

Jan Henry Keskitalo: The Gargia Conference 2010

These are some reflections about the 2010 Gargia conference.

This was the first time I attended the Gargia conference. I found the title: “Between Tradition and Modernity. Community Development in Indigenous Regions of the North”, both quite challenging but also interesting.

The program indicated interesting and adequate items and possibility to meet interesting contributors, so when I was invited to participate there was no doubt and I said yes to come.

From my viewpoint the conference presented adequate and important issues connected to the head-lines. Even if circumstances did not allow all presenters to come the program still covered most of the planned activities and the days were full enough with presentations, discussions and group work.

The combination of these activities gave a chance to meet, discuss and socialize across language- and cultural borders. The organizers succeeded in bringing together representatives of Indigenous Peoples from different parts of the Arctic. This gave an opportunity to have good discussions with indigenous participants. I personally probably missed representation from Greenland and Alaska but it is not give that all UArctic Networks will have members from all UArctic countries.

The selection of presenters and their themes covered according to my view issues that are crucial to the challenges of community development for indigenous regions. The case examples highlighted both common challenges for indigenous peoples as well as they gave an opportunity to sense that the community and regional, as well as system context differ a lot.

The working groups got some challenging tasks but managed to solve the tasks within the time-frame given. The presentations gave the conference participants an opportunity to further discuss the questions, and the discussions extended into the after-program socializing. The reports will themselves answer to the questions.

The intimate and genuine context at Gargia gave good opportunities to meet, discuss and socialize. The host and the service was excellent and itself an example of community development.

Under such circumstances it works quite well to have integrated indigenous and general themes hand in hand.

I thank the organizers for inviting me to the conference and I am looking forward to the continuation of the network.

02.11.2010