

# 13 Reflections on Lessons Learned and Future Directions

## A Succinct Epilogue

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Upon completing this exploration journey through the pages of this book, we are left with a profound realization of the immense work that still needs to be undertaken to address the critical role of supply chain management (SCM) in nurturing a socially sustainable Arctic. The diverse studies collected in this anthology provide a rich tapestry of insights into the various manifestations of supply chain practices and their social impacts across different Arctic regions. However, despite their varying geographic coverage, all of these works acknowledge that developing and maintaining supply chains in the Arctic's extreme environments is a formidable challenge, not only in terms of cost-effectiveness for businesses but even more so in fulfilling commitments to local communities and Indigenous Peoples. As we draw closer to the end of this anthology, it is time to reflect on the valuable lessons we have learned. While by no means exhaustive, three lessons are particularly salient.

Firstly, we are struck by a plethora of far-reaching and multifaceted challenges that Arctic supply chain practices and operations encounter. These challenges range from the intricacies of logistics in Arctic shipping to the unique geographical features of the region, from the limited and decrepit infrastructure to the cultural diversity and social dimensions that shape healthcare delivery and re-supply procurement. With this in mind, the works in this volume bear witness to the complexity of SCM in the Arctic, necessitating a nuanced and context-specific approach to it in the region. This renders a one-size-fits-all framework inadequate for addressing the complex social issues elicited by Arctic-based supply chain operations. Not only does this anthology reveal challenges, it also shines a light on unique opportunities for the development of supply chains in the Arctic. However, the intricate interplay between these challenges and the opportunities arising further amplifies the inherent complexity of various SCM practices in the region. This growing complexity is clearly exemplified in the findings of Tsvetkova et al. (Chapter 3), Saunavaara

et al. (Chapter 4), and Helgadóttir et al. (Chapter 5). While the paucity of infrastructure is conceived of as an urgent issue that hinders supply chain development, the (re)construction of new infrastructure facilities can also have debilitating impacts. To illustrate this, the aforementioned three chapters unveil how the development of novel transportation routes and SCM practices can trigger social contradictions and unforeseen social repercussions due to the complex interactions between business interests, local residents, and the traditional ways of Indigenous reindeer herders.

Another pivotal lesson we have gleaned is the importance of embracing the demands and perceptions of local residents and Indigenous Peoples in developing socially sustainable practices within the SCM domain. This features prominently in the contributions of Tsvetkova et al. (Chapter 3), Helgadóttir et al. (Chapter 5), Tsvetkova and Nenasheva (Chapter 6), and Schwarzburg (Chapter 9). Drawing from their extensive experience across various regions in the Arctic, these authors all share a common belief: that local residents and Indigenous Peoples possess a profound understanding of the unique context and community needs, which can differ drastically from those of other stakeholders such as businesses and politicians. Moreover, their actions, non-indifference, and capacity for reflexivity have a tangible impact on the development of supply chain practices that help them survive. The aforementioned studies provide compelling evidence of how socially responsible SCM practices carry far-reaching implications for all enmeshed stakeholders. Furthermore, they eloquently demonstrate that social issues and cultural attributes can pose a challenge while also acting as a catalyst for innovation and inspiration within existing SCM practices. Tsvetkova and Nenasheva's (Chapter 6) study of socially responsible food supply chains in most coastal communities in the Russian Arctic is strongly supportive of this observation. This chapter dissects how economic concerns and the need to adapt and maintain mobility have resulted in evolving social responsiveness. Despite the lack of support from local authorities, the explicit and proactive actions of residents underscore the importance of local involvement in SCM practices to ensure survival.

Logically derived from the second, the third lesson advocates for more active engagement from governmental and local authorities to fine-tune northern supply chains and better meet the demands of remote settlements. As vividly demonstrated by the studies presented in Chapters 3–7, 9, and 12, the current level of endorsement and involvement from the government is woefully inadequate. Against this backdrop, the contributions by Gurtu et al. (Chapter 2) and Saunavaara et al. (Chapter 4) deserve particular attention, as they emphasize the critical need for regulatory frameworks that strike a balance between economic benefits, environmental protection, and social responsibility. Despite endeavors to implement market mechanisms to curtail supply chain inefficiencies, they have largely failed to come to fruition and/or have undergone noteworthy revisions over time, as illustrated by Tsvetkova et al. in Chapter 8. For instance, Chapter 11 by Lasserre presents evidence that transport companies and shipping operators have displayed little interest in

establishing supply chains and providing re-supply freight to far-flung communities. Moreover, the financial burden of holding supply chains on subsidies, where available, coupled with the fiscal constraints faced by governing bodies, has further exacerbated the situation. Consequently, the question of whether re-supply of freight to northern communities can be cost-effective and translate into more affordable prices for local consumers remains unresolved. With this in mind, a handful of contributions to this anthology highlight the paramount importance of appropriate procurement and re-supply processes. It is crucial that politicians act as intermediaries in bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders, including residents and businesses, to promote socially sustainable and responsible practices within the SCM framework.

To summarize all three lessons outlined above, social sustainability is an immensely important objective that must not be sidelined or ignored. Instead, it deserves to be given equal footing with, or even prioritized over, the other two privileged dimensions of sustainability. However, achieving it in the Arctic is widely considered a daunting task, as evidenced by the abundance of data compiled in this anthology. This is primarily due to the competing and often conflicting interests, ambitions, and demands of various enmeshed stakeholders. It has become evident through the exploration of real-life cases that SCM practices deployed in the region play a vital role in either hindering or promoting social sustainability. As several chapters of this book assert (see, e.g., Chapters 4, 9, and 10), SCM practices that prioritize business interests with a narrow-minded focus on cost efficiency and short-term financial gains, as well as political ambitions, can run counter to social sustainability goals, such as protecting the environment and supporting local communities. On the other hand, SCM practices that put collaboration on a pedestal and seek to align industrial and commercial development with the needs and aspirations of local communities and Indigenous Peoples are essential to reconciling competing interests and thereby fostering the attainment of social sustainability (see, e.g., Chapters 3, 5, 6, and 7).

Overall, we fervently hope that this anthology has yielded valuable insights into a diverse range of SCM aspects in the Arctic. These have included transportation and service delivery; the specifics of tourism supply chains; social responsiveness initiatives in SCM; the adaptation of fisheries to environmental and social concerns; the role of governance mechanisms, such as the Marine Stewardship Council; healthcare delivery in remote Arctic communities; the feasibility of climate-resilient carbon cycle strategies; and the challenges and opportunities of Arctic shipping. In this regard, the present book has responded to the ever-increasing call for more in-depth empirical studies within the field of SCM (Näslund, 2002; Seuring, 2005; Pagell and Wu, 2009; Stock et al., 2010; Quarshie et al., 2016; Tsvetkova, 2021). This anthology has not only empirically explored various facets of Arctic-based supply chain operations but has also drawn upon a corpus of theoretical approaches to lend academic rigor to the book. These approaches have entailed institutional logics, adaptive governance, anthropological and

ecosystem frameworks, among others. However, despite the dizzying array of topics and theoretical lenses, all the works collected here share a common goal of urging for greater integration of social responsibility practices into the SCM landscape. Looking back at the pages of this book, we hope to have accentuated the multifaceted and context-specific nature of social sustainability, which necessitates a tailored approach that considers the unique social dynamics at play in each supply chain. As we bid farewell to these pages, we aim to set the stage for a promising research agenda that can guide future work and provide direction in the field.

We heartily encourage scholars and practitioners to delve deeper into the social implications of supply chain operations in the Arctic. Only by doing so can we devise enduringly sustainable solutions that prioritize the well-being of local communities and other stakeholders. Similar to the lessons outlined above, our focus is on illuminating only a couple of the most auspicious paths that naturally appeared throughout the chapters, rather than striving to encompass all. First, due to the marked contrasts between social responsibility and social responsiveness, a huge research gap exists in the SCM landscape. To bridge this gap, a comparative analysis can be conducted to reveal how both concepts contribute to truly socially sustainable practices within SCM. Such research endeavors hold promise for more comprehensively addressing the demands of local communities and improving their overall welfare. Second, exploring the interplay between sustainability and resilience in a supply chain context proffers another rich opportunity for future research. Investigations that uncover how these two concepts impact each other can aid in calibrating an integrated framework for the sustainability–resilience nexus. It is our unwavering belief that this integrated framework can be leveraged to nurture more effective and sustainable SCM practices, particularly in the Arctic context, where supply chain operations are extensively exposed to extreme conditions and (risks of) potential disruptions. Much like the entire book, the proposed avenues for further research reiterate the crucial importance of social responsibility and sustainability principles coalescing into SCM practices in the Arctic. The outcomes of such research efforts possess the enormous potential to augment the cohesive development of the Arctic region while harmonizing the interests of businesses and political ambitions with the needs of local communities.

In closing, we cordially invite scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to join us in our ardent efforts to advance sustainability in Arctic supply chain operations. Together, we can create a truly equitable and sustainable world for everyone! Let us embrace the unique challenges and opportunities elicited by the Arctic region, pooling our efforts to forge socially sustainable and responsible supply chain practices!

## References

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