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The Participatory Research Laboratory on the Social Acceptability of Responsible Natural Resource Development

ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE

Investment:
\$500,000

FUQAT contribution:
\$500,000

THE PROJECT

The development of natural resources and renewable energy sources is a major economic and social development issue that affects every region of Quebec. Mining, forestry, agricultural, and energy projects, as well as the activities they generate have a direct influence on land use. Their impacts on the surroundings and on the living conditions in communities in these territories, as well as on the environment, are significant.

Many parties affected by the development and valorization of natural resources and their use, as well as the complexity of related issues, have brought consideration of social acceptability and social responsibility to the forefront. **As a result, UQAT is creating a participatory laboratory whose mission will be to develop cutting-edge interdisciplinary knowledge related to the process of social acceptability of natural resource valorization projects.**

This laboratory will bridge the gap between the technical expertise involved in these projects and the individual, collective, and general interests of the various parties involved. The goal of research activities is to design operational mechanisms for consensus around social acceptability that are consistent with the concerns and interests that the various parties involved, naturally including Indigenous communities, have around these resources.

The key steps leading to the creation of this research structure are the mapping of the parties affected by these types of projects, the identification of contributors and partners from the various affected parties, the definition of the laboratory's scientific guidelines, as well as the study of the best and bad practices, in terms of social responsibility and social acceptability.

TIMETABLE

Project start
2021

First results disseminated
2023



The Participatory Research Laboratory on the Social Acceptability of Responsible Natural Resource Development

Fields:

Management • Mines and the Environment • Forests • Agriculture • Hydrogeology • Engineering • Human and Social Development • Indigenous Studies



THE OPPORTUNITY

The concept of project social acceptability has become an essential one. It also involves many project host communities, various political actors, the business community, investors, as well as social and environmental groups. Today, taking all stakeholders into account is a necessary step.

Many government departments, responsible for issuing natural resource exploration or development permits, now require that projects be socially acceptable. Given that these projects are central to regional socioeconomic development efforts, it is essential to provide all parties with the tools to be able to arrive at a mutual understanding of the issues. In turn, this understanding promotes the drafting of and entering into agreements enabling these projects to be realized while maintaining social cohesion.

IMPACT

- The development of natural resources presents specific economic, environmental and social challenges. Students and researchers in management sciences, mining, forests, agriculture, and the energy sector will benefit from the results of the laboratory's interdisciplinary research thanks to knowledge development through interactions between project proponents, expert consultants, and affected communities.
- The tools developed by laboratory members will benefit many interested parties, both in the academic environment and in civil society.
- As part of the Unité de recherche et d'enseignement des sciences de la gestion [Management Sciences Teaching and Research Unit], the laboratory will contribute to the growth of research within the unit.
- Research results will allow already well-informed communities to enter into constructive dialogue with project proponents, fostering respect for their interests and the sharing of the wealth thus created.
- The valorization of natural resources creates wealth. Accordingly, the study of social acceptability will paint a picture of the conditions for creation and maintenance of jobs central to the vitality of all regions, including our own. Additionally, the business taxes and fees paid to the various levels of government following deployment of development projects will enable the projects to pursue their missions.
- The development of natural resources leaves visible and significant traces on regional landscapes. Understanding the expectations of all stakeholders in these matters will help governmental bodies put consistent policies in place with respect to site preservation and rehabilitation.
- The work of the laboratory team will be the catalyst for a social, local, regional, and national climate satisfactory to all stakeholders. For public authorities, the advancement of knowledge and drafting of tools regarding the social acceptability process will make balanced economic and social development easier.
- Lastly, these results will position UQAT as a key scientific player on the subject, at national and international levels.