

Arctic petroleum: local CSR perceptions in the Nenets region of Russia

Loe J.S.P. Kelman I. Fjaertoft D. Poussenkova N.

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to identify and discuss perceptions of petroleum-related corporate social responsibility (CSR) among local and regional authorities, local peoples (indigenous and non-indigenous) and representatives of petroleum companies working or living in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug (NAO) in the Russian Arctic. Although the CSR literature comprises a broad spectrum of approaches, an underrepresentation of perspectives from non-business stakeholders has been suggested. The paper seeks to redress this gap. The data are obtained through 34 in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted and qualitatively analysed to extrapolate perceptions, views and expectations of petroleum-related CSR in NAO. By exploring needs, wants and expectations, differences are identified between short-term expectations and long-term perspectives. A central feature of the authors' findings is the wide variation in the responses not only between community groups and sectors but also within them. The complexity identified is an argument in favour of local involvement to understand local contexts and suggests avoiding "one-size fits all" CSR approaches. Challenges and opportunities are identified for the petroleum companies in dealing with different stakeholders and diverging interests. The importance of local context means that caution is advised when considering the transferability or generalisability of lessons, within NAO and elsewhere in and outside the Russian Arctic. Furthermore, fundamental motivations are not always transparent from interviews. Although a rich literature exists on CSR, this is perhaps the first study providing a cross-sectoral analysis of people's perceptions, including those of non-business stakeholders, in this region.

Introduction

Although many players in the oil and gas industry regard social and environmental sustainability as key elements of corporate social responsibility (CSR), there is as yet no common understanding of what CSR means among businesses, NGOs, scholars, or community groups (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; Brammer *et al.*, 2012; Dahlsrud, 2008; Ellis and Bastin, 2011; Frynas, 2009; Jamali, 2008; Montiel, 2008). While the petroleum sector has been praised as a champion of CSR action (Frynas, 2005: 581), some have accused the industry of using CSR as an exercise in greenwashing (McQueen, 2015; Vries *et al.*, 2015).

The scholarly literature contains a variety of CSR theories and conceptualisations (Godfrey and Hatch, 2007; Muniapan and Dass, 2008). Others explore stakeholder perspectives (Barron and McDermott, 2015; Doh and Guay, 2006; Du and Vieira Jr., 2012; Kirat, 2015). Several authors explain that perceptions and insights of non-business stakeholders are still underrepresented (Ditlev-Simonsen and Midttun, 2011: 25; Skouloudis *et al.*, 2015: 95).

In seeking to redress this gap, this article presents the results of 34 in-depth interviews on attitudes towards CSR policies among companies, local and regional authorities, and local people (indigenous and non-indigenous) working or living in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug (NAO) in the Russian Arctic. This approach, we believe, is the first cross-sectoral analysis of CSR perceptions in NAO and a first for Arctic petroleum studies whose focus has tended to be on perceptions of people in a single sector. The importance of NAO in Arctic petroleum is related to the long-term domination of oil in the regional economy, which over past decades has contributed significantly to the Russian economy (NAO, 2014; Degteva, 2006; Stammler and Peskov, 2008; Tuisku, 2002).

This article provides a platform for local voices, irrespective of the sector in which they work, to describe their perceptions of CSR in their own words and to express their thoughts on what oil and gas companies should and should not be doing with respect to CSR. By identifying local perceptions, we reveal challenges and opportunities faced by petroleum companies in implementing CSR in NAO.

The next section provides a brief literature review followed by a description of the case study and methodology. Results are then presented in terms of how interviewees understand the CSR concept, how they describe CSR practices in their local community, and their thoughts on the responsibilities of petroleum companies operating in the region. The discussion section looks at challenges and opportunities for petroleum companies in the region while the conclusion summarises this paper's contribution, its social and practical implications, and suggestions for further research.

2. CSR in a Russian Context

Friedman (1970) famously argued in his *New York Times* article "The Social Responsibility of business is to increase its profits" in favour of limiting the scope of CSR, as businesses contribute to society simply by providing jobs, which in itself has economic ripple effects. Since then, the science and practice of CSR have evolved and diversified (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; Argandoña and von Weltzien Hoivik, 2009; Brammer *et al.*, 2012; Dahlsrud, 2008; Ellis and Bastin, 2011; Montiel, 2008). Conceptualisations of CSR today place a stronger emphasis on responsibilities of businesses to communities and environments affected by their actions (Bénabou and Tirole, 2010; Ditlev-Simonsen and Midttun, 2011; Frynas, 2009; Godfrey and Hatch, 2007; Muniapan and Dass, 2008). Various studies of petroleum-related CSR programmes around the world have had different objectives and different outcomes (e.g. Dana *et al.*, 2008, 2009; Frynas 2005; Gulbrandsen and Moe, 2005, 2007; Kirat, 2015; Rowe, 2016; Schmidt, 2011; Wilson, 2016; Wilson and Stammler, 2006).

Frynas (2005) and Gulbrandsen and Moe (2007) distinguish between micro and macro-level CSR, the latter finding (p. 813) that micro-level CSR activities by their nature

involve ‘benign’ and uncontroversial issues and projects, potentially benefiting both company reputation and community development. By contrast, macro-level CSR refers to the responsibility of transnational companies (TNCs) for the broader economic, political, social and human development in host countries.

In Russia, the term “Corporate Social Responsibility” was adopted after the break-up of the Soviet Union, even though many practices constituting a CSR framework today are akin to traditional social responsibilities of industries during the Soviet period (Tchourilov *et al.*, 1996; Wengle, 2015). In the Soviet model, the dominant industry in a community (particularly in Northern Siberian oil company towns) was also responsible for social infrastructure; i.e., everything from electricity supply, education, and health care to public baths (Stammler and Wilson, 2006: 17). Today, most large Russian companies have a CSR or sustainability policy and many still play a larger local role in communities than the state (Rusal, 2008: 5-6).

Companies usually need the approval of a community to obtain a “social licence to operate” (Moffat and Zhang, 2014; Wilson, 2016; Zinkin, 2004), which is possible within a micro-level CSR framework. The economic support that companies offer communities for social and cultural purposes may therefore be understood as a form of informal, voluntary taxation as well as a necessary investment in protecting property rights (Gaddy and Ickes, 2005: 561). Obligations can also be included as terms in the licences for petroleum and other resource exploration or production, formulated as agreements between companies and regional or local authorities. These agreements can stipulate a range of social activities to be undertaken by a company operating in the region.

3. Nenets Autonomous Okrug (NAO)

In the Russian Arctic, onshore oil and gas production has a decades-long history of mutual interaction between petroleum companies, regional authorities, and local populations, including indigenous communities (Alekperov, 2011; Tchourilov *et al.*, 1996). While state companies previously dominated, privatisation and the entry of Western petroleum companies into the region have changed the relational dynamics among stakeholders (Stammler and Wilson, 2006).

NAO is a region in the Russian Arctic with approximately 43,000 inhabitants spread across an area of 176,810 km², mostly lying north of the Arctic Circle. The administrative centre, Naryan-Mar, has a population of roughly 21,000. The region occupies the northern part of the hydrocarbon-rich Timan-Pechora basin.

Oil production in NAO started in 1984; today, the region contributes about 3 per cent of Russia’s overall production (NAO, 2012). Oil accounts for more than 90 per cent of NAO’s total industrial output (GKS, 2014b), providing the region with the highest gross regional product per capita in Russia (GKS, 2014a). In contrast to most Russian petroleum-producing regions, production volumes grew primarily after 1990, making petroleum a comparatively recent industry. Eighty per cent of expected extractable resources have yet to be produced (NAO, 2012), so petroleum production will be important for the region for many years to come. NAO has regional-level legislation defining relations between companies and communities and there is considerable experience in drawing up benefit-sharing agreements with local communities (Degteva, 2006; Stammler and Peskov, 2008; Tuisku, 2002).

Oil and gas production in NAO is dominated by Russian companies, including Lukoil, Naryanmarneftegaz (70 per cent owned by Lukoil), Rosneft, and Bashneft. When this study

was completed, the French-owned company Total E&P Russia was operating in parts of the Kharyaga oil field until it sold its 40 per cent stake to state-owned Zarubezhneft. Other participants during the time this study was carried out were the Norwegian company Statoil (30 per cent), Zarubezhneft (20 per cent), and Nenets Oil Company (10 per cent). The oil and gas industry accounts for perhaps as much as 96 per cent of regional tax revenue (Federal Tax Service, 2014).

As of 2010, NAO's indigenous population counted approximately 11,100 of whom 7,500 were Nenets and 3,600 Komi. Many pursue reindeer husbandry livelihoods. Over 100 herding units manage 186,000 reindeer (GKS, 2010), with herding occurring across the okrug. Herding co-exists with the oil and gas industry whose production sites and pipelines occupy relatively large swathes of land (Zakariassen, 2012). Under Federal Law N-82 (1999), indigenous peoples have the right to be consulted and to take part in the environmental assessment of industrial development plans affecting their traditional areas of habitation. Under this same law, indigenous peoples are also entitled to compensation for any losses incurred as a result of industrial activities in their traditional land areas. Indigenous peoples are represented by the reindeer herder association Yasavey which has a well-established dialogue with regional authorities.

Under the Regional Law on Subsoil Resource Usage, awarded licences shall accommodate the interests of resource exploitation and the rights of indigenous peoples to maintain their traditional livelihood (Khmeleva, 2008). After this law was adopted, licensing policy became a federal prerogative and it is therefore unclear how much legal weight the regional provisions still carry. Furthermore, several traditional lifestyle preserves have been created regionally to protect reindeer herding (Naryan Vinder, 2014). Although federal law limits land preservation opportunities in such territories, establishing them indicates that efforts are being made. The development of a GIS map by the indigenous organization Yasavey and the Norwegian Polar Institute in 2010 has been described as an important step in identifying migration routes and easing negotiations on land use (Zakariassen, 2012: 5). But laws, rights, and organisations do not mean that all conflicts are solved. Several authors (Pika and Bogoyavlensky, 1995; Stammler and Peskov, 2008; Wilson, 2003) have recorded the problems facing indigenous peoples around Russia in dealing with petroleum companies alongside wider challenges of Russian governance with respect to resource exploration and extraction.

4. Method

The data presented in this article were obtained through 34 in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Table 1) conducted and qualitatively analysed to extrapolate the perceptions, views, and expectations of CSR of four main groups: (i) local populations, both indigenous and non-indigenous; (ii) representatives of regional and local authorities; (iii) petroleum company representatives; and (iv) academics and environmental NGOs. Interviews were structured around a common interview guide covering conceptual understandings of CSR; local activities and programmes set in motion by oil and gas companies; and the interviewees' normative perspectives of the social and environmental responsibilities of petroleum companies operating in the region.

Table 1: Interviewees in NAO

#	Categories	Indigenous?	Gender	Location
1	Regional administration	Indigenous	Female	Naryan-Mar
2	"Regular" person (middle class)	Non-indigenous	Male	Naryan-Mar

3	“Regular” person (working class)	Indigenous	Female	Tundra
4	City administration	Indigenous	Female	Naryan-Mar
5	Regional administration	Indigenous	Male	Naryan-Mar
6	Indigenous NGO	Non-indigenous	Male	Naryan-Mar
7	“Regular” person (traditional lifestyle)	Indigenous	Male	Tundra
8	Indigenous NGO and Russian petroleum company	Indigenous	Male	Naryan-Mar
9	Director, public sector	Non-indigenous	Male	Naryan-Mar
10	Director, public sector	Indigenous	Female	Naryan-Mar
11	“Regular” person (working class)	Non-indigenous	Female	Naryan-Mar
12	City administration	Non-indigenous	Female	Naryan-Mar
13	“Regular” person (traditional lifestyle)	Indigenous	Female	Tundra
14	“Regular” person (working class)	Non-indigenous	Male	Naryan-Mar
15	Russian petroleum company	Non-indigenous	Male	Naryan-Mar
16	“Regular” people (traditional lifestyle)	Indigenous	Female + Male	Naryan-Mar
17	Regional administration + indigenous NGO	Indigenous	Male	Naryan-Mar
18	Environmental NGO	Non-indigenous	Male	Moscow
19	Foreign petroleum company	Non-indigenous	Female	Moscow
20	Foreign petroleum company	Non-indigenous	Female	Moscow
21	Russian petroleum company	Non-indigenous	Male	Naryan-Mar
22	Academic (sociologist)	Non-indigenous	Female	Moscow
23	Academic (economist)	Non-indigenous	Female	Moscow
24	Foreign petroleum company	Non-indigenous	Male	Moscow
25	Foreign petroleum company	Non-indigenous	Male	By telephone
26	Russian petroleum industry and local politician	Non-indigenous	Male	Naryan-Mar
27	Russian petroleum company	Non-indigenous	Male	Naryan-Mar
28	Environmental NGO	Non-indigenous	Male	Naryan-Mar
29	“Regular” people (cultural sector)	Indigenous	Female + Female	Nelmin-Nos
30	“Regular” person (working class)	Non-indigenous	Female	Nelmin-Nos
31	“Regular” person (working class)	Non-indigenous	Female	Nelmin-Nos
32	Local authorities	Non-indigenous	Male	Nelmin-Nos
33	“Regular” person (small-business)	Non-indigenous	Male	Naryan-Mar
34	Russian petroleum company	Non-indigenous	Male	Moscow

Most of the interviews were carried out during two field trips to NAO’s capital Naryan-Mar, in June 2013 and April 2014, including a one-day trip to the village of Nelmin-Nos and two day-trips to interview people living on the tundra. Six interviews were carried out in Moscow, where the head offices of most petroleum companies are located. All interviewees remain anonymous.

The principal researcher (an intermediate Russian speaker) was helped by a research assistant (a fluent Russian speaker) as an interpreter and note-taker during all of the interviews in NAO. After each interview, both transcribed the interviews together based on the two sets of notes and memory. The interviews in Moscow, with one exception, were carried out in English and were transcribed by the principal researcher alone. The interview data were categorised and

coded in a spreadsheet, enabling systematic analysis and comparison of community groups on each of the questions.

In the Russian interviews, the Russian term *korporativnaya sotsialnaya otvetstvennost* (KCO) was used for CSR, a commonly used literal translation of ‘corporate social responsibility’. If interviewees were unaware of the term, then they were asked to talk about what oil and gas companies in the region, as far as they knew, did for the local community socially and environmentally and what, in their opinion, the companies ought to be doing for society and the environment.

5. Results

5.1. Varying meanings and understandings of CSR

The concept of ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ (*korporativnaya sotsialnaya otvetstvennost*) or variations thereof were familiar to all Naryan-Mar interviewees. In explaining its meaning, they emphasised either the goodwill of company decision-makers, companies’ readiness to meet the expectations of regional authorities, or the use of CSR as a public relations tool aimed at creating a positive company image. When moving to specifics, interviewees diverged in their interpretations (Table 2).

Table 2: Examples of interviewees’ understanding of the term and concept of ‘CSR’

Interviewee	Quotation
2	“Yes, we use the term ‘CSR’. To me, the term means what companies do over and above whatever is obligatory; in other words, spending extra money on the community. Companies do this in order to ensure a good reputation and because that is what the regional authorities expect of them.”
5	“In my opinion, CSR is when the companies do positive things out of goodwill, voluntarily, and not because they are forced to do them. Then, it is social responsibility. In Russian we put it like this: <i>po dobrote dushevnoy</i> (because of the kindness in our soul).”
9	“CSR is not about spending money, but about doing something to help people develop. CSR should be a driver for other kinds of things.”
10	“Corporate social responsibility? Well, we call it <i>sponsorskaya pomosch</i> (sponsor help). The reindeer herders in the tundra don’t use words like CSR. They rather talk about ‘help’. As a term, it’s primarily related to reindeer herders and support from oil companies.”
15	“CSR is everything that’s aimed at [improving the] well-being of people of all kinds.”
24	“Our company has a strict definition of what CSR is and what it is not. CSR supports our reputation as a ‘socially sound’ [company] and it’s more about spirit than material issues...The local population, however, has a different way of seeing it. They think everything the companies do is CSR. Regional authorities also expect a lot. They want all kinds of things as part of CSR, which doesn’t always chime with the limitations companies have.”
27	“We don’t exactly use the term CSR, more ‘social projects’, <i>sotsialnie proekti</i> . When you have a business, you need to support the development of society – businesses must undertake projects, [financing] social infrastructure

– such as kindergartens and schools, while also supporting cultural festivals etc.”

Both the term and concept of CSR are known, accepted, and understood by the interviewees, who are in broad agreement regarding its overarching meaning. Perceptions of the conceptual details vary widely, although our interviewees were aware that not everyone shared their particular conceptual view. In particular, a clear difference of opinion emerged regarding whether or not CSR meant doing anything extra. Some believed CSR was about everything a company does to benefit the community (e.g. Interviewee 27). Others suggested that CSR comes in addition to a company’s typical or regular activities (e.g. Interviewee 2).

One implied common thread is that money is one if not the necessary main aspect of CSR. Table 2 mentions words such as “help”, “support”, and “projects”, accepting that financial resources are needed for those activities but it is not just about handing over cash, instead also being about involvement in implementing projects. In fact, members of the public readily embrace the meaning of CSR whereby the company does as much as it can. A company representative (Interviewee 24) sees this as a difficulty, explaining that the company wants to restrict activities and narrow the scope of its CSR. Interviewee 24 also explained that in his company, “CSR” and “environment” are seen as two completely different tasks, of which the latter belongs under Health, Safety and Environment, thereby dividing CSR into specific activities.

These findings echo those of previous studies which also failed to find uniform understanding of the meaning of CSR for businesses, NGOs, scholars, or community groups (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; Amaeshi *et al.*, 2006; Brammer *et al.*, 2012; Dahlsrud, 2008; De Roeck and Delobbe, 2012; Ellis and Bastin, 2011; Frynas, 2009; Jamali, 2008). Instead, different people, groups, or communities develop their own interpretations, understandings, and hence expectations of CSR, possibly leading to disappointment and criticism. We see examples of this in Sections 5.2 and 5.3, and in a Murmansk study conducted by Rowe (2016).

5.2. The micro-level focus of perceptions of specific CSR activities

All interviewees were asked about (i) their awareness of CSR actions and programmes in NAO; (ii) how companies in their opinion were fulfilling CSR in NAO; and (iii) whether they were aware of specific CSR measures and activities in NAO.

Apart from interviewees in Nelmin-Nos, a village not directly affected by petroleum activities, interviewees in NAO were all able to describe specific projects or activities under their expectations of CSR. In Nelmin-Nos, some interviewees could not see why a researcher wanted to interview them about the oil and gas industry’s CSR, since there were no petroleum operations in their area (Interviewees 29, 30, and 32). CSR had no relevance for them because no companies operated in their area, so they had no expectations.

In NAO, many interviewees mentioned how the company spent money on different activities or programmes for the social or cultural benefit of their communities or as compensation for using the land (Interviewees 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 15, 17, 19, 20, 24, and 26). The French company Total’s local involvement was particularly well-known. Total, for example, offered free French language classes and donated French books to local libraries, while also financing a local school together with the Norwegian company Statoil (mentioned by Interviewees 1, 2, 9, 10, 13, and 33). Overall, the interviewees mentioned three types of CSR-related arrangements.

First, the funding of regional authorities. Interviewees explained that one of the largest contributions to society by the petroleum companies came in the form of a negotiated sum of money transferred from companies to the regional administration (in addition to tax revenue). The regional administration then allocated these funds for social and cultural projects. NAO's Department of Natural Resources signs agreements with the companies detailing the latter's participation in the region's socio-economic development.

Second, direct funding of specific projects. Examples in NAO are schools, orphanages, health facilities and programmes, educational programmes, and cultural events. In some cases, the regional authorities had asked for project financing based on an assessment of local needs. In other instances, projects were initiated by the companies themselves.

Third, direct agreements are made between the petroleum companies and the local population. In areas where the companies operate, they are obliged to negotiate deals with affected reindeer herder units. These units receive economic compensation and other benefits for the land they have lost to the oil and gas industry. Although the agreements are confidential, according to interviewees these "other benefits" can be one-off payments of an agreed sum of money; helicopter transport for people and goods, such as bringing reindeer meat to market; and delivering food, fuel, and equipment. People also ask the companies to support festivals, to fund competition prizes, and to purchase equipment.

Reindeer herder units are only supported, however, if their pastures are directly affected by oil and gas activities. An adjacent unit might receive nothing. Differences in living standards are emerging where neighbours who once shared similar prospects and livelihoods are now separated by differences in wealth. This situation was described as a source of conflict, not only because of the sense of unfairness and jealousy, but also because some people found it hard to preserve traditional livelihoods while others were opting for a more modern lifestyle.

The three forms of economic input described above are all instances of micro-level CSR in practice. Not a single interviewee in NAO mentioned any examples of macro-level measures such as supporting human rights or promoting good governance. This finding contrasts with other studies of micro- and macro-level CSR among petroleum companies. Wilson (2010), who studied CSR in Azerbaijan, found an awareness of both levels of CSR activity being implemented in tandem, with mixed success. The three types of activities in NAO are also found in Azerbaijan along with macro-level actions addressing human rights and wider environmental topics. Meanwhile, the findings of a case study of petroleum-related CSR in Nigeria paralleled our own findings: Frynas (2005) explains how a focus on micro-level CSR, to the neglect of macro-level CSR projects, led to the same perceptions among villagers of jealousy and unfairness. Yet the micro-level actions also tended to satisfy those who gain from them, as detailed in section 5.3.

5.3. CSR supporting perceived social needs and expectations

The interviewees more or less agreed that petroleum activity benefits NAO to a large extent. Only Interviewee 16 was categorically against the industry, saying "It would be better if the companies weren't here, because we don't get anything from them of importance to us." Nevertheless, the community, in the eyes of many interviewees, benefits less than the industry could and should deliver, considering how much the companies earn. People in NAO are

relatively prosperous compared with people in other Russian regions, but as Interviewees 2 and 13 said, they could have been living “like in the Emirates” if the money were distributed better.

When we asked interviewees what they thought the petroleum companies should do for the community under the CSR banner, responses varied (Table 3). Some ideas recurred, such as a need to improve basic public services including social services, sanitary systems, housing, and clean drinking water, especially in areas far from NAO’s capital, Naryan-Mar, while generally boosting the standard of living (Interviewees 5, 2, 3, 13, 31, 32, and 33). A planned Aquapark in Naryan-Mar was mentioned as an example of extravagance, especially since people’s basic needs were still not met satisfactorily. There were also calls for local competence building measures and job opportunities. Few locals work in the oil industry because, as the companies stress, they need specially skilled workers that are hard to find locally. Several interviewees were nonetheless interested in company projects aimed at training and hiring local staff (Interviewees 2, 3, 4, 14, and 33). Companies were appreciated for sponsoring festivals and cultural events (Interviewees 1, 29, and 32).

Table 3: Examples of what interviewees perceive as needs and expectations of CSR

Interviewee	Quotation
4	“People here need basic things, not luxuries. This is what CSR should provide...People suffer from alcoholism because children don’t leave home to study when they finish school, while in town there are no suitable jobs. There is a lack of specialists in oil and gas, but to train for that, you need to go to St. Petersburg, Moscow, or Arkhangelsk and the indigenous people can’t afford that. In my opinion, it would be better if companies arranged educational programmes themselves.”
5	“Companies should do more for people from Naryan-Mar who aren’t visible, living far away from the city. They need support but nobody sees how badly they live.”
7	“In my opinion, the companies’ CSR [policy] should be to follow the legislation. It is not the business of oil and gas companies to give money. Their job is to follow laws.”
8	“The most important content of CSR should be to pay taxes and to negotiate agreements with all parties.”
10	“Ecology is the most important thing. In addition, oil and gas companies should [take steps to] minimize the damage to reindeer territories from their operations. Socially, I don’t think it is the job of the oil companies to do things. People themselves should take responsibility for their lives.”
14	“People should get jobs. Companies’ responsibilities should be about employment mostly.”
16	“There should be direct social agreement between reindeer herders and the companies about ‘help’. Establish better relations with the people. It would benefit the companies too, as the indigenous people know everything about the area where they’re operating.”
17	“Establish good relations with the indigenous population. There should be negotiations and monetary compensation for using the land and wise siting of infrastructure. For example, it may be only a single pipe occupying a small place, but it divides an important reindeer migration area. Then, just a small pipe can create a lot of harm.”
29	“What we need most of all is access to education for the young generation, so they can have a future. One should also support festivals, cultural events,

and reindeer herders. People should not get money – handing out cash only makes things worse.”
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Several interviewees said that if CSR staff were really interested in identifying needs and making a positive difference to the communities, then they should talk to people where they live, not expect people to travel to the capital Naryan-Mar for meetings and negotiations, which is difficult for many who live in remote areas. Reindeer herders spend much of the year on the tundra and cannot easily leave their herds, while transport infrastructure is limited.

Many interviewees (Interviewees 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 4, 9, 11, 22, and 33) wanted to see improvements to procedures and communication between people and petroleum companies, suggesting that all parties should be involved in negotiations, especially reindeer herders. With workable procedures in place, herders could notify companies about oil spills which might otherwise go undetected (Interviewee 8).

Some caution was expressed regarding petroleum-related CSR in NAO. Two of the indigenous interviewees thought the petroleum companies' social contributions could be limited to avoid lessening the focus on traditional livelihoods (Interviewee 7) and to avoid creating a beggar mentality (Interviewee 10).

The needs, expectations, and concerns of interviewees regarding CSR projects were mostly related to social aspects, with environmental issues hardly being mentioned unless prompted by the interviewer. Only three interviewees in NAO mentioned “ecology” or “environment” when asked about the petroleum companies' CSR performance (Interviewees 10, 16, and 28). Four other interviewees mentioned climate change as a challenge for animals or reindeer herders (Interviewees 3, 13, 30, and 33), but did not make a link to petroleum-related emissions or to CSR.

Amaeshi *et al.* (2006) found a similar lack of interest in the environment when they studied oil-related CSR in Nigeria. Stakeholders were much more interested in social and business matters. In contrast, Wilson (2016) found that people in the Komi Republic and Sakhalin in Russia were much more concerned about the environmental implications of petroleum development, although they were sometimes willing to accept harm to the environment in return for what they perceived to be the social benefits brought by petroleum extraction. Similarly mixed views are observed in North America. Dana *et al.* (2008, 2009) found that communities in northern Canada welcomed the social rewards from CSR from petroleum development but were apprehensive about potential environmental impacts, matching findings from Alaska (Schmidt, 2011).

6. Discussion

6.1. *With whom should petroleum companies work?*

International petroleum companies operating in NAO have to deal with the regional authorities to get a formal licence to operate, which links CSR to these authorities. Companies may additionally choose to engage directly with the local population, formulated as a “social licence to operate” (Moffat and Zhang, 2014; Wilson, 2016; Zinkin, 2004) often raising the question of how far company representatives should go to engage with the population face-to-face. As seen in section 5, this topic yielded strong but mixed opinions from the interviewees. The regional authorities, some argued, were best suited to handling how the petroleum companies

fulfilled CSR. Others insisted that petroleum companies should consult with the population directly, typically because they had little trust in the authorities.

Interviewees highlighted benefits and disadvantages of each approach, in line with the CSR literature. The main benefit of consulting with the population is that the companies get to decide for themselves which projects to support (Gulbrandsen and Moe, 2005; Wilson, 2016; Wilson and Stammer, 2006). They also have the option of monitoring and evaluating project output and performance. The disadvantage of direct support is that more resources are needed to maintain a strong local presence and to gain a thorough knowledge of the context. Companies are not necessarily willing to engage at this level, so consultations can be superficial and incomplete as a result (Frynas, 2005; Stammer and Wilson, 2006). An outside company that assumes it already knows how best to support the locals is likely to be perceived as provocative and arrogant, being unable or unwilling to fully understand community dynamics (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Pretty, 1995; Walmsley, 2006).

Conversely, while it might be more efficient for companies to focus on the regional authorities, the companies then cannot control exactly how the money is spent. In theory, they could use their clout to demand more transparency from the authorities, for themselves and for the public, plus they could aim for macro-level CSR projects. In practice, opinions are divided on whether macro-level CSR projects are ethically or operationally viable, since companies often lack macro-level capacity and expertise. As Stammer and Wilson (2006: 16) note, “Despite their talk of promoting sustainable development, international oil companies and their lenders frequently state that they do not have the right to influence how governments manage project revenues.”

In NAO, petroleum companies have sought some semblance of balance in their CSR activities. They support both the regional authorities and the local population directly. But these projects are all micro-level with little apparent impetus to tackle the macro-level. This situation might exist because the companies wish to contribute as little as possible in order to operate successfully in the area. Since they know that Russian indigenous peoples are used to working with petroleum companies (Stammer and Wilson, 2006), the companies involve everyone in consultations but steer clear of promoting fundamental change in society. This situation is analogous with what Frynas (2005) dubbed the “false development promise” whereby companies fail to deliver development as promised, as seen in Murmansk (Rowe, 2016). Rather than working closely with affected groups on their own terms, companies often prefer to work with those in the best position to advance the companies’ business interests.

6.2. Recognising and dealing with community heterogeneity

A central feature of our findings is the wide variation in the responses, not only between community groups and sectors, but also within them. In determining CSR policies, petroleum companies need to be conscious that helping some groups, or certain sections of a group, may result in conflict with others, as was noted in connection with the reindeer herding units. Whether to help all or just some is therefore a dilemma, as is defining ‘equity’ compared to ‘equality’ in providing assistance and determining how to broach these thorny topics.

Yet it is not definite that all reindeer herders seek or want CSR support from petroleum companies, nor that everyone in a unit would sign a petroleum-related agreement (see also Wilson and Stammer, 2006). Leaders may make decisions without involving every one of the herders affected, and herders spend much of their time on the tundra anyway and cannot always

take part in communal decision-making. Using NAO as an example, Tulaeva (2014) describes a variety of laws, regulations, conflicts, and conflict resolution mechanisms for reindeer herders and petroleum companies. And like other researchers (e.g. Montiel, 2008; Muniapan and Dass, 2008; Skouloudis *et al.*, 2015; Wilson and Stammer, 2006), including the present author, Tulaeva was also unable to find evidence of a “one-size-fits-all” approach, the theoretical model explored and refuted by Argandoña and von Weltzien Hoivik (2009) in Europe.

Such challenges are common to participatory processes in development projects, to which resource-related CSR belongs. Communities are not homogeneous, leaders can represent a clique or faction rather than the whole group, and decisions must be made and implemented in the face of disagreement with power relations playing a significant role (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Pretty, 1995; Walmsley, 2006). Degteva (2006), Stammer and Peskov (2008), and Tuisku (2002) suggest ways of overcoming identified difficulties related to consultation, involvement, and agreements with indigenous communities in NAO, with Buxton and Wilson (2013) laying out a general framework for CSR-related community consultations—all ensuring that community heterogeneity is recognised, accepted, and factored into the consultations. Despite the time that has elapsed since those studies were published, our results suggest that their work matches the situation in NAO.

6.3. Differing time scales of priorities and interests

The interviewees’ focus on day-to-day issues in connection with CSR, namely micro-level projects, demonstrates where petroleum companies could make a difference. To what degree should petroleum companies take responsibility for a community’s short-term and long-term future (e.g. Bénabou and Tirole, 2010)? Given the enormous amounts of resources which petroleum companies need to invest in production infrastructure, decisions have to be made well in advance, sometimes years, with plans drafted for decades ahead. In theory, petroleum companies’ CSR policies could involve plans to develop the NAO economy and society in step with growth in production capacity. None of the interviewees, including petroleum company representatives, mentioned this macro-level possibility. Only the indigenous interviewees mentioned the long-term petroleum-related concern of climate change, although without linking it to possible climate-related CSR projects.

A generation has now passed since the fall of the Soviet Union, where community viability was considered to be part of corporate roles and responsibilities. This is no longer the case for international companies (Stammer and Wilson, 2006). But companies still need community approval to obtain a “social licence to operate” (Moffat and Zhang, 2014; Wilson, 2016; Zinkin, 2004) which can often be achieved simply by meeting short-term needs. Some interviewees, for example, want companies to supply goods such as snowmobiles as part of their CSR policy, an attitude that could be criticised for short-termism. But as a means of communication and transport, snowmobiles create job opportunities and significantly improve quality of life. The downside is that they require petrol, oil, insurance, maintenance, and ultimately replacement, especially after having relied on them for a while. Should the company providing snowmobiles also pay for some or all of the owners’ subsequent costs?

Even if companies feel they should take a longer view in their responsibilities to the community, including for instance a climate change policy (e.g. Beale and Fernando, 2009), should they do so if the community has not asked them to (keeping in mind that no community is homogeneous as noted in section 6.2)? Jobs in the oil and gas industry and small business development, although mentioned by some interviewees, do not seem to be at the centre of what locals in

NAO appear to want. This might reflect apathy, inertia, or ignorance of the possibilities—or perhaps desires like these seem unrealistic. Interviewee 18 explained, “It’s easy to sell [the prospect of] oil and gas [production] to the local communities because they get advantages such as taxes and social support. It is less evident that the companies involve local businesses or employ local people. It’ll take many years to teach people to work in the industry. It’s safer and easier [to hire in] people from other places. This is what is not discussed with the local population.”

Similarly, our results show the low priority of environmental considerations in CSR projects and interests in NAO. While company engagement with the environment in many contexts is viewed by locals as “greenwashing” (Vries *et al.*, 2015), environmental issues are not considered in detail by the interviewees here. Climate change was the main environmental topic, and it was unclear how the companies were expected to respond. This finding differs from other studies in NAO (Degteva, 2006; Tulaeva, 2014; Tuisku, 2002) which found heightened concern among indigenous peoples in particular regarding the industry’s impact on their land and environment. The explanation of the difference may be that people do not associate environmental sustainability with CSR or may simply have other, more pressing concerns (Forbes and Stammler, 2009), so shorter-term social and economic needs take precedence over longer-term environmental concerns.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Summary of this paper’s contribution

This paper presents practices and perceptions of CSR in NAO, an Arctic region in Russia heavily influenced by the petroleum industry. The work builds on past studies of petroleum company activities in the region (Degteva, 2006; Stammler and Peskov, 2008; Tuisku, 2002). This study, we believe, is the first cross-sectoral analysis of CSR perceptions in NAO and is comparatively unique when it comes to Arctic petroleum studies, which have tended to focus on perceptions of affected groups in a particular sector. Our cross-sectoral results indicate that international petroleum companies, even though they often wish to promote sustainability with their CSR projects, tend instead to focus on micro-level projects.

The data and analysis reveal differences in respondents’ views and interests, not only between specific groups—such as the local population, petroleum companies and regional authorities—but also within these groups. It is therefore particularly important to be conscious of the limitations of grouping people, for example in “indigenous” and “non-indigenous” categories, as if each were homogeneous. Rather, it is crucial to understand local contexts, local power differentials, local expectations of different groups, and local expectations of those groups’ members. Our findings also show that providing support to some groups but not to others is likely to cause conflicts by creating differences between people who previously were or perceived themselves to be on equal terms. If local contexts and differences within and between groups are to be understood, then people need to be consulted and engaged with on their own territory in their own ways.

If petroleum companies want to support local people on local terms—which may or may not be in line with CSR policy—then they will need to invest both time and money for conducting proper consultations. Such actions will involve ensuring that all members of a community or group are consulted, separately or in groups, while accounting for power differentials (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Hickey and Mohan, 2004; Pretty 1995). If the consultation involves only

leaders of established groups and people who can travel to the capital, then petroleum company staff might not get a full picture of different and diverse needs. The same applies if the focus is mainly on micro-level CSR projects. If time is spent getting to know the local context, engaging with the regional authorities, talking to people where they live, and combining an understanding of what people want with the companies' own initiatives, then petroleum-related CSR projects have a chance of succeeding at micro and possibly also macro levels.

7.2 Implications for research and practice

Despite the frequent focus in the corporate sector on short-term profit (Beale and Fernando, 2009) and the ever-changing difficulties of operating in Russia (Locatelli, 2006), petroleum companies have to plan infrastructure investments decades ahead. While companies can have a longer-term perspective, many people in the communities may be struggling to meet their basic and day-to-day needs, although this situation does not rule out planning to ensure that their children have a better future. The importance of local context also means that caution is advised when considering the transferability or generalizability of lessons, within NAO and elsewhere in and outside the Russian Arctic. Balancing these time and space considerations is perhaps the hardest CSR challenge faced by petroleum companies around the world.

A balance can be achieved if the companies wish to do so. Participatory development techniques and critiques of them are well-known in the literature (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Hickey and Mohan, 2004; Pretty, 1995), so if companies want to apply known lessons, then they could hire development practitioners, anthropologists, and/or locals to ensure that consultations are conducted and decisions are taken with suitable methods (e.g. Buxton and Wilson, 2013). The meaning of "suitable", as with the meaning of "CSR", will change with each context, so companies must be prepared to make an adequate resource commitment and to be flexible.

Companies might not be interested in this approach or might not be willing to make the commitment. But they must then be prepared for the consequences, as indicated by this work. CSR efforts can exacerbate inequality and conflicts within a community; they can wittingly or unwittingly support corruption and power abuse; and they can harm the communities and the environment. That is, CSR interventions can be negative rather than beneficial or neutral. These consequences might not be of interest to the company, but at least they are foreseeable.

One important implication for research in this area is not only that context matters, which limits the transferability and generalizability of the particular case examined here, but also that fundamental motivations are not always transparent from interviews. If the goal of research is to report on people's understandings and perceptions, then our study was successful. If the goal is to understand true motivations and to create positive change for the community, then much more is needed than interviews. Whether it falls within a researcher's mandate or responsibility to seek to change minds and actions of communities or companies remains an open question. How to react if the researcher is unsuccessful in this pursuit is another open question.

7.3 Further research areas

Petroleum operations, inextricably bound up with CSR, have led to violent conflicts, as in Nigeria (Frynas, 2005), but also opportunities where communities can try to balance social and environmental concerns, as in northern Canada (Dana *et al.*, 2008, 2009). Russia (and before, the Soviet Union) has been involved in this sector and in debates on CSR for years, from

Sakhalin (Wilson, 2016) to Murmansk (Rowe, 2016). A cross-sectoral analysis of opinions of respondents in NAO contributes to the literature by supporting and contrasting lessons from elsewhere in Russia and around the world, but also by emphasising the importance of understanding local contexts because so much differs from, and is the same as, other case studies.

To better understand how and why differences and similarities emerge, the current research could be enriched with focus groups. Residents would then have the opportunity to exchange views among themselves and to discuss preferences with respect to NAO's future and possible futures. Such focus groups should take place in the capital, in villages, on petroleum development sites, and on the tundra with reindeer herders. With a cohort of interviews and focus groups from NAO, comparative analysis with other locations would be possible, as Wilson (2016) did when comparing the Komi Republic and Sakhalin. We can also think beyond Russia, heeding the studies from around the world cited in this paper. One important aspect would be to emulate the work done here by thinking cross-sectorally, to involve multiple groups within a community or a population so that different viewpoints could be compared.

Despite the wealth of stakeholder studies on CSR-related projects and policies in the oil and gas industry, a cross-sectoral analysis is rarely conducted and it is rare for data to be pooled in order to develop an empirically based theoretical framework for explaining and predicting similarities and differences in petroleum-related CSR projects among locations, groups, and circumstances. CSR has long been theorised (e.g. Friedman, 1970), especially in the petroleum industry (Tchourilov *et al.*, 1996), but better connections are needed to empirical studies to test theory against practice. Two important and testable conclusions in the study of petroleum-related CSR is that "one size does not fit all" (Argandoña and von Weltzien Hoivik, 2009) and that context matters immensely. A research agenda should seek to move beyond these conclusions by developing a theoretical framework with explanatory and predictive powers across multiple contexts.

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