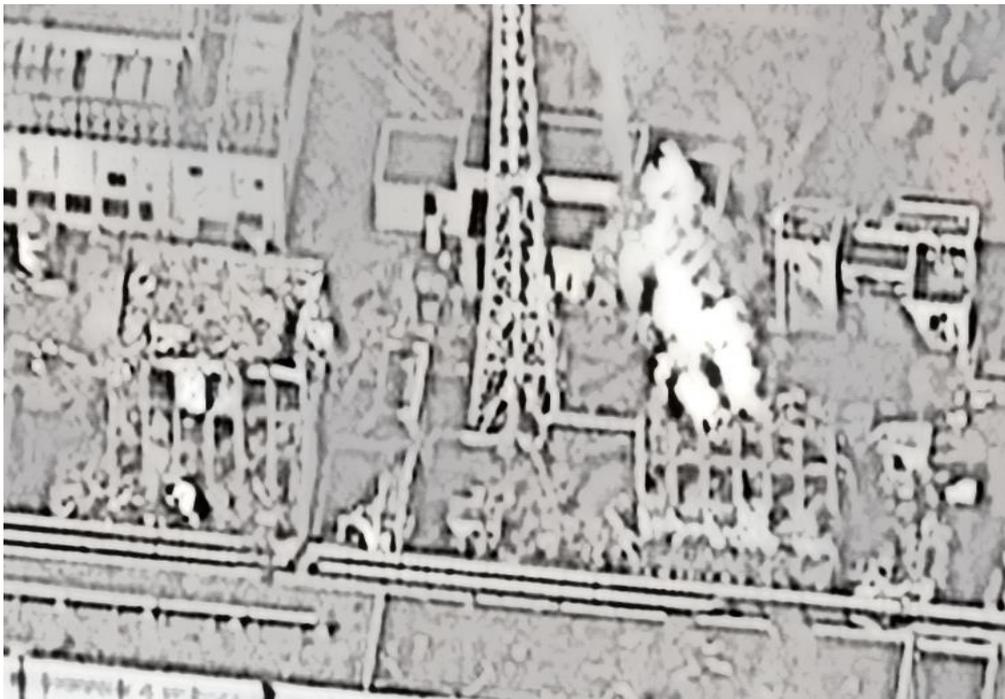


INGSA CASE STUDIES

RESORCIA:

Powering Change – Immigration, Labour and Social Cohesion in a resource town

INGSA Secretariat; European Commission Joint Resource Centre



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RESOURCIA:

Powering Change – Immigration, Labour and Social Cohesion in a resource town

Background and context

'Resourcia' is a federation of six provinces, parliamentary consensus-based democracy and an overall highly developed country with firmly entrenched and widely supported welfare policies, low-level of inequality and high social cohesion. It occupies a large territory and, due to the harsh climate and difficult access across the mountain ranges, parts of the country remain sparsely populated and economically comparatively underdeveloped.

The country is rich in mineral resources, from natural gas to iron ore and uranium. Uranium mines are located in the province of East Resourcia, which was settled in the eighteenth century by a wave of homogenous migration that left the province culturally and linguistically distinct from the rest of Resourcia. Their language remains one of the two official languages in the province (together with the more prevalent Resourcian language) and the traditional cultural ties with the 'old homeland' remain strong, with 65% of the population descendant from the original wave of settlers.

In the 1950s and 1960s, uranium mined in East Resourcia was exported for the use in nuclear power plants and in the Cold-War weapons production by a global super-power. In 1982, Resourcia imposed a temporary moratorium on uranium mining in its eastern province, a decision made largely through the public pressure mobilized by a national anti-nuclear lobby group, which would, just a few years later, transform into the Green Party of Resourcia. In 2006 the moratorium was partially lifted to allow restricted exploration with a view to supplementing Resourcia's own hydro-electric energy production with nuclear-derived electricity and increasing exports.

While the price of uranium has been low over the past decade, the move towards carbon-free energy has made nuclear energy more attractive in some global markets—as part of the mix with hydro, solar and wind energy. Indeed, with the global prices poised to increase again, the Ministry of Energy together with mining companies is looking at lifting the remaining part of the moratorium to allow not only mining but also processing uranium in East Resourcia. However, neither the province nor Resourcia more generally (both of which have low natural population increase and falling numbers of work-active population) have sufficient skilled (or unskilled) workforce.

Conjointly, the federal and the provincial Ministries of Labour and Immigration have launched a new programme that is fast-tracking immigration of migrants with skills suitable for the employment in the East Resourcia mining industry: from skilled labourers to tradespeople and engineers.

The dilemma

Across the globe, the Kingdom of Crossroads is in deep political crisis. Rebels are threatening to overthrow the governing dynasty; while the dynasty, supported by the army, is retaliating by indiscriminate attacks on Northern Crossroads, an identified rebel stronghold.

For over a year the civilian population has been fleeing Northern Crossroads. This mountainous region is a traditional mining territory with rich uranium reserves. However, because of the civil war, the mines have not been operating and the labour force—from unskilled to the highly educated and specialized engineers—are all out of work.

News about the possibility of employment in the newly developing uranium mines and processing facilities of East Resourcia has spread. At least a hundred Crossroaders are applying to the fast-track skilled immigration scheme “Powering East Resourcia”. However their (large) extended families are not eligible for the scheme. The federal Ministry of Labour and Immigration has drafted an additional immigration programme to allow families to reconnect. Yet even before its launch, newspapers critical of the entire plan have begun to publish estimates of the cost, arguing that the cost of ‘unproductive’ family members—healthcare, social benefits, education—will exceed the economic contribution of their ‘productive’ members, immigrating through the fast track scheme.

Furthermore, the Federal right-wing People’s Party of Resourcia is arguing that the immigration of a large number of Crossroaders into the culturally homogenous, and ideologically conservative province of East Resourcia will cause deep social problems. They point to the social science research showing that religious and ethnic diversity reduces social cohesion. The East Resourcia Spirit Party—a political party established to represent the interests of the 65% of the provincial population that is linguistically and culturally distinct—is arguing that any decision by either the federal or provincial governments to settle these “migrants” in the Resourcian heartland of East Resourcia is an attempt to dilute the ethnically and linguistically homogenous population of original settler families in the province, which will eventually lead to the loss of their autonomy and any claims they may have to a form of self-governance. The Spirit Party argues that the money spent to bring and integrate Crossroaders (who traditionally have a higher birth rate than East Resourcians) would be better spent on incentive policies to: increase population growth in Resourcia generally (and especially East Resourcia); to repatriate East Resourcians who emigrated from the province for career opportunities; and to train or retrain East Resourcians for next-generation uranium production.

As the first Crossroader refugee families arrive in the country, protests begin in the capital of East Resourcia. It is less than a year to federal elections and Democratic Party of Resourcia is worried that the scandal will cost them key federal electorates in the province, especially as the People’s Party and East Resourcia Spirit Party have begun discussing coalition at the federal level. They have found an unlikely ally in the Green Party, the former anti-nuclear lobby. The People’s Party is not known for its “green” credentials, indeed they’ve always favoured less regulation and promoted a “business first” position.

The Green Party had fought unsuccessfully against the partial lifting of the temporary moratorium in 2006 and is firmly set against uranium mining, processing and any energy production in Resourcia (which it claims Resourcia does not need). They point out that the environmental damage done by extraction and transportation methods in the 1950s has never been fully remediated. Lakes and entire watersheds around mining sites remain contaminated. The Green Party also bring up the human health costs of uranium mining, caused by radiation as well as inhalation of silica dusts and similar compounds. Finally, they argue that the nuclear energy is not at all carbon-free because much energy is needed to move the rock and process the ore, not to mention dealing with the waste water and other contaminated by-products of the industry.

The governing federal Democratic Party, however, argues that environmental and health regulations, enacted under them, are much stricter than those of half a century ago. They furthermore say that wind and solar power will provide nowhere near enough energy in East Resourcia. To be sure, hydropower does not pollute water or air, but the environmental costs of damming rivers must be taken into account. They also make the argument that East Resourcia has great potential as an exporter of excess energy through its power grid network linked to neighbouring provinces and countries.

The Government is also worried that backtracking on the redevelopment of next-generation uranium mining and the rolling back of the related immigration programme would be seen as a sign of weakness and indecision, leaving room for much political gain by the newly emerging coalition. It could also send a signal to other anti-immigration groups and impact other immigration programmes that the Democratic Party has long supported.

The current scientific advisor to the federal government is from the province of East Resourcia with the background in geology. He comes from a mining family that traces its roots to the early settlers in the province, and was the first one to get a university degree and PhD. The Prime Minister is asking him to provide opinion regarding: energy trends (including export potential); the likely environmental and human health impact of nuclear vs other types of carbon free energy; and the environmental impact of redeveloping and expanding East Resourcian mining operations. She has also asked the scientific advisor to help soothe societal tensions in the region and, in the long run, find the way for skilled Crossroaders and their families to integrate into East Resourcia.

Task

The science advisor (or advisory mechanism) must provide a report to the Prime Minister in six months (leaving sufficient time for deliberation before the federal election) on prospects for regional development in East Resourcia. In particular, the Prime Minister wants to know:

- energy trends (including export potential) of uranium vs hydroelectric, and the province's potential with regards to each;
- the likely environmental and human health impact of nuclear vs other types of carbon free energy;
- the environmental impact of redeveloping and expanding East Resourcian mining operations.
- The human resource requirements of the province if the mining and energy sectors were to be developed and expanded, and how these needs can best be met
- the sociological profile of the population, its ability to cope with economic and demographic change and how transition can be facilitated

A series of consultations with stakeholder groups is being set up to inform the report process. There is also opportunity for public submissions.

Setting up the Discussion

At least five categories of stakeholder can be identified:

1. Political Perspectives

- a. Federal Democratic Party
 - The current governing party
 - Responsible for the current health and environmental regulations
 - Concerned about upcoming election (threatened by possibility of right wing coalition and loss of Federal seats in East Resourcia)
 - Need to be careful to distinguish policy and politics (due to close election timing)

- b. Federal People's Party
 - Right wing and essentially anti-immigration
 - (Superficially?) concerned about social cohesion for linguistically distinct East Resourcia, despite the possible separatist movement
- c. Federal Green Party
 - Born from an anti-nuclear platform
 - Now essentially anti-mining (or mining expansion)
- d. Provincial Spirit Party of East Resourcia
 - Main platform is to support the linguistically distinct East Resourcians. This group will be worried about integration of a large wave of foreigners in one remote region of the province.
 - Would prefer the 'fast-track' money is spent retraining existing population or repatriating those who've left to pursue jobs elsewhere.
 - Party is at the heart of a long slow-burning separatist movement
 - They could shift the balance for the ruling party in the federal election if they team up with the Federal People's party to campaign for Federal seats in the region.

2. Policy (government) perspectives

- a. Federal Ministry of Labour and Immigration
 - Jointly devised the new fast-track scheme and has an interest in seeing it succeed
 - Has announced the additional program to reconnect fast-tracked migrants with families who were not eligible under the original scheme. It is not known how this program will resonate provincially (Province does not appear to be a partner). Could it lead to tension, given the resistance in the provincial and local media about the new comers?
- b. Provincial Ministry of Labour and Immigration
 - Jointly devised the fast-track scheme and has an interest in seeing it succeed
 - Will be particularly interested in regional development and renewal in this part of East Resourcia
 - May be ambivalent about the additional program to reconnect families that the Federal Ministry has established without collaborating provincially, but with potentially significant societal and political consequences provincially – thus a potential tension between the levels of government
- c. Federal Ministry of Energy
 - Is the ministry responsible for lifting the longstanding moratorium on uranium mining and adding to this the further development of a processing plant for the uranium.
 - Ministry is also open to exploring the development of nuclear energy plants, which would be a new direction for the province and the country, following the moratorium.

- Has been working with the mining sector to develop decisions and planning, but will the Hydro-electric sector have a counter-argument for the ministry to consider?
- d. Federal Regulators (Health Ministry / Environment Ministry)
- There have been new regulations established during the tenure of the current government. Regulators may have an interest in applying them, but not seeing them tested severely on the public stage as they are dealing with the government that brought them in.
- e. Mayor of the town where uranium mine and processing plant to be located
- Is at the frontline of the debate in the media and around town
 - Is concerned about social cohesion of two culturally distinct communities
 - Is concerned about the local social services required to integrate the migrants: schools, community groups, interim housing, language classes
 - Wants local economic development, but must weigh this against social cohesion and the politics of language/culture that have a long history in the province.

3. Industry perspectives

- a. The mining sector
- Has a strong vested interest in lifting the moratorium on uranium mining
 - May or may not be equipped to meet modern environmental and health standards put in place since the sector was last active
 - May or may not be equipped to process the raw uranium ore into 'yellow cake' for export and/or further processing into enriched uranium for fuel.
 - Has a strong interest in the fast-track program to boost human resources
- b. The prospective nuclear energy public-private partnership
- The policy discussion is in its infancy
 - There is no current nuclear-power infrastructure and expertise will need to be sourced for this massive project
 - A number of foreign energy companies have expressed interest in co-development with the government
- c. The hydro-electric energy sector
- Has been the dominant provider of energy for the province and in many parts of the country as a whole.
 - Was recently semi-privatised, so there is a multitude of companies but also sector-wide government relations body
 - Has a strong interest in maintaining its market share and feels threatened at the prospect of nuclear-energy entering the sector.
 - The mining company is a huge prospective client (or existing client, but now with increased energy needs to re-boot and ramp-up the uranium development), however the long term consequences of mining is the ushering in of a serious competitor in the energy sector. The hydro-companies feel ambivalent

- d. The tourism sector
- Has grown in recent years during the uranium moratorium
 - Has promoted 'eco-tourism' (hiking, mountainbiking, 'glamping') alongside more traditional pursuits of the region (hunting and fishing)
 - Has been a key pillar in the provincial government's regional development plan during the moratorium years
 - Feels threatened by the spectre of increased mining, particularly contentious uranium mining that will affect the area's tourist brand

4. Mainstream media perspectives

- a. The provincial mainstream media
- is openly sceptical about redeveloping the mining industry but has long called for regional development
- b. Local media (close to the mine site)
- has been increasing their coverage of radicalisation of newcomers in other countries and stories about the lack of community and social services in the recipient towns to absorb the influx

5. Civil Society perspectives

- a. Local population
- As represented by Churches and service clubs, etc. which are largely aligned to the culturally and linguistically distinct sector of the population and have historically served as a base for their cultural activities. Such organisations would normally be deeply involved in supporting newcomers to integrate, but they are ambivalent about this prospective wave of newcomers.
 - Majority are from mining families (the towns of this region of East Resourcia were founded and built by mining companies from the 1920s onwards)
- b. Local social services providers (Red Cross, SA, YMCA...)
- These groups are often a first port of call for integration of newcomers
 - The services they provide rely on both government and private donations
 - Their resources at the local level may be stretched to accommodate rapid influx in a small town
- c. Crossroader cultural association
- A small group of Crossroader organisers who are among the first to have moved to East Resourcia before the current expected influx.
 - Are actively trying to dispel myths and rumours about Crossroader culture and religion and are working to create a positive image of the incoming migrants. They do not wish to be thought of as refugees and the majority are highly skilled and educated, with a level of education exceeding that of the local population on average.

Thematic Considerations

Socio-cultural considerations

- The relationship between social cohesion, social capital and support for welfare policies.
- The link between immigration and social cohesion¹
- Policies designed towards immigrant integration: what has been successful?

Demographic and economic considerations

- Impact of incentive policies to stop/decrease population decline
- Impact of policies developed to drive up the workforce in particular sectors/with particular skills
- Impact of policies targeted at slowing down emigration and attracting emigrants back

Energy considerations

- Energy trends: the likelihood of the pro-nuclear trend to last.
- Comparisons of energy efficiency and cost, nuclear versus hydropower

Environmental and human health considerations

- Greenhouse emissions, comparisons nuclear vs hydropower
- Estimates of environmental and human health cost/impact of nuclear power, in particular in relation to the environmental and human (not only health but also change of life) impact of hydropower.

Debate

Together with your group, use the case to discuss the interconnections of science and policy. Follow the specific instructions of the moderator to organise the debate.

Taking up the task of producing a comprehensive scientific report in a complex situation of high political tension, multiplicity of interests and an emotional public discourse, one has to consider a number of general questions, including:

- Where is the likely greatest area of scientific uncertainty?
- What is the likeliest inconvenient truth i.e. the scientific evidence most unwelcome to the Prime Minister or the general public?
- Where is there the greatest risk of biased evidence?
- What single action from the scientific advisor would build the greatest consensus about the evidence?
- What piece of evidence is likely to be most decisive in the Prime Minister's eventual decision?
- Which is likely to be the most "irrational" argument in the public debate?

¹ Most research analyses the connection between diversity (religious, ethnic) and social cohesion but not immigration.



ABOUT INGSA

INGSA provides a forum for policy makers, practitioners, academics, and academics to share experience, build capacity and develop theoretical and practical approaches to the use of scientific evidence in informing policy at all levels of government.



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INGSA's primary focus is on the place of science in public policy formation, rather than advice on the structure and governance of public science and innovation systems. It operates through:

- Exchanging lessons, evidence and new concepts through conferences, workshops and a website;
- Collaborating with other organisations where there are common or overlapping interests;
- Assisting the development of advisory systems through capacity-building workshops;
- Producing articles and discussion papers based on comparative research into the science and art of scientific advice.

Anyone with an interest in sharing professional experience, building capacity and developing theoretical and practical approaches to government science advice is welcome to join INGSA.

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