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CAP-SHARE

Building bridges of shared capacity between
scientists, policymakers, and communities

FIRST STRATEGY SECTION

CAPACITY SHARING FOR BIODIVERSITY AS COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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CAP-SHARE

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

CAP-SHARE is an Interreg NPA project that supports collaboration for biodiversity conservation by developing a practical, community-driven capacity-sharing model across Arctic regions. The first of four co-development workshops, *Capacity Sharing for Biodiversity as Community and Regional Development*, examined how biodiversity conservation can support social, cultural, and economic wellbeing, bringing together diverse stakeholders to share experiences and identify concrete actions. Workshop 1 discussed key needs, barriers, and opportunities in relation to how biodiversity conservation intersects with community and regional development. Participants emphasised the importance of stronger collaboration, ethical engagement with Indigenous and local communities, knowledge sharing, and the meaningful involvement of youth and intergenerational perspectives. Despite identified social and structural barriers, participants highlighted strong community assets – such as local knowledge centres, community-based science, locally grounded and regenerative livelihood practices, and established networks – as concrete starting points for capacity sharing and as a foundational contribution to the CAP-SHARE model.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the first workshop was to bring together stakeholders from across the Arctic to discuss how biodiversity conservation is linked to community and regional development. Participants explored the social, cultural, and ecological dimensions of biodiversity, and discussed how shared capacity – such as knowledge, networks, and resources – can contribute to collaboration among Arctic actors.

According to the Convention on Biological Diversity¹, biodiversity refers to variability within species, between species, and between ecosystems. Alongside this, Indigenous and Arctic knowledge systems understand biodiversity through relationships among people, lands, waters, animals, and seasonal cycles, forming interconnected socio-ecological systems². Arctic biodiversity is currently in decline, with

implications not only for ecosystems but also for local and Indigenous livelihoods, cultural continuity, and future regional wellbeing^{3,4}.

For Arctic nature and communities to thrive together, collaboration must be grounded in reciprocal and intergenerational dialogue that values local and Indigenous knowledge, supports relationship-building, and creates space for shared reflection and collective action⁵. In this workshop, we explored the intersections between biodiversity conservation and community development. Here, community development is understood as a collaborative process through which people build networks, share knowledge, and engage in collective action in ways that contribute to community wellbeing. This working understanding aligns with international community development scholarship⁶.

The discussion therefore focused on how cooperation around biodiversity conservation in Arctic regions can be approached, and how different forms of action may relate health, community wellbeing, and social and economic opportunities in local contexts.

CAPACITY SHARING FOR BIODIVERSITY AS COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This CAP-SHARE online workshop, held on 11 October 2024 and hosted by the Icelandic Museum of Natural History, focused on how biodiversity conservation can support community and regional development across the Arctic.

The first part of the workshop featured a series of project presentations that introduced key concepts and provided a shared foundation for discussion. **Ragnhildur Guðmundsdóttir** outlined the characteristics of Arctic and subarctic biodiversity, highlighting the region's distinctive species and population diversity, ecological sensitivity, and the accelerating pressures caused by climate change. **Jessica Aquino** discussed community development as a relational and participatory process and emphasised the role of youth engagement in strengthening local capacities and fostering long-term community involvement in biodiversity action. **Pigga Keskitalo** examined how Sámi educational

perspectives – including language, place-based learning, and culturally grounded pedagogies – shape understandings of biodiversity, community wellbeing, and socio-ecological resilience, highlighting the importance of Indigenous knowledge for ethical and locally rooted approaches to biodiversity conservation.

Several other project speakers shared examples from their ongoing work. **Kristín Vala Prastardóttir** and **Eva Björk Káradóttir** illustrated how local knowledge centres and museums function as important community hubs for documenting, interpreting, and sharing environmental knowledge, creating spaces where biodiversity, cultural heritage, and public engagement intersect. **Rauni Äärelä-Vihriälä** examined sustainability in the green transition, emphasising the need for regionally grounded approaches that balance ecological goals with community wellbeing and local decision-making. **Hanna Helander** demonstrated how language learning and culturally grounded educational practices can deepen young people's sense of place and strengthen their connections to local nature, supporting awareness of the environments they inhabit.

A full description of the speakers and presentations, as well as a recording of the session, is available [here](#).

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Knowledge gained from the online workshop

In the second part of the workshop, participants were divided into four breakout rooms, each facilitated by one or two members of the project team. The discussions were guided by three central questions:

1. What kinds of **needs and challenges are present** in Arctic regions in relation to biodiversity conservation and community and regional development? What are the **barriers**?
2. What **barriers** shape how biodiversity conservation is currently approached in different local and regional contexts?

3. What **opportunities** for capacity sharing do participants identify across Arctic regions, and what forms of action do they see as relevant or meaningful in their own contexts?

These questions were designed to direct the conversations toward what participants, as local stakeholders, identify as the most significant gaps and opportunities at the intersection of biodiversity and community development. They also encouraged reflection on practical next steps that Arctic communities consider essential for strengthening collaboration, improving knowledge sharing, and supporting long-term wellbeing through biodiversity action.

DISCUSSION OUTCOMES: Needs and barriers regarding biodiversity conservation actions for communities

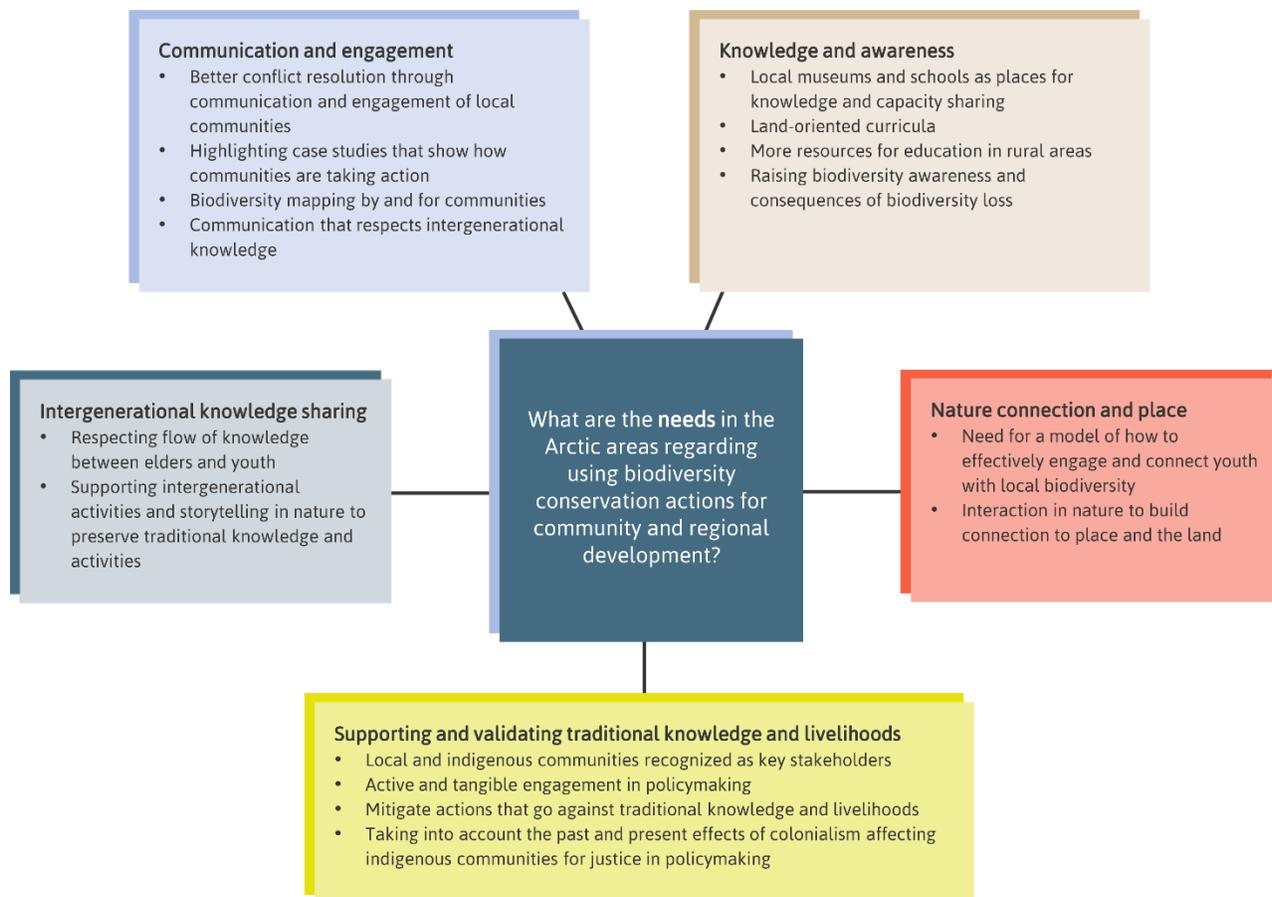


Figure 1 presents the needs identified by participants, which centred on improving collaboration and connection – specifically by improving knowledge sharing between stakeholders, fostering closer relationships with nature and community, and ensuring ethical and respectful engagement with local and Indigenous communities.

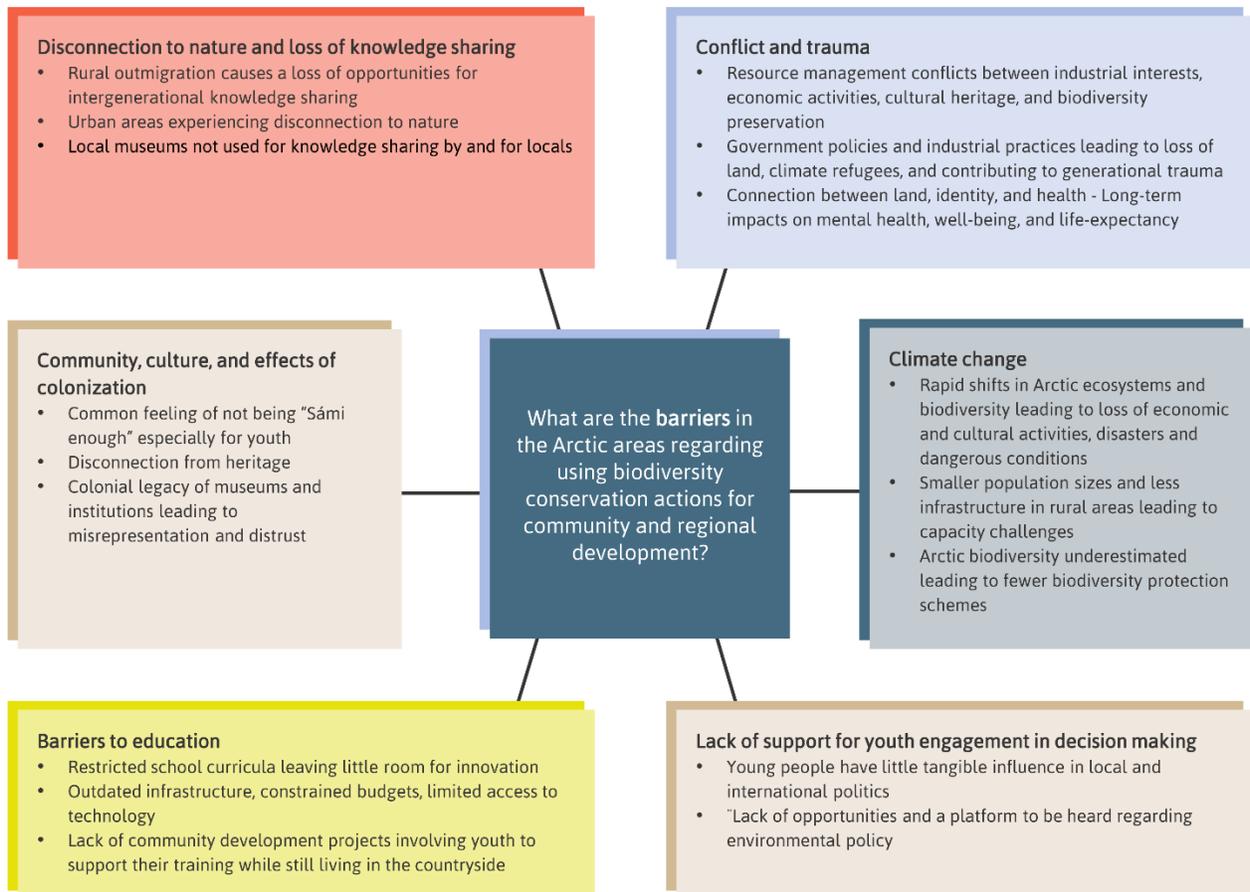


Figure 2 presents the key barriers identified by participants, most of which were social in nature – such as limited connection between stakeholders, insufficient knowledge sharing, and unethical or extractive engagement practices that can lead to conflict. Climate change was additionally highlighted as a factor that intensifies these social barriers and further complicates biodiversity conservation efforts.

DISCUSSION OUTCOMES: Opportunities seen for capacity sharing in the arctic regions towards biodiversity conservation to address needs and barriers

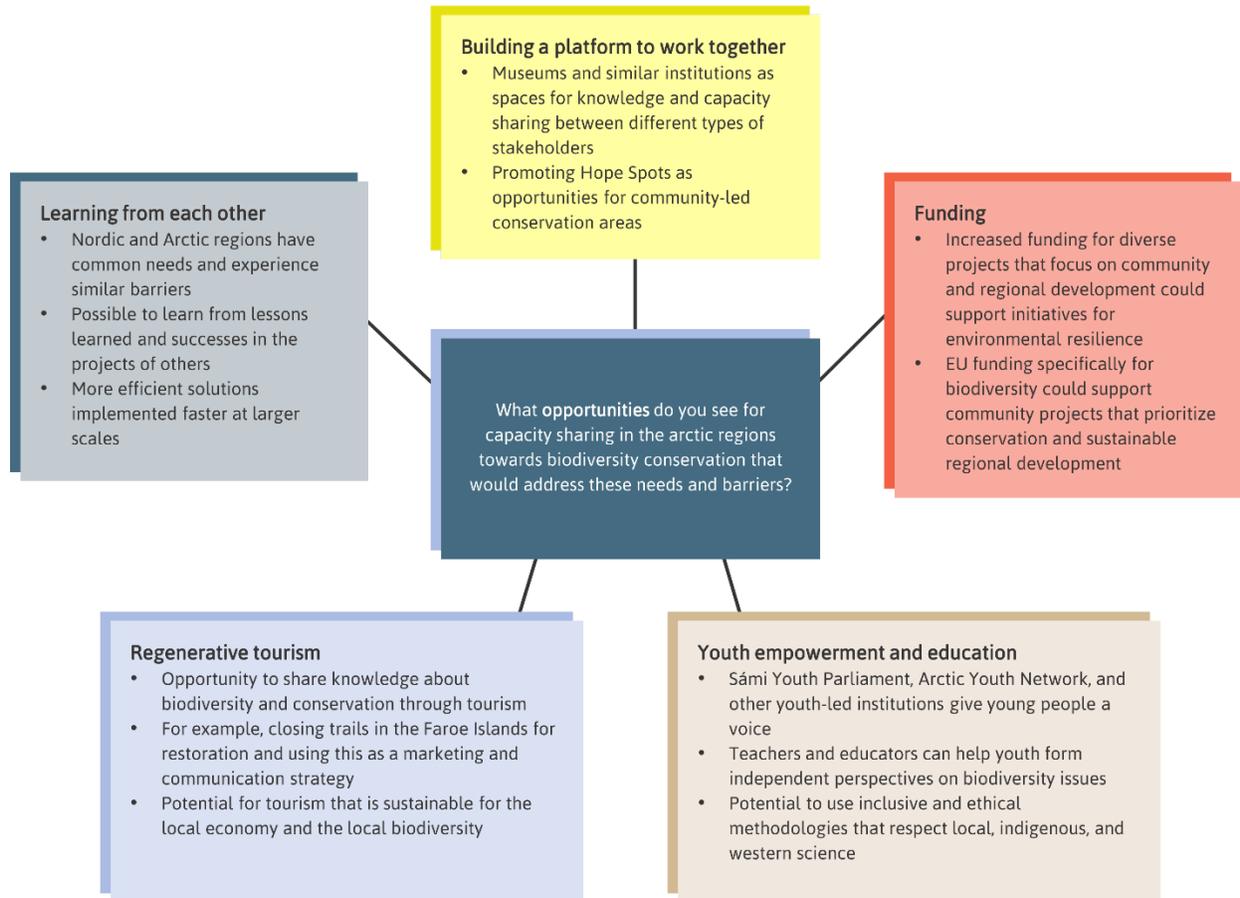


Figure 3 shows that knowledge sharing, education, and engagement were highlighted as key opportunities, reflecting the rich networks, resources, and existing knowledge within Arctic communities that can help transform barriers into possibilities. Participants identified several concrete resources and methods available in the region – including funding opportunities, knowledge-sharing networks, local livelihood practices, museums, and nature conservation schemes – that can support collective action toward biodiversity conservation.

DISCUSSION OUTCOMES: Actions needed to move forward



Figure 4 highlights the key themes discussed in relation to taking action. Focusing on the resources and opportunities available, participants reflected on what is needed to overcome existing barriers and respond to Arctic communities' needs for better knowledge sharing, engagement, and connection in biodiversity conservation. The key points centred on actions to strengthen and systematise tools and methods for policymaking, engagement, education, and regional development. The discussion also emphasised that social, environmental, and economic priorities are interlinked and must be addressed together rather than separately.

HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The discussions uncovered three main themes that highlight the importance of community and regional development.

Fostering connection to place, nature, and community

Participants emphasised the need to strengthen connections between people, nature, and their local communities. Youth engagement was seen as particularly important for building awareness of local environments, alongside more inclusive and place-based approaches in both formal and informal education. These were identified as opportunities to foster deeper relationships with local biodiversity.

Ethical engagement of communities in decision and policy making

Participants stressed that community and regional development depend on ethical engagement practices that ensure meaningful involvement of local and Indigenous communities in environmental decision making^{7,8}. Creating inclusive opportunities for dialogues between communities and policymakers was considered essential for developing fair and effective policies.

Community-based action for biodiversity

The workshop further highlighted several community-based approaches that support biodiversity conservation. Community science was noted as a valuable way to facilitate reciprocal knowledge sharing between communities, researchers, and between industries⁹. Local knowledge centres and museums were also recognised as important spaces for dialogue and collaboration, offering holistic, integrative, and democratic approaches to working together¹⁰. In addition, the discussion addressed locally grounded pathways to connect biodiversity action with livelihoods and regional development. Together, these examples illustrate how community-driven initiatives can contribute to building shared capacity for biodiversity conservation.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, discussions during the workshop highlighted the importance of fostering engagement, collaboration, connection, and knowledge sharing for nature and biodiversity conservation as tools for community and regional development. Social, environmental, and economic justice are strongly linked to each other, and participants focused on opportunities to develop Arctic communities through actions that benefit this entire system.

¹ Convention on Biological Diversity. (2022). Decision 15/4: Kunming-Montreal Global biodiversity framework. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf>

² IPBES (2019): Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. S. Díaz, J. Settele, E. S. Brondízio E.S., H. T. Ngo, M. Guèze, J. Agard, A. Arneth, P. Balvanera, K. A. Brauman, S. H. M. Butchart, K. M. A. Chan, L. A. Garibaldi, K. Ichii, J. Liu, S. M. Subramanian, G. F. Midgley, P. Miloslavich, Z. Molnár, D. Obura, A. Pfaff, S. Polasky, A. Purvis, J. Razzaque, B. Reyers, R. Roy Chowdhury, Y. J. Shin, I. J. Visseren-Hamakers, K. J. Willis, and C. N. Zayas (eds.). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany.

³ Grigorieva, E. A. (2024). Climate Change and Human Health in the Arctic: A Review. *Climate*, 12(7), 89. <https://doi.org/10.3390/cli12070089>

⁴ Hauser, D. D. W., Whiting, A. V., Mahoney, A. R., Goodwin, J., Harris, C., Schaeffer, R. J., Schaeffer, R., Laxague, N. J. M., Subramaniam, A., Witte, C. R., Betcher, S., Lindsay, J. M., & Zappa, C. J. (2021). Co-production of knowledge reveals loss of

Indigenous hunting opportunities in the face of accelerating Arctic climate change. *Environmental Research Letters*, 16(9), 095003. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/ac1a36>

⁵ Mercer, L., & Ovitz, K. (2023). Shifting from capacity building to capacity sharing in Arctic research: Considering transformative shifts in collaborative research at the ArcticNet Annual Scientific Meeting. *The Polar Journal*, 13(1), 172–176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2154896X.2023.2205248>

⁶ McConnell, C., Muia, D., & Clarke, A. (Eds.). (2022). *International Community Development Practice*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003140498>

⁷ cf. Buschman, V. Q. (2022). Framing co-productive conservation in partnership with Arctic Indigenous peoples. *Conservation Biology*, 36(6). <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.13972>

⁸ cf. Ferrie, J., & Lachapelle, P. (2021). Evaluating and Improving Policy and Practice. In *International Community Development Practice* (pp. 225–253). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003140498-9>

⁹ Aquino, J., Falter, M., & Fusté-Forné, F. (2024). A community development approach for regenerative tourism in the Nordics: lifestyle entrepreneurs towards a placed-based research agenda. *Journal of Tourism Futures*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JTF-06-2023-0148>

¹⁰ Kreps, C. (2025). Collaboration as a Relational Process: Co-Creating Relationships and Making Connections. In A. Edmundson & M. Haviland (Eds.), *Collaboration and Co-Creation in Museums, Heritage, and the Arts*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003222804>