6 Social Responsiveness within the Russian Arctic Supply Chains

Evidence from Isolated Communities through the Anthropological View

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> *These people who live on the island and coastal territories of the North...we don't know anything about them at all. When you start talking to them, it turns out that this is a completely different universe; even if they have a little something to do with Arkhangelsk, everything is different there.*
> Representative of the Arkhangelsk River Port

Introduction

Research on responsible supply chain management (SCM) has gained considerable attention recently. Being socially responsible means that an individual or social entity complies with not only economic but also moral duties, ethical and social standards, which are partially determined by stakeholder demands (Maignan and Ferrell, 2001; David et al., 2005). Active means of social responsibility and a way to manage and respond to societal needs and stakeholder demands (Crampton and Patten, 2008) can be identified as so-called social responsiveness, which is often referred to as "social responsibility". In the broad sense of the term, responsiveness means that an individual or entity should take explicit and proactive actions to respond to and deal with stakeholders and social issues (Waddock, 2004). Klassen and Vereecke (2012, p.103) define social issues in supply chains as "product- or process-related aspects of operations that affect human safety, welfare and community development". So, social responsiveness seems to contribute to activities that focus on responding to societal needs in a way that improves the quality of life and environment for those around them.

Within SCM studies, much has been written about the variety of relationships – but often from a restrained and technical viewpoint (Price,

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1996). Further, most studies on social responsibility in SCM have focused on purchasing decisions due to suppliers' incorrect behavior, including ethics and safety conditions, thereby emphasizing supplier relationships and supply management practices as a challenge to enhancing social performance and sustainability (Carter and Jennings, 2002; Boyd et al., 2007; Ciliberti et al., 2008). In this study, we suggest that the most fundamental challenges are social rather than technical. Groups of people can deal with a number of challenges regarding communication, cooperation, and competition by developing detached cultures. Within these cultures, roles and relationships evolve to maintain the structure and function of an entity or whole community. At the same time, individuals or groups of people in a particular cultural context are inevitably influenced by the cultural atmosphere they live in. Thus, our study's main motive is to analyze social responsiveness initiatives in SCM and *explore how local residents in isolated northern settlements of the White Sea respond to social needs and develop socially responsible supply chains in Arctic local communities.*

In doing so, this study represents an empirical case of the evolvement of social responsiveness initiatives in the existing SCM practice in two different groups of rural, remote settings in the Russian Arctic: island and coastal settlements of the White Sea. This qualitative exploratory study utilizes the anthropological approach of observing the behavior of local residents who assume the role of supply chain managers in these rural remote settings. This approach is proposed to better understand the cultural context of the day-to-day lives, activities and motivations of local residents who make supply chains work and of locals who rely on them.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows. The following section provides an overview of the extant literature on social responsibility within SCM and the anthropological view. We then present our methodology and the data collection process, followed by an analysis of data and findings. Next, the findings are discussed in light of our conceptual framework and anthropological approach. Finally, the study concludes with theoretical and practical implications and provides insights for future research.

Social Responsibility and Social Responsiveness in SCM Literature

Social responsibility issues are commonly considered through the core characteristics of corporate social responsibility (CSR). An early definition of organizations' social responsibility dates back to Bowen (1953, p.6), who defined it as the obligation to

> *pursue those policies, to make those decisions or to follow those lines of actions that are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society.*

Later, Davis (1973, p. 312) defined CSR as

> *the firm's consideration of and response to issues beyond the narrow economic, technical and legal requirements of the firm which results in accomplishing social benefits along with the traditional economic gains which the firm seeks.*

Much of the literature deals with socially responsible practices adopted by individual firms to enhance and ensure social, environmental, and economic attitudes and behaviors (Ciliberti et al., 2008). However, SCM practice links various organizations from different fields of business with multiple goals and ways of managing, and CSR initiatives should be transferred beyond the individual firm to act "as a multiplier effect for social responsibility" (Preuss, 2000, p.143). Along the whole supply chain, a common understanding of social responsibility and social issues becomes a significant challenge for all supply chain partners, including suppliers, manufacturers, customers, and society or local communities. Thus, the social aspect concerns fair opportunities and involvement inside and outside the community, not only the boundaries of an individual organization. However, the incorporation of CSR-related parameters in the SCM field struggles to measure the social efforts of supply chain agents and members (Slaper and Hall, 2011; Servaes and Tamayo, 2013) due to the lack of comprehensive indicators (Yawar and Seuring, 2017).

Further, Yawar and Seuring (2017) proposed that responsible supply chain actions initiated by stakeholders and accepted by other supply chain members to address social issues can be grouped into communication, compliance, and supplier development strategies. The challenge is that what constitutes social issues differs significantly among different stakeholders because they constantly adjust and depend on the conditions in which a firm operates (Klassen and Vereecke, 2012; Hoejmose et al., 2014). Moreover, SCM's integrative and cooperative nature can suggest a particular influence on socially responsible activities, which may not be reflected in the more traditional private sector (Spence and Bourlakis, 2009), especially concerning society's needs (Tsvetkova, 2020). The shift to supply chain responsibility requires that all supply chain members not only strive to achieve social and environmental benefits besides economic gains but also acknowledge different approaches to ethics by various organizational forms within the supply chain (De Vlieger, 2006; Spence and Bourlakis, 2009).

These social issues can be understood through another concept of social responsiveness closely related to social responsibility. Social responsiveness is defined as stakeholders' intention to contribute to society's welfare and betterment. While social responsibility refers to the ethical/moral obligation and duty of an individual or entity toward society, social responsiveness is the manner in which an individual or entity responds to social needs. Social responsibility and social responsiveness are two factors enabling an individual and/or group of people to benefit society's development. Thereby,

social responsiveness reflects on the social or human dimension issues, which have received scarce attention in SCM literature (see Tsvetkova, 2021). In this light, SCM practice is also viewed as consistent patterns of human actions that perform ongoing operations, produce outcomes in day-to-day endeavors, and envision new forms of collaboration among supply chain members (Tsvetkova, 2021). Despite both topics – SCM and CSR – having been increasingly observed in the literature, little attention has been paid to understanding the possible effects of integrating SCM and social responsibility in local communities and the needs of society (Pagell and Shevchenko, 2014; Tsvetkova, 2020).

This study addresses the above-mentioned shortcomings in the literature on incorporating social responsibility in SCM practice and its influence on supply chain integration problems, by applying an anthropological view, as outlined in the subsequent section.

Cultural Settings of Supply Chain Management: The Anthropological View

From the anthropologic perspective, this study deals with the cultural aspects of social action to gain a better understanding of praxis and conscious action by local residents who develop and maintain food supply chains and of those who rely on them.

Culture is an essential part of SCM, as supply chain members operate in cross-cultural contexts (Murphy et al., 2019). Further, relationship issues, in terms of both structure and communication and other problems related to integration efforts, can be attributed to cultural differences (Klaus et al., 1993). Culture can be defined as a common set of shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and norms that characterize a group of people (Hofstede et al., 2010). This means that culture embraces all aspects of society and thus affects the behavioral aspects of how people act and think in everyday life.

Culture can be seen as a separate system of ideas or "an ordered system of meaning". Geertz (1973, p. 145) argued that culture becomes "the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action". Foster (1994, pp. 370–371) added that "cultures are systems of symbolic meaning which can not be separated from the process of social interaction". This suggests that the meaning of culture can barely be separated from the person and his/her intentions. Most anthropologists agree that "finding meaning" is vital in cultural analysis.

Most frameworks adopted in current research on organizational culture have been based on the competing value framework of Cameron and Quinn (2006), cultural intelligence, and other operationalized frameworks for SCM research (El Baz et al., 2022). However, such cultural frameworks insufficiently delineate motives, roles, and interactions between the organization's members (Marshall et al., 2016), as they oversimplify culture. For

anthropologists, culture cannot be divided into several elements or different values to be measured and quantified. In contrast, cultural context concerns the diversity of values, roles, and relationships that emerge to maintain the organization's structure and function through symbols and meanings in an integrated manner (Baskerville, 2003). According to Price (1996) and El Baz et al. (2022), SCM research can extend its scope by learning from cultural anthropology.

Method

Research Design

A qualitative in-depth single case was chosen to explore social responsibility practices in SCM within the Russian Arctic. Case study research is an appropriate approach, as it represents the interchange of theory, structures, and events. Moreover, it allows the investigation of a specific phenomenon within its specific contextual settings through different sources of knowledge (Seuring, 2008), interpreting them "in terms of meanings people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

The case represents two groups of rural, remote settings in the Russian Arctic: island settlements (see Figure 6.1) and coastal settlements (see Figure 6.2) of Primorskiy district in the Arkhangelsk region. The geography of these settlements includes islands in the lower course of the Northern Dvina River and the White Sea coast around Dvina Bay, namely the Onega Peninsula.

Data Collection

We used multiple data sources, including field research and observations, 50 semi-structured, in-depth face-to-face interviews with local residents and authorities of 13 rural settlements, as well as archival materials.

Anthropological data were acquired via field studies performed by the second author, who resided in the respective rural settlements for several weeks and days in 2019 and 2021. Field studies on the settlements on the Northern Dvina delta islands (see Figure 6.1) were conducted during four trips in the period June–July 2019. Each trip's duration was two to three days and "tied" to the main local river passenger transport schedule. Further, field studies on settlements on the White Sea coast (the Onega Peninsula) (see Figure 6.2) were conducted as part of the scientific expedition in August–September 2021. Data collection was challenged by problems due to the difficult and scarce transport accessibility of these areas (see Figure 6.2 and Picture 6.1). Consequently, field research on these remote northern territories in the Arkhangelsk region has not been conducted for the last 20 years (Batyanova, 2013).

To conduct this field study, the second author joined a group of pilgrims from the Arkhangelsk diocese who visited rural settlements, performed divine

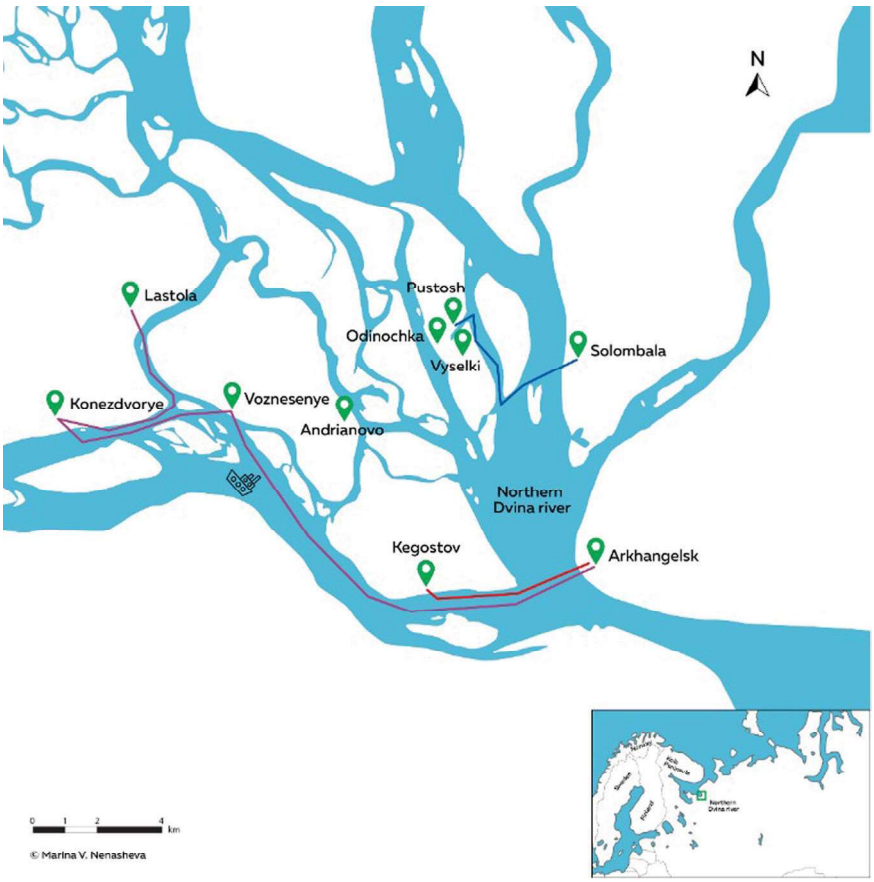

Figure 6.1 Map of settlements located on the Northern Dvina delta islands (*Source*: the second author's elaboration).

services in remote villages, and examined the technical condition of religious monuments. In most cases, the locals helped move between the villages on their boats, e.g., as shown in Picture 6.1, the journey from Pushlakhta to Letnyaya Zolotitsa on a small motorboat took about three hours. The purpose of both field studies was to investigate and collect data on the day-to-day lifestyle, economic and social activities, and motivations of locals who keep food supply chains moving and those who rely on them.

This primary observation data of residents who organized and maintained food supply chains and of locals who rely on them was combined with insights from the anthropological approach to explore the cultural context of local food supply chains. This made it possible to identify and describe individual and collective features of their lives, social perceptions, and expectations regarding needs, prospects, and acceptable means of rural existence in response to several

Picture 6.1 Motorboat used for traveling from Pushlakhta to Letnyaya Zolotitsa (Photo taken by the second author).

economic and social challenges. Further, field research was conducted in real-world and natural settings, so we could gain a deep understanding of the research phenomenon, due to the proximity to it. Hence, our study is extensive, thorough, and accurate.

Due to the small size of the local population and the region's limited accessibility, the selection of respondents and the interview process were carried out by the "snowball" method. This meant respondents being selected at random (on the streets, in grocery shops, at the post office, in the local administration) and then suggesting other potential candidates for interview. Consequently, 50 residents, aged 25–82 years, were interviewed during field research. Of particular interest were respondents involved in developing and maintaining local food supply chains and the evolution of social responsibility practices. All 50 interviews (performed by the second author) were hand-written and recorded with the consent of each respondent to be transcribed later. Interviews were conducted in Russian and translated into English. Interview data mainly included stories about residents' lives in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, the history of the respective rural settlements, food delivery and procurement, climate change, and challenges for survival in the North. To ensure

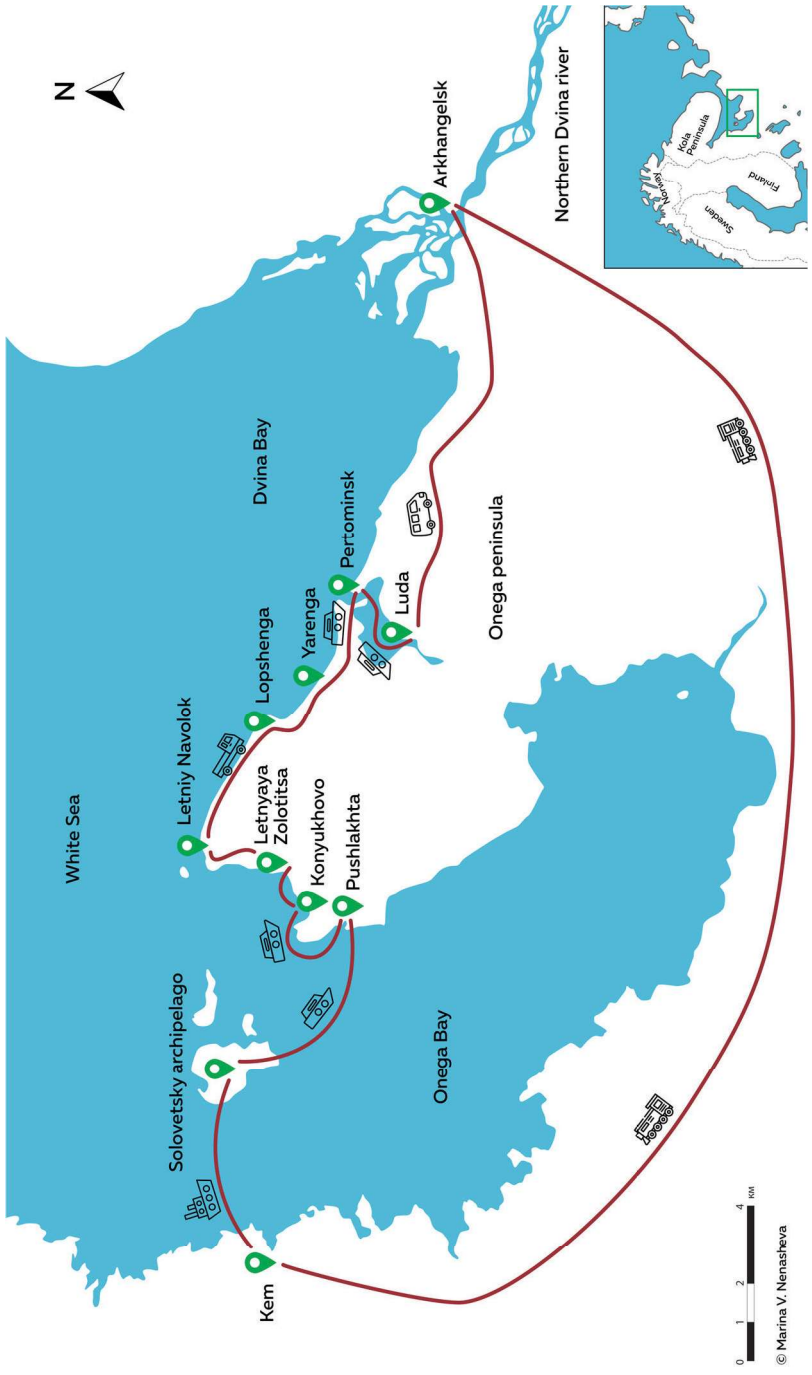

Figure 6.2 Map of settlements located on the White Sea coast, the Onega Peninsula (*Source:* the second author's elaboration).

Table 6.1 Data on rural localities, including economic infrastructure, population, and interview numbers in each locality

#	*Islands and coastal settlements in the Arkhangelsk region*	*Economic infrastructure before the 1990s*	*Distance from Arkhangelsk (km)*	*Permanent population as of 1 January 2021*	*Current economic status*	*Interview numbers*
Island settlements in the Northern Dvina delta						
1	Pustosh	Agriculture	4.4	221	Subsistence economy, tourism, museums	R1, R2
2	Vyselki	Agriculture	6	25	Subsistence economy	R3, R4
3	Odinochka	Agriculture	6.5	30	Subsistence economy	R5, R6
4	Voznesenye	Agriculture	12,8	412	Municipality, museum, agriculture, subsistence economy, tourism	R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12, R13, R14
5	Andrianovo	Agriculture	11	23	Agriculture, subsistence economy	R15
6	Lastola	Agriculture	38	432	Subsistence economy, tourism, museums	R16, R17, R18, R19
7	Konezdvorye	Agriculture	33	31	Subsistence economy, tourism	R20, R21, R22
Coastal settlements in the Onega Peninsula (the White Sea)						
8	Pushlakhta	Agriculture, fish farm	191	31	Agriculture, subsistence economy	R23, R24, R25, R26, R27, R28, R29
9	Letnyaya Zolotitsa	Agriculture, fish farms, airport	310	102	Agriculture, extraction of White Sea algae, sea seal hunting (up to 2010), tourism, subsistence economy	R30, R31, R33, R34, R35, R36
10	Letniy Navolok	Agriculture	268	5	Subsistence economy	R37

11	Lopshenga	Agriculture, fish farms, airport	234	187	Municipality, museum, agriculture, subsistence economy, tourism, fishing collective farm	R38, R39, R40, R41, R42, R43, R44, R45, R46
12	Yarenga	Agriculture, fish farms	216	74	Museum, tourism, subsistence economy	R47
13	Pertominsk	Agriculture	186	245	Municipality, tourism, agriculture, subsistence economy	R48, R49, R50
	Total number of interviews					**50**

ethical practice, the respondents' real names were encrypted as R1–R50 (see Table 6.1).

The data obtained during field research were supplemented with archival materials, including historical information about the development of the island settlements on the Northern Dvina delta and coastal territories of the White Sea; ethnographic data and statistics; official documents about navigation and its features along the Northern Dvina and in the White Sea; scientific reports on climate change; social information from the media; and official sources about the delivery of food and vital medical supplies to the respective rural settlements.

Data Analysis

A content analysis was conducted to evaluate the meaning of the great amount of data, collected from multiple sources. To gain a deeper understanding of the evolvement of social responsibility practices in food supply chains, we located the phrases "food procurement" and "food delivery" in the interview data and archival materials. Then, we identified other words or phrases that appeared next to them (such as survival, social issues, transport challenges, culture, and isolation) and analyzed the meanings of these relationships to better understand the intentions and goals of residents involved in developing food supply chains. To obtain more detailed data, we also coded for other categories, such as local communities, disruptions in food transportation, and residents' mobility. Following our coding rules, we examined each data source in our sample. We recorded the characteristics and challenges of food supply chains in the respective rural settlements, along with all words and phrases related to social responsibility that were used to describe them. Once coding was complete, the collected data were examined to find patterns and draw conclusions in response to our research question. Then, we discussed our interpretations of the findings.

The content analysis approach helped analyze communication and social interaction without our direct involvement, as researchers, allowing independent and transparent findings to be obtained. At the same time, content analysis depends on the availability and accuracy of recorded data (Tangpong, 2011). So, to support our interpretation of data, respondents were repeatedly questioned for cross-checking and to grasp the true meaning of their words behind the emotions, voice tones, repetitions, and different rhetorical forms of the spoken Russian language.

Case Presentation

Historical and Contextual Settings of Rural Settlements in the Arkhangelsk Region

Historically, these lands have been inhabited since the 12th century as a result of Novgorod colonization and the emergence of monasteries. Fishery

was traditionally the primary means of subsistence and survival in these White Sea coast settlements. During Soviet times, settlements on these lands received huge state support, since the development of the Arctic was a priority. A special socio-economic policy was pursued in the northern territories, which included higher wages compared to other regions, economic benefits, and additional vacation days, making the Russian North attractive for work and life. The economy of the island and coastal territories of the Arkhangelsk region was primarily based on agriculture; vegetables were grown and dairy products were produced and supplied to Arkhangelsk, the nearest regional center and major port, and other regional towns. Timber production and fisheries were also widely developed to be further exported.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, there was a break in economic ties between the regions, which led to extreme deterioration in the local population's living standards and an outflow of people from northern areas. As one respondent stated:

> *In the nineties, rural villages began to gradually empty, and soon several houses were boarded up. Even today, a rare tourist can reach us, and their first impression is an empty, silent village. But no, not everyone left the ashes... (laughs)* *(R10)*

According to a local resident, there are up to 49 villages on the islands in the Northern Dvina delta, with a population of 1,896 people; however, population recordings have not been conducted since 2014 (R1). Further, according to the All-Russian Population Census of 2010, 504 people live on the White Sea coast; moreover, they consider themselves Pomors.

Despite dwindling considerably, these settlements retain their primary historical meaning and archaic features today but have lost their former economic significance (see Table 6.1). Traditional activities of the islands' and coast's inhabitants are fishing, hunting, picking, and harvesting berries and mushrooms. In Soviet times, agriculture was the main economic activity. However, many collective farms went bankrupt with the transition to a market economy. Today, there are only small private farms in some localities that develop agriculture, fishing, and the extraction of White Sea algae (see Table 6.1). In Pushlakhta, residents prepare firewood for the needs of the Solovetsky Monastery. In each explored settlement, except for Letniy Navolok, which has a permanent population of five people, there is a small shop, and some have a post office.

Regulatory Change as a Prerequisite for a New Reality for Rural Settlements

In the former Soviet Union, the viability of these northern settlements was mainly supported by such a phenomenon as Northern Delivery, a set of annual

federal measures to provide the population of the Russian High North with basic goods for the long, harsh polar winter. Up to 70% of the Northern Delivery was fuel, followed by food, medicines, and other goods. The most critical reasons for Northern Delivery were the absence of its own production base, the remoteness of the main industrial areas, and the lack of roads and railways. In these conditions, the only possibility was the centralized purchase and transportation of goods from southern and central Russia to the High North, which was the federal government's responsibility.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Northern Delivery experienced serious difficulties and, subsequently, a radical transformation (Alekseev, 2013; Vasiliev, 2018). With the transition to a market economy, the centralized planned supply system for the northern territories was destroyed. The Russian government tried to transfer the functions of Northern Delivery to other actors. However, due to their institutional weakness, they were not ready to manage this supply phenomenon. This led to a growing number of operators involved in the Northern Delivery system, resulting in regular failures in northern life support (Vasiliev, 2018). As a result, during the market reforms of the 1990s in the Russian Federation, there were multiple declines in the total volume of goods delivered to remote northern settlements.

In 2001, the Russian government approved a new Northern Delivery scheme, according to which the responsibility for financing and ensuring the delivery of goods was assigned to regional and municipal authorities. Regional authorities determined the supply chain operators but could not provide sufficient control over them due to institutional and economic issues. From 2000 to 2004, the responsibility for Northern Delivery was transferred to oil companies. So, northern regions and oil companies became the main operators of Northern Delivery in the Russian High North, with the latter financing this supply system. According to official data, about 1.5 million tons of petroleum products, 3–4 million tons of coal, and more than 500,000 tons of food were delivered to the northern regions at the beginning of the 2000s.

Since 2005, the responsibility for ensuring the delivery of goods to the northern territories has been entrusted to the regional administrations. Further, the responsibility for preparing, determining the volumes of necessary goods (e.g., fuel, food, medicine, etc.), organizing bidding and concluding contracts with suppliers of these goods, financing purchases, and deliveries was assigned to the municipalities. An inevitable consequence became the deterioration of the northern settlements' life support, as well as a significant increase in the cost of goods delivered to the North. In general, this meant that from 2005, the Northern Delivery system was excluded from state-centralized financial support and, in fact, ceased to exist.

Until now, the Russian government has not succeeded in reconstructing or renewing an effective Northern Delivery system, the notion of which has recently been used only in the media and specialized literature. The current interdepartmental fragmentation and lack of a clear definition of the "Northern Delivery" notion and its mechanisms to meet contemporary conditions make

it almost impossible to create a single mechanism to ensure a centralized process for extremely remote areas of the Russian High North. Consequently, the current Northern Delivery system is subject to serious criticism from local authorities despite repeated recent attempts to improve it. The most critical factors for this deplorable state of affairs are: (a) lack of a unified, systematic approach to Northern supply management and to monitoring the goods delivery process, (b) lack of assessment of the volumes and range of supplies, (c) the huge number of stakeholders involved in Northern supply delivery with different economic interests complicates regulatory mechanisms, (d) lack of coordination and coherence in actions of stakeholders involved in Northern supply management: e.g., federal and regional authorities, commercial companies, etc. (Vasiliev, 2018).

Insufficient transport infrastructure development is another critical factor affecting the Northern supply management system. A feature of most northern territories is sparse transportation networks and the absence of rail and road communication. In Soviet times, small aircraft and water transport, subsidized by the state, played an important role in Northern Delivery. By the end of the 1990s, the Russian North boasted about 1,300 airports. In addition, state atomic icebreakers regularly escorted convoys of vessels along the Northern Sea Route to supply remote northern settlements. However, after the transition to market conditions, these delivery types lost state funding. According to experts, more than 80% of airfields intended for the needs of small aircraft rapidly deteriorated, with erosion and roots breaking up the runways. Further, many shipbuilding and shipping enterprises went bankrupt. State support for passenger transportation and the delivery of industrial and food products was significantly reduced (Nenasheva and Olsen, 2018). As a result, over the past 20 years, many issues accumulated in the water transport sector: poor waterway conditions, insufficient port infrastructure, the "aging" fleet, and state regulation decline of water traffic management (Nenasheva and Olsen, 2018). To date, the most critical factors in the Russian High North are the absence of its own production base, remoteness of the main industrial areas (thousands of kilometers), and absence of large/medium trading enterprises that could perform the functions of regional wholesale intermediaries, as well as concentrating most of the commodity mass at the time of the opening of the navigation season.

As one respondent stated:

> *Northern settlements are thousands of kilometers away from the main industrial areas... This makes it difficult and expensive for private entities to deliver goods, even in summer. So, there is no particular growth of entrepreneurs to replace the state provision with essential products.*
>
> *(R23)*

The funds earmarked for financing Northern Delivery are used to pay for one-time deliveries by air at high tariffs.

The settlements we consider in this chapter have specifically been challenged by stopping centralized supplies in line with Northern Delivery. This led to significant economic and social issues since the northern municipalities could not find a solution to organize the centralized procurement and delivery of goods exclusively from the local budget (Alekseev, 2013).

Geographical Proximity and Complete Transport Isolation

It is surprising that, despite their proximity to the main regional center and main port of Arkhangelsk, settlements on the islands of the Northern Dvina delta and even on the White Sea coast are extremely isolated. This is due to limited transport accessibility. There is no all-season road network or transport infrastructure, only scarce opportunities to travel here. As several respondents observed:

> *Waterways play an important role for us, the rural residents. They are very helpful in passenger transportation and food delivery because there are no bridges and roads between the settlements and Arkhangelsk.*
>
> *(R1–R22)*

During the navigation period, from the beginning of May to the end of October, the island and coastal territories are connected to Arkhangelsk by the regular river and sea transport and in winter by ice roads, which locals call the "roads of life" (Olsen et al., 2021). There is also a rare air connection with Letnyaya Zolotitsa and Lopshenga settlements, but this transport is not used for product deliveries because of high transportation costs.

At the same time, most households have boats: small rowing and motorboats that locals use to visit neighbors, relax, travel for mushrooms and berries, and/or go fishing. As one respondent noted:

> *These small boats are, for the locals, like a car for city people.*
>
> *(R6)*

According to numerous respondents, shipping plays an essential role in the livelihood of the inhabitants of the islands and the White Sea:

> *If there were no shipping here, we would have died out long ago!*
>
> *(R10, R13, and others)*

During the Soviet period, the regularity and frequency of passenger traffic was supported by the state. As one respondent said:

> *During Soviet times, the passenger boat used to run every half hour between the island settlements and Arkhangelsk. The coastal settlements were also*

> *connected with Arkhangelsk by regular sea routes. But after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the crisis of the 1990s... (sighs)... many locals left for cities. River and sea transportation became unprofitable and today is supported by subsidies from the local budget.*
>
> *(R14)*

Now, there is twice-daily river transportation to the settlements in the Northern Dvina delta. During the navigation period (May to October), the ship "Belomorye" carries passengers once a month on routes of the White Sea, including the coastal settlements on the Onega Peninsula. Often,the "Belomorye" is delayed or postponed due to storms, bad weather, fog, and ice conditions despite the voyage schedule (R1, R16–R17).

A significant issue is the seasonality of water transport, whose availability is limited to the navigation period. Traditionally, the navigation period on the northern rivers lasts six months. However, conditions have recently been affected by climate change. Most respondents emphasized that, if earlier winters were colder, now they are milder, and snow melts faster (R6, R8, R14–R20). Climate warming leads to a shift in the opening and closing dates of navigation, as well as the emergence of cases of forced opening of navigation in December and January for several days or weeks after it being closed due to winter thaws (R6–7, R21). Recalling similar cases, one Vyselki resident noted:

> *Before, there was always an ice drift between May 5 and 9. Now, it's between April 25 and 28.*
>
> *(R16)*

As other respondents stated:

> *Just a few years ago, the ice appeared in February; now, already in March, it has melted.*
>
> *(R10, R20, R37)*

Another respondent also confirmed:

> *Now there are no such severe frosts: it freezes, then melts again. The autumn season has become too long; everything used to freeze faster.*
>
> *(R22)*

According to the official representative of the Arkhangelsk River Port:

> *Navigation traditionally opens in late April – early May; the closure of navigation depends on the actual onset of winter. However, I have to say the opening date of navigation has not changed significantly over the last 20 years.*
>
> *(R6)*

Table 6.2 Dates for the opening and closing of navigation between 2002 and 2021 (excluding data during the thaw)

Opening navigation	*Closing navigation*
14.05.2009	01.12.2009
15.05.2010	23.11.2010
09.05.2011	12.12.2011
10.05.2012	10.11.2012
14.05.2013	10.11.2013
10.05.2014	25.11.2014
01.05.2015	17.11.2015
29.04.2016	06.11.2016
08.05.2017	23.11.2017
09.05.2018	23.11.2018
01.05.2019	07.11.2019
05.05.2020	07.11.2020
28.04.2021	05.11.2021

The opening and closing dates of navigation are shown in Table 6.2.

These northern territories are famous for the special natural phenomenon of "*rasputitsa*", when traveling on unpaved roads, across country and sea routes becomes impossible, owing to muddy conditions from rain, melting snow, or ice drift. The off-season in the North (usually in spring and autumn, rarely in the winter months) is always a test of patience and character, and people in the outback have long been accustomed to this weather. During this period, the population of these northern settlements becomes completely cut off from other villages and regional centers for a long time, up to several months (R2, R8, R10, R18, R23). As soon as the "*rasputitsa*" season reigns in the autumn, transportation to the islands is carried out by ice-class passenger ships – tugboats, but not to coastal areas – until the ice thickness is safe enough to open ice winter roads. Conversely, the end of the spring "*rasputitsa*" season marks the beginning of navigation. In recent years, muddy conditions have become frequent due to noticeable climate changes and ice conditions. As one local told us:

> *Previously, rasputitsa lasted two or three weeks, but now it can stretch for two months or more. For example, in 2019, stable ice formation was not seen right up to the New Year time [grins]... oh, we had to live without normal bread for a long time.*
>
> *(R20)*

Changes in ice conditions have a significant impact on the life of the population of Pomor villages:

> *In rasputitsa, we are cut off from life for two weeks.*
>
> *(R10)*

Or even longer than two months.

(R18)

On one hand, the change in the navigation period contributes to some extent to the development of shipping and an increase in the volume of cargo and passenger traffic. On the other hand, the late onset of a strong ice formation on the rivers and the shackling of the ground cover significantly reduces the delivery time of goods to hard-to-reach settlements along the so-called winter roads, as well as through the forest, more often on snowmobiles. In addition, climate change has a negative impact on the coast and coastline, leading to their degradation (Nenasheva and Olsen, 2018). Thus, the specifics of supply chain practices vary greatly and depend on the season and contextual settings.

Development of New Food Supply Chain Practices

In line with a complete absence of centralized supply chains and regular deliveries after the cessation of the Northern Delivery to these settlements, today, residents of the coastal and island settlements independently provide procurement and their social security by planning in advance the delivery of necessary products, including food, medicine, and energy carriers. Over the last decade or more, this has been done thanks to local entrepreneurs who are natives and residents of these villages. This was facilitated by the fact that there were no large trading enterprises left capable of performing the functions of a regional wholesale intermediary. Further, high transport costs have left the region with no operators capable of organizing the regular delivery of goods to these settlements. Most local entrepreneurs have small shops in the largest settlements, e.g., Letnyaya Zolotitsa, Lopshenga, and Pertominsk, and are also engaged in delivering food and industrial goods to the island settlements. Local shops are often a hut, where the fishing farm director sits in one room, and the shop and its storage area are located in another. Private entrepreneurs form stocks of food and essential goods based on the preferences and orders of the residents themselves. This is regulated and financed by the regional administration. As one local entrepreneur stated:

In winter, villagers mainly order canned food, frozen products, and juices. In summer, the store sells freshly caught and lightly salted fish, berries, and mushrooms, which residents put up for sale. We bring in flour in large quantities without fail so that villagers can bake fresh bread. The revenue is a penny, but there are a lot of troubles and expenses. Nevertheless, keep the enthusiasm up…[chuckles]…Often people come and order specific items for themselves, for which a special list is drawn up.

(R11, R32)

For residents of island villages during the period of "thaw", including ice drift and spring flood, when they are cut off from transport communications, private shops provide exceptional support, although prices are 30% higher than in Arkhangelsk. According to our respondents, local entrepreneurs often speculate and try to store short-shelf products, even perishable, for at least three months, when in fact, food can be stored for one to three weeks (R6–R7). In other seasons, residents themselves aim to bring food and other products from Arkhangelsk (R3, R14–R15, R22–R24).

The situation concerning the White Sea coastal settlements is entirely different. In summer navigation, the only cargo motorship, "Dauria", owned by the Arkhangelsk algae plant, is involved in delivering essential products to all coastal settlements. From May to October, "Dauria" traditionally works to provide sea sites with all necessary resources for harvesting algae and, along the way, approaches the coastal settlements to unload food, fuel, and other life-sustaining goods. "Dauria" carries cargo once every 10–12 days. On return voyages to the regional center, it transports dry algae – raw materials for the plant. This ship performs about a dozen trips per summer; the total volume of harvested algae is 370–400 tons during the summer season. As one respondent commented:

> *The current navigation began a little later than usual. This year, we only went on the first voyage on the night of May 28. Yesterday, there was ice in the waters of the Solovki islands, and the harbor looked like a winter landscape. They had to use a special ice-breaking boat that cleared the Monastyrsky pier from fast ice. Onboard, we had only 40 tons of cargo. Some cargoes are tools, materials, and supplies for algae sites; another part is for local shops...Hmmm, it has been very important both for the residents of the White Sea settlements and the workers of the algae plant.*

This is the only motorship which is a reliable transport connection between the regional center and the settlements on the White Sea coast.

The "Dauria" is mainly processed at a distance of 400 meters from the shore, in a protected area of water, in which sea ships can anchor. This is due to shallow water, plentiful sandbanks, and thickets of algae. In this regard, there is an absence of berths near the coastal settlements. As one respondent stated:

> *Each arrival of this ship to our Pomor village is a big event. It means that our local shop will soon have fresh products and some other necessary kinds of stuff. It will be possible to please the kids with delicious things you can't get here in spring and autumn… Wait until the ice drifts or the river freezes! Products are stocked up in advance.*

As soon as the "Dauria" (this also applies to the "Belomorye") stops in the roadstead, local boats immediately detach from the shore and quickly head

to the ship where they take on board food cargo and/or passengers. As one respondent told us:

> *We, the whole local community, help with the unloading of the ship. The water area is so silted up you can hardly get a rowboat through. But every minute counts.*

Then, local boats charge straight up the unequipped sandy bank to unload cargoes and passengers. Sometimes bread and dairy products are delivered by boat from the neighboring village, Lentnyaya Zolotitsa, or Solovetsky monastery, located on the Solovetsky archipelago. In addition, in Lentyaya Zolotitsa, there are two collective fishing farms with their own ships, which, along with "Dauria", deliver products to this village (R28–32). As one resident from Vyselki village said:

> *When 'Dauria' finally comes to our banks… and products end up in our local shop, people from such distant villages come to us by boats and in winter by snowmobiles with tied sleds, to buy food.*

However, such situations are only seen during a short navigational period in summer. In recent years, climate change has adversely affected the local entrepreneurs' activities in developing and maintaining food supply chains in the island and coastal areas. Since the period of impassable muddy land from rain and wet snow conditions and the thaw has significantly increased, stocks of goods in spring before the rivers are free of ice and in autumn before the freeze-up are depleted to such an extent that the shelves are empty for more than one or two months. Also, in the White Sea coastal settlements, the Union of Consumer Societies of the Arkhangelsk Region plays a significant role in supplying necessary products by maintaining small shops in the Pomor settlements. As one of these shopkeepers told us:

> *In summer, I negotiate with the director of the local fishing collective farm, and they deliver some food and goods here on their fishing boat. And, in winter, I myself ride a snowmobile – tie a few sledges together and slowly make my way through the snowdrifts to Arkhangelsk.*

So, in other seasons, mainly in winter, when the ground cover freezes, communication and delivery of necessary cargoes are carried out by using snowmobiles on so-called winter roads (R22–27).

Meanwhile, the point is that far from all the residents' requirements and needs are satisfied by these articles delivered by local entrepreneurs when using "Dauria", fishing farms' ships, and snowmobiles. This is especially true for medicines. Back in Soviet times, stores were state-owned, and there were food and commodity warehouses in the settlement, that is, large stocks of products

were created within the Northern Delivery framework. Various ministries formed specific lists of goods to be delivered to the northern areas. As one elderly resident of the village of Pushlakhta told us:

> *In the Soviet years, medicines were always brought, at least against colds and heart problems, and now our local merchants have their own vision of the list of necessary goods to be brought in. Their main concern is to sell quickly and get benefits. The list of goods is minimal, flour is always mandatory. I always ask my neighbor to bring me medicines from the city when she travels on the Belomorye ship. I know that she always asks all the neighbors around who needs what. So, we meet her on her way back with huge heavy knapsacks and bags... [Laughs]… Or when someone else is going to the city on the passenger ship, he always asks the neighbors, makes a list, and brings food and other goods for everyone.*

In conditions of limited and unstable transport links, remoteness, and the lack of centralized and regular goods supply chains, a particular phenomenon has emerged: social community thinking and mutual assistance, which allows the constant transport mobility of rural residents to be maintained. Such a social community is built on personal (neighborly) ties between village inhabitants, which become the basis for survival and reinforce the perception of a shared identity and the sense of belonging to a single community. It also contributes to a sense of security in an uncertain situation. From interviews with our respondents, we found out that, in summer, if a regular river trip is canceled, residents of the island settlements in the Northern Dvina delta use the services of acquaintances, who are essentially private carriers with small boats, to get to Arkhangelsk (R2–18). On the White Sea coast, private rowboats, motorboats, and launches are currently the only means of transporting residents across the White Sea. Neighbors often help and deliver someone to neighboring villages using these sea "cars" (R23–42). In addition, locals do not hesitate to borrow groceries and some other goods at local shops with the promise to pay later. As one respondent in Lopshenga said:

> *While you wait for payday, some food products may already be spoiled or run out. After all, delivery is not every week. I can always come in for some product and ask the seller to put me on a special list that confirms I will pay the money later. Everything is built on trust. Very convenient and simple.*

In the island villages, we noticed how the locals were engaged in the private sale of manufactured goods right on the street (see Picture 6.2). Residents of coastal villages told us that they themselves bake bread and pies, fish, pick berries and make jam for the winter, and grow vegetables (potatoes are everywhere). Some of them grow vegetables for later sale in Arkhangelsk. One resident stated:

Picture 6.2 Private sale market organized by residents (Photo taken by the second author).

> *It would be so helpful if the municipal authorities organized a mini-market for locals, where they could sell vegetables to neighbors and tourists.*
>
> *(R6)*

That also confirms independent actions by the local population to ensure food and energy security.

Further, in most studied settlements, we met enterprising villagers who were involved in maintaining the socio-economic life of these settlements. As a rule, these are people born in the northern areas who have lived all their lives in their native village. Having retired, they are engaged in reviving and preserving their native land's historical and cultural heritage, as well as in a number of organizational issues. For example, one of the residents of Pushlakhta village told us that she simultaneously performs several daily tasks: she meets occasional tourists, organizes cultural activities for residents, and monitors the lighthouse in the White Sea (R27).

Discussion

The northern Russian settlements case study, which we propose as a good practice example of social issues in supply chains, illustrates how residents have become accountable for the survival and welfare of their neighbors and local communities by addressing existing social needs. Thereby, villagers' voluntary intention initiative, which subsequently turned into a kind of obligation, to contribute to the development of food supply chains in the presented

settlements in conditions of complete isolation and the absence of regular food delivery, reveals an unexpected phenomenon of social responsiveness.

The findings show that most of the rural population is concerned about unpredictable changes in economic and social life, climate challenges affecting navigation conditions, and the lack of measures to support the mobility of the population in the form of regular water, land, and air communications, as well as transport infrastructure. As Pilyasov and Zamyatina (2019) emphasized, this is due to the fact that the economic and social viability of the northern areas was supported by the state for a long time. Indeed, while, in Soviet times, the state was involved in ensuring the procurement and delivery of necessary goods to the settlements, and thereby performed social responsibility, consisting of economic, regulatory, and social obligators, today, the same issues have become residents' concern. Further, a significant part of the Russian North population has an "innate craving for mobility", which is not only an important component of the culture and life of northern communities but also the basis for overcoming peripherality and reducing the feeling of isolation from the rest of the country (Pilyasov and Zamyatina, 2019). Thus, residents' social responsiveness is essentially a "response" to economic challenges and, as a rule, is advocated by the need for the adaptation and maintenance of mobility, which is initiated and carried out by local residents or entrepreneurs, mostly with little support from local authorities.

On the other hand, remoteness in the supply chain and the inaccessibility of these settlements affect the adoption of socially responsible supplier practices. Surprisingly, despite occasional speculations about certain products' expiry dates, local entrepreneurs' actions are often driven by social objectives rather than commercial benefits in terms of how the procurement and delivery of goods are treated. This is largely due to their being residents of the same communities and working for their neighbors' welfare. Therefore, our findings reveal that social responsiveness occurs as a result of someone being socially responsible. Compared to CSR, it is possible to say that social responsiveness constitutes concrete actions and reactions to social responsibility or social issues rather than focusing on ethics. In this light, managing social issues in supply chains reflects the role of stakeholders, in our case local residents, in driving socially responsible actions that help implement initiatives, build capacities, and achieve trust and commitment along the supply chain. So, our findings contribute to previous research (Strand, 2009; Klassen and Vereecke, 2012; Yawar and Seuring, 2017) but in terms of a person's obligation and proactive volunteering activities, rather than from a business and managerial perspective.

Further, our findings have identified several features that contribute to the sustainable welfare of the presented settlements and social adaptation to the economic, institutional, and contextual challenges. One of the most startling features is the cooperative co-existence of local communities, which creates an extraordinary combination of shared identity and coherent sense, by enhancing trust, close ties, and contacts. This results in increasing commitment in

relationships between local residents. So, our findings support Yawar and Seuring's (2017) assumptions that responsible supply chain actions produce actions that stakeholders "initiate to address social issues that are subsequently accepted, adopted and implemented by other supply chain members" (p. 625). It is the integrity of the social structure of local communities that increases residents' ability to adapt to external challenges. The next feature is preventive actions of life support, when residents are independently involved in providing their own food, industrial, and energy security. Both features are drivers for socially responsible supply chains in these northern areas.

Our findings have also pinpointed mutual assistance and commonality between local residents in response to economic and contextual challenges by developing a specific cultural setting. Within these cultures, roles, ties, relationships, and cultural attributes emerge in order to achieve the local community's welfare and survival. These are "clans" of sorts, where behavior is governed more by moral messages of social responsibility than official contracts, state legal norms, and markets. Within these cultural settings, our case study has identified a number of new socially responsible roles, which are necessary to ensure and sustain the local food supply system. Therefore, our findings have revealed that commitment and trust play a powerful mediating role in integrating SCM practices and social exchange. In light of this, our findings contribute to the extant literature on a relatively underexplored area of how social responsibility principles and responsiveness initiatives enable supply chains to contribute to the needs of local communities in terms of the values of the northern settlements' society (Tsvetkova, 2020). This is especially intriguing, considering the absence of regulatory or societal requirements, except for the need to survive.

Conclusions and Implications

This in-depth study identifies how SCM research can extend its scope by learning through cultural anthropology the roles and relationships needed to encourage socially responsible SCM practices and social influences on values and behavior. This study emphasizes that supply chains become socially responsible when they create value for residents' survival and adaptation to the economic, institutional, and contextual challenges, as well as sustainable welfare through supporting and building capabilities in local communities.

Responding to calls to conduct more case study-based research within the SCM field (Näslund, 2002; Seuring, 2005; Pagell and Wu, 2009; Quarshie et al., 2016), and to the scarcity of research empirically examining the issue of social responsibility in food supply chains (Spence and Bourlakis, 2009), this study reveals the social responsiveness phenomenon which has been originated from local residents' concrete actions and reactions to social issues in the island and coastal settlements of the White Sea. Within these cultural communities, proactive volunteering activities by local residents, which over time turn into a

kind of social obligation, result in the terms of increased commitment and trust and improved quality and performance of suppliers who are both local residents themselves and entrepreneurs. This contributes to integrating SCM practices and social exchange. Further, our findings extend the current knowledge in the area of how social responsibility principles and responsiveness enable supply chains to contribute to local communities' needs in terms of the values of the northern settlements' society.

Reflecting on social issues in developing food supply chains within the northern cultures of the Russian High North can be useful for policymakers, entrepreneurs, suppliers, and logistics managers. Our findings can provide an understanding of how they can better manage social issues in these remote and isolated settlements and ensure the regular and centralized procurement and supply of necessary products and goods. Moreover, the knowledge of cultural attributes and local capabilities before deploying procurement, food delivery operations, and supply chain strategies may be crucial for managers and policymakers in choosing a set of subsequent strategic actions and improving their awareness and execution. Finally, as our findings show, social issues and cultural attributes can be a challenge and a source of innovation and inspiration within existing SCM practices; that also should be taken into account in decision-making.

Our study was limited to individual volunteering actions by local residents who initiate social responsiveness and are directly involved in developing socially responsible food supply chains for the White Sea settlements, thereby potentially affecting our findings' generalizability. Further research is necessary to explore behavioral and social issues dealing with the interaction between all participants (suppliers, customers, consumers, and policymakers) in the procurement and supply of food and other necessary goods. Therefore, a behavioral perspective may provide promising theoretical insights to further research on SCM. In light of some significant differences between social responsibility and social responsiveness, a valuable avenue for future research could be a comparative analysis of how both lead to socially responsible and more socially sustainable practices within the SCM field and contribute to servicing the needs of local communities.

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