



# HOW TO USE INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE IN PLANNING?

BuSK fact sheet



Northern Periphery and  
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## Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK)

refers to the knowledge which has been developed from the experience gained over centuries by people living in a specific area and that are embedded in community practices.

People have experiential knowledge of land use, local culture and the environment. As traditional knowledge, ILK can take e.g. the form of stories and narratives, songs and other artistic expressions, cultural values and beliefs.

ILK is holistic - all things in nature are interconnected; non-linear - time and processes are viewed as cyclical, and communal and shared among individuals horizontally

ILK is also supposed to promote stewardship as it takes a proactive approach to environmental protection and an ecosystem approach to resource management. It is often used in research settings, referring to local communities' experience-based and locally-bound knowledge local communities.

### Inclusion of ILK makes land use planning better:

- Helps to understand environmental values and importance of particular places from a local cultural point of view.
- Enhances participation of locals and brings in-depth, detailed, practice-based local scale knowledge into planning.
- Helps to understand the needs, concerns and world views of locals, and gives answers: how are areas used now and how were they used in the past? What kind of values, meanings and emotions locals associate to different areas and natural resources? Are there land use conflicts?
- Helps to deal with complex environmental issues such as climate change and biodiversity loss: ILK holders spend plenty of time in nature and constantly observe it, and thus often have specific knowledge from remote places from all seasons.

# Why is it important to make ILK spatially explicit and how to do this?

## why

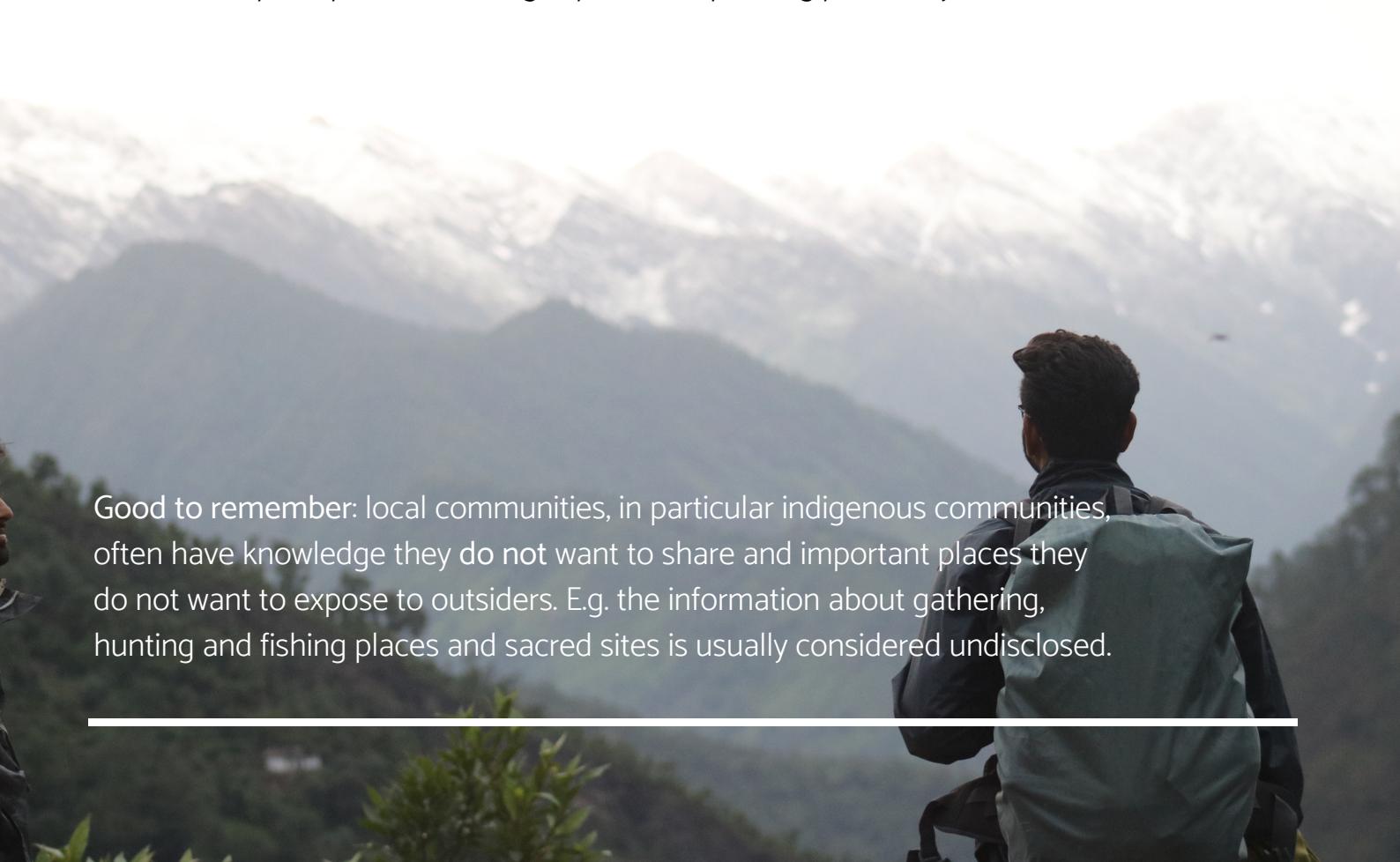
Natural resources and nature areas are easily exploited if they are regarded as otherwise non-valuable by planning officials or majority population. Thus, by locating ILK, local and indigenous communities can mark areas as their “own”. Culturally important places and sacred sites can be protected only if their locations are known.

## how

Participatory and public participation geographic information systems (PGIS/PPGIS) are good methods to collect and locate ILK. A PGIS method is often focused on empowering marginalized groups in developing countries and rural areas (Swedish example). In PPGIS the emphasis is more on public involvement to inform land use planning and management.

## remember to

- pay attention to empowerment, equity, trust and learning among all parties in the whole process of involving ILK to participatory mapping
- recognise relevant stakeholders and involve them as early as possible
- have clear, meaningful and important shared objectives
- tailor the processes to local context and take care of involvement of stakeholders in methodological issues, i.e. the planning of the contents of the knowledge gathered
- facilitate stakeholder participation in methodological and technological issues and, when needed, the information should be complemented with traditional participatory methods
- ensure that participation is an integral part of the planning process by authorities



Good to remember: local communities, in particular indigenous communities, often have knowledge they do not want to share and important places they do not want to expose to outsiders. E.g. the information about gathering, hunting and fishing places and sacred sites is usually considered undisclosed.

# What can we achieve if we do it well?

## Real life examples from BuSK project

### Better land use plans and better recognition of cultural values

Results from the participatory mapping surveys in the north-western border areas of Finland and Norway indicate that mapping can reveal differences among respondents with different cultural backgrounds. The results showed that the local residents and other Finns marked recreation, beautiful sceneries, silence and special nature value among the four highest values, while Norwegians marked notably fewer places with the two latter values. Also the most conflictual areas of snowmobiling and other noisy activities versus more silent-seeking recreationists coincided demonstrating that PPGIS can be used to identify the spatial dimensions of conflicting values.

### Empowerment of local communities

In land use planning in Gran Reindeer Herding Community (RHC) in Sweden, PGIS was used to map e.g. reindeer herding areas, migration routes and grazing lands. Scientists provided mapping tools and supported reindeer herders knowledge production. Resulting maps and data was used for support the RHC's consultations with planners from different authorities. The process led to empowerment of the local herding communities. The RHC has been involved from the beginning of the process and the PGIS was developed and improved together with the RHC. The RHC defined important data, and they own and control their data. The collected data are mainly for internal use which incentives work, stimulates learning and gives a deeper knowledge of reindeer herding within the RHC. Collected ILK data are presented in a format compatible with existing planning tools simplifying the consultations. Since such spatial data are valuable in a planning process, there has been a feedback from planners to the RHC that their knowledge is important. Better understanding of the planning process levels the playing field in consultations and has given opportunities for Gran RHC to make demands.

### Better spatial knowledge base of resources and improved communication

In the new UNESCO site in Qeqqata in Greenland, inclusion of ILK in planning by the use of PPGIS led to better the spatial knowledge of the natural resources and cultural landscape, and improved communication between authorities and locals.

In Sandoy, Faroes, PPGIS was used to build a participatory cartography of cultural and environmental landscape values, as well as to identify conflicts over land use. The maps produced in this way make local knowledge on land use practices and perceptions spatially explicit and visible, and are used for instance in the local community to help to inform the negotiation and integration changes in local land use, such as tourism activities.



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