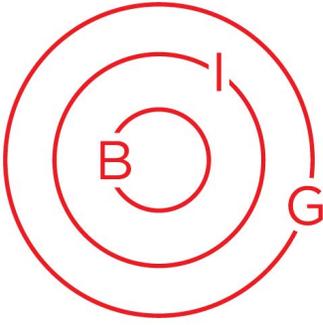




**BORDERS IN
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Rescaling Cooperation: The Arctic Council and the North American Chairmanship

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The Arctic Council has evolved from a small organization of eight Arctic states whose main focus was implementing the Arctic environmental protection strategy in the early post Cold war era to a modern circumpolar intergovernmental forum. Its successes in environmental protection and the new and looming threat of climate change have led to increased interest in this organization. A new diversity of interests and actors has pushed the Arctic Council agenda towards consideration of both economic development and environmental sustainability. Under the US Chairmanship however the specificity of American regional federal state and non state relationships has shaped the agenda in a particular way leading to the more general reflections on economic development in favor of projects and agendas in support of climate change science environmental protection and applied science. The question is raised as to how economic development will proceed if it is not supported or directly embedded in Arctic Council agendas and programs.

Introduction

Keskitalo's (2004) review of the historical processes that ultimately led to the creation of the Arctic Council identifies the region-building process which 'negotiated' what is now the international Arctic. Her analysis suggests that a series of environmental discourses, embedded in specific framings of power were at play during this process of negotiation, and that these reflected national ambitions of the member states of what would become the Arctic Council. But the process that began with Gorbachev's Murmansk speech in 1987, although it was strongly supported by states throughout Northern Europe and North America, was also a product of an evolving framework of actors and politics emerging from the bottom up, sometimes at very local scales (Heininen, 2004; English, 2013). This made the "the Arctic" synonymous with the circumpolar North as defined by the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) which defined the initial program (Figure 1), through a hybridized and innovative governance model (Heininen and Nicol, 2007).

Since then, new rationales and scales for Arctic cooperation have emerged that dissect the neatness of the circumpolar frame envisioned perhaps by earlier policy-makers (Graczyk and Koivurova, 2013a, 2013b). While the process began with the intent of implementing the more singular frame of cooperation through the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), since that time circumpolarity has become an increasingly a messy business. Well-defined regional boundaries and identities encounter cross-cutting global as well as bilateral initiatives, strategies, and issue areas, creating a web of relationships sometimes anchored tenuously to regional framings of common interest (Knecht, 2015). The seductively simple "evenness" of the Arctic Council, originally understood to be a soft law cooperation which knitted together disparate Northern politics into a coherent structure – one that the current US Arctic Chairmanship would go so far as to call "One Arctic" (Ulmer, 2015) - today faces a degree of discord. While such tensions do not threaten "peace and stability" in the way in which some alarmists have predicted (Borgeson, 2008; Huebert 2010), they do threaten the scale at which issues are defined and the nature of policies that result. The new circumpolar North sees a not just a fluorescence of state actors and non-Arctic state actors (Graczyk and Koivurova, 2013a, 2013b) but also a fluorescence of sub-regional actors not just for the purposes of representing new issue areas, but – and this is key- for representing them at new scales (see Heininen, 2004; Nicol 2015).

Indeed, the Arctic Council, which began as an implementation process for the AEPS, today supports over six working groups which in turn support dozens of projects and initiatives. It has seen the addition of new Permanent Participants and Observers. This situation, the rise of new politics supported by new binational and multinational agreements at all kinds of scales among a plethora of national, sub-national, state and non-state actors have the effect of undermining the concept of Arctic "exceptionality" which has, to date, informed the understanding of Arctic Governance in the early 21st century (Keil, 2014, Graczyk and Koivurova, 2013a, 2013b; Exner-Pirot, 2016). "Exceptionality" is the now normative political discourse through which a consensus has developed that the Arctic is a region whose experience cannot be understood, explained, even reproduced, elsewhere in the world. Indeed, Keskitalo (2004), traces the rise of this exceptionalism narrative and

its contribution to contemporary Arctic region-building. Others such as Hønneland and Stokke (2003) also contribute to the discourse of Arctic exceptionalism, identifying the innovative ways in which regional actors have facilitated new modes of indigenous inclusion, brokered new environmental treaties and cooperation, and faced down the specter of climate change. The Arctic Council has been seen to be both a leading model for future governance, an institution in need of strengthening (Arctic Governance Project) and an exemplar for environmental cooperation (Fenge, 2013).

At the same time as the circumpolar North develops visibility as a regional entity, however, it is also increasingly drawn into global networks of politics and economic investment. More and more, Arctic identities, societies and cultures have become embedded in a networked world, managed less through national government oversight and more through subsidiarity and non-state actors (Heininen and Southcott, 2010). This type of governance facilitates the networking of actors across boundaries at all different scales (Paasi and Zimmerbauer, 2015) – consistent with the structure of cross-border flows of people and goods elsewhere within the broader global community (see Brunet-Jailly, 2013). Such networking can dilute or strengthen region-building, depending upon how state and non-state actors navigate the landscape of varied interest.

If the circumpolar Arctic has also been a region which is not static, nor does it necessarily hold clear and discernable boundaries when national and non-state strategies of interest are stripped away (Bailes and Heininen, 2012; Heininen and Nicol, 2007). Even the early AMAP rendition of the Arctic in Figure 1, which suggests multiple parameters traced by natural indicators like climate or vegetation, implies an uncertainty about where to situate the “edges” or border of regionalism. The region-building discourse which led to the identification of a circumpolar region has adopted a geography which suggests the Arctic has discrete and symmetrical proportions. Fundamental problems exist with this perspective, however. Most importantly, the kinds of the political, economic, social and environmental issues which influenced circumpolar regionalism are cross-cutting in character (Heininen and Southcott, 2010; Dittmer et al., 2011; Dodds and Nuttall, 2015, Steinberg, Tasche and Gerhardt, 2015). There is now an argument to be made that the “North” is a series of Arctic and sub-Arctic environments which are increasingly global in context.

In light of the tension between the constructed exceptionalism of the circumpolar North and the global nature of the Arctic, this paper asks how tensions among the state, sub-state and regional actors contribute to the increasingly broad array of issues that are now repositioning of the boundaries of regionalism. With this conceptual framework in mind, in this paper I argue that in North America, the specificity of regional, state and sub-state interaction is important to the Arctic Council’s effectiveness as a regional organization. In doing so I explore the way in which American and Canadian Arctic Council Chairmanships have recently differed in their approach to the Arctic Council Chairmanship. While in North American scholarship there has been a propensity to explore the potential impact of more Observers on the structural capacity of the Arctic Council, less attention is paid to the issue of multiplicity of actors and changing structural capacity within states. Yet this issue is extremely important in understanding how region-building has stalled

around the problem of sustainable economic development, and how the economic development theme has been rescaled as a result. We will explore a recent period in regional governance - the Canada to the US Chairmanship of the Arctic Council beginning in 2013. Before we turn to consideration of each chairmanship, however, it is important to establish how regional governance and borders are intimately tied to a multiplicity of state and non-state actors which represent different interests at different scales.

The Arctic Council and regional governance

Paasi and Zimmerbauer (2015, 2) challenge the understanding of the world as a simple continuum of bounded territorial entities. Instead regions have formed in which “borders are increasingly porous” because of the relational capacities of states to operate in new ways. The state has facilitated the engagement of new actors and new roles in the process of governance, and is thus a bundle of relationships some of which extend well beyond the territorial confines of the state (Brenner, 2004; Keating, 1998; Painter, 2010). States now govern across borders as well as within them, negotiating and brokering trade and migration agreements which effectively manage flows and people and goods, of ideas, money and infrastructure. The concept of the “relational state” as Paasi and Zimmerbauer define it, builds upon arguments made by Agnew and others concerning the way in which globalization has impacted territories and boundaries. Agnew (1994, 54) argued, for example, that while the structure and role of states may change, the concept of the state as a specific assemblage of actors and interests remains. He observed that “depending on the nature of the geopolitical order of a particular period, territoriality has been ‘unbundled’ by all kinds of formal agreements and informal practices, such as common markets, military alliances, monetary and trading regimes.” Indeed, not only do states routinely engage in global activities to further both domestic and international interests, they also facilitate the participation of a variety of sub-national and non-state actors in these networks to further state goals by other means (see also Painter, 2010). Today, the problematic and changing relationship of state government to bounded or territorial thinking has been well defined by a number of researchers (Brenner, 2012, Paasi, 2010, Shah, 2012) to the point where we now speak of “the relational” capacity of states (see Paasi and Zimmerbauer, 2015). The Arctic Council, and the circumpolar North in which it finds its role, compares well to other models of regional governance seen worldwide. Examples of regions which reflect this new porosity and expanded scales of interest include both trade blocs like NAFTA and supranational governance structures like the EU. They also include smaller coalitions like the Barents Council (Hønneland and Stokke, 2003) or the Association of Caribbean States (Nicol, 2000), where national governments negotiate common regions and interests. The circumpolar North can also be understood as a similar type of arrangement. The Arctic Council, established in 1996, has negotiated a regionally-defined cooperation which crosses conventional boundaries by new modes and new agencies cooperation – in some but not necessarily all areas of governance (Keil, 2014; Knetch, 2015). This means that now, in the Arctic, just as elsewhere, political leadership has become involved in developing new modes of modes of governance that rather than making states redundant, attempt to revive their power and influence in new ways or extend their

degree of effective influence and decision-making beyond the narrow parameters of national boundaries in land and sea. Co-management structures in the Canadian North, for example, have reworked territorial boundaries, while transnational organizations of indigenous peoples create common interests across borders. A 1988 American and Canadian Agreement on the Northwest Passage sidesteps the problem of maritime boundaries altogether – for the present – while state governments like Alaska participate formally and informally in a number of regional and global initiatives such as the Northern Forum or the World Economic Forum. The Arctic Council’s Search and Rescue Agreement assigns Arctic states specific sectors of responsibility in a borderless Arctic Ocean, while transnational corporations dream of shipping lanes which intersect all borders in transits across a melting Arctic Ocean.

The point of this paper is not, however, to revisit the theory of state territoriality within globalization models (although these are important concepts - see Shah, 2012). Rather, our purpose is to contribute to a reinvigoration of Arctic Council scholarship by exploring the way in which the relational capacity of states to operate effectively in international fora through and across effective national and regional boundaries has opened up new themes for governmental cooperation, but has also led to increased contestation about the nature of those themes, who they represent and how they play out across the region and the world. Indeed, in the Arctic contestation over whether climate change or economic development are legitimate themes for Arctic Council initiatives has led to changes in the scale at which governance of issues is understood as well as the array of actors who are involved. We will not reprise this debate about cooperation or competition or regional exceptionalism as argued elsewhere (see Olsen, 2014). Rather we will shift understanding of how region-building under successive North American chairmanships is responding not just to new pressures from geopolitical, geo-economic and state-centered narratives, but also to regionalized, sub-state, and even non-state actors. We ask how the borderless scale of the Arctic Council resonates with the structural complexities that, despite much rhetoric to the contrary, continue to reify state power and interest. The issue of how, for example, under the US Chairmanship, the theme of sustainable development and climate change have been promoted as the single most important issue in the North, is a case in point. Under the US Chairmanship environmental concerns, especially climate change, have been isolated from economic development and marginalized through programmatic and political agendas very specific to the US national agendas. Indeed, today there are now two competing region-building discourses - environmental and economy - which operate at different “scales”. This not only complicates the landscape of regional decision-making, but also underscores contestation concerning the legitimacy of the decisions that are made.

States and influence: networking the Arctic

Within the Arctic Council, as elsewhere, sub-national units of governance, private sector actors, and a roster of rights and stakeholders have also attained roles which were previously occupied by state governments. The most notable, and also most exceptional, is the Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council. The latter are Indigenous People’s Governments which operate within and beyond the scale of the nation state. By definition they transcend boundaries. The rules governing the

establishment of Indigenous Peoples Organizations who are admitted as Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council require that they are either a single Indigenous people resident in more than one Arctic State or more than one Arctic Indigenous people resident in a single Arctic (<http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us/permanent-participants>). In either case they represent polities which consistently defy normative boundary relationships inherent in the Westphalian scheme of sovereignty and international relations (Nicol, 2010). In addition to Permanent Peoples Organizations are both Observer states and Observer NGOs and ENGOs like the World Wildlife.

Still, as is the case elsewhere, the inclusion of any number of non-state actors in Arctic governance does not eliminate the role of state government, any more than governments have been eliminated elsewhere in global regional cooperation. The Arctic Council is at its heart a “Ministerial” organization, and states remain the only voting members. Because of this, Arctic governance is more than “the Arctic Council”. It is also a topology of interests created by the strategies and domestic policies of all eight Arctic states – many of which are expressed in “northern strategy” and “foreign policy” documents designed for aligning Arctic Council participation with larger national interests. They also govern through subsidiarity – in conjunction with sub-national actors and non-state agencies (Bailes and Heininen, 2012; Heininen and Nicol, 2007; Arctic Council Website –see Member States). Therefore, the observation that the Arctic Council at times behaves like a recalcitrant organization of state-centered stakeholders (Dodds, 2010, Dodds and Nuttall 2015; Steinberg and Dodds, 2014) is not surprising. But it does raise the larger question of how states manage subsidiarity, complexity and supranationalism through the venue of the Arctic Council governance forum (see Knetch, 2015; Knetch and Keil, 2013) in ways that continue to reinforce state interest. What does that complexity mean for the scale at which issues are managed? The recent Canadian and current US Arctic Council Chairmanships are instructive in answering this question.

Canada, the US and the Arctic Council: two themes colliding?

The current US Arctic Chairmanship represents the second time that the US has held the Chair and, arguably, sees the US Federal Government more engaged than ever before. The fanfare and flurry as the US, under Secretary of State John Kerry, assumed the mantoux of the Chairmanship was unprecedented. The compelling reason for this new degree of support has been, of course, the threat of climate change. The current US focus in the Arctic Council reflects upon an array of initiatives, almost all of which involve scientific assessment and application to regionally perceived environmental and health issues. Under US leadership, for example, the focus of working groups is on a series of specific projects which include “development of a circumpolar local environmental observer (CLEO) network , strengthening the region’s search and rescue (SAR) capacity, efforts to support a pan-Arctic network of marine protected areas (MPAs) and building capacity and promoting community-based Arctic leadership on renewable energy microgrid” (see <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/our-work2/8-news-and-events/388-sao-fairbanks-2016>).

Indeed, since the US took the Chair it has established three overarching thematic priorities focusing upon economic development and Arctic peoples, ocean stewardship and protection, and climate change. While the announcement of US platforms were listed in precisely this order, however, in reality the first priority, economic development, was neither supported nor developed. Climate change and sustainable development has instead become the central focus of the US Chairmanship, and this was signaled early in dialogue at the GLACIER meetings in Alaska. But sustainable development is somewhat oddly configured – missing the development piece as economic initiatives are deemed to be of domestic nature, to be managed by US sub-national actors, agencies and steering committees – like the Alaskan Arctic policy Commission or the US Arctic Executive Steering Committee, and of little international significance.

The American focus on climate change follows the Canadian Chairmanship's equally singular focus on the single issue of economic development - to the near exclusion of climate change. Like the US, this was the second time that Canada had assumed the chair over the past 20 years. While the Canadian Chairmanship, from 2013-2015, attempted to prioritize the problem of economic development in the Arctic region - announcing as it took the chair in Kiruna that it would focus on "making a difference in the lives of the people of the North, reflecting the Ottawa Declaration's commitment to economic and social development and environmental protection" (<http://www.international.gc.ca/arctic-arctique/chairmanship-presidence.aspx?lang=eng>) – it too reflected the landscape of internal partisan politics and interests within Canada at the time (see Nicol, 2015).

At the core of Canada's plan was the creation of an economic advisory council – The Arctic Economic Council (AEC). The initiative was embedded in the Kiruna Declaration as a Canadian project and survived what Fenge (2013) called the "rough and tumble process" of negotiating the two-year Canadian Arctic Council Chairmanship with other Arctic Council Member States and Permanent Participants the following October. But the Canadian initiative was not particularly well received by many Arctic Council states at the time, and for a variety of reasons (Nicol, 2015). Certainly the reputation of the Harper Government contributed greatly to the negative perception, as did the domestic agency of its implementation through the leadership of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor). Neither did it help that the entire substance of Canada's "Kiruna Vision" for the Arctic Council, proposed by the Canadian Government in 2013, was considered to be somewhat lacking in innovation, imagination or specificity (see Nicol, 2015 and https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/287/MM08_Kiruna_Vision_for_the_Arctic_Final_formatted%20%281%29.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y). Moreover, the Canadian Chairmanship was critiqued at home for its singular interest by a highly critical national media: "In light of its dismissive attitude toward environmental, climate and sustainable development issues – of key importance in the Arctic and effectively addressed by the Arctic Council – this may well be what the government of Canada intends. There are also serious concerns that the Arctic Economic Council will provide transnational corporations with preferential access to national governments" (Axworthy and Simon, 2015)

Since then, however, the Arctic Economic Council has been established as an independent body, and is more widely supported. It is increasingly seen as

legitimate, perhaps, for the reasons we have already raised: it successfully navigates the divide identified by Dodds and Steinberg (2014) between actors with a territorial stake and those that have none. It self-identifies as “a body that can respond to, and advise, on the kinds of projects and issues this development brings up [and] gives the northern business community an important voice” (<https://www.adn.com/article/20160128/how-will-arctic-economic-council-shape-business-future-north>). Nonetheless, the initiative has been nearly crippled by the failure of the US Arctic Chair to prioritize or support it in any significant way, although the AEC had emerged as one of the only forums, under the US Arctic Council Chairmanship, where economic well-being of Arctic peoples could be discussed by regional actors.

Instead, in 2015, having announced that the economic development priority established by Canada was on its list of goals, the US Chair quickly turned its attention to other things. This lackluster response to the economic development portfolio of Arctic nations, was not totally unanticipated. Indeed, since the inception of the Arctic Council the theme of sustainable development has itself faced significant challenges. Early on, Keskitalo (2004) reminds us, the US was reluctant to address any issues which concerned themes beyond environment. She notes that “US opposition was connected to its opposition to the Canadian focus on indigenous issues. With a strong environmental conservation lobby, the US clearly placed the primacy for Arctic matters on the environment” (Keskitalo, 2004, 172). Indeed, since its inception the Sustainable Development working Group has always had to navigate the divide between science and development gingerly, and only gained traction when the concept of “resiliency” became associated with the very real link between human security and climate change in the Arctic during the Swedish Chairmanship. So in the second round of both the Canada and US Chairmanship rotation, it is not surprising to see one of the old fault lines re-emerge over the same types of issues. Although today the US and Canada do not differ as sharply on the significance of the role of sustainable development, they differ considerable on the definition and the status of its target group - Indigenous peoples and those who live within the North. For Canada this is constructed as an “international issue”; for the US Arctic Chairmanship, it is “domestic”.

But, it would be wrong to suggest that US opposition to sustainable development then, or now, was universal. In the US in particular, different institutional and governmental structures are vitally important if only because they remain significant to the way in which Arctic regional issues are framed in different ways by a variety of actors - both state and non-state. These too reflect imaginaries of where the boundaries of the circumpolar North are located in relation to specific polities – for example Alaska, Washington DC, Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations and global NGOs – or private agencies, think tanks and transnational corporations. This is significant because the themes chosen by each imposes its own “boundary.” For example, the Canadian Chairmanship envisioned the North as a strategic space for sovereignty and resource development, and in doing so, imposed boundaries of policy and interest reflected by the dimensions reflected in the Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor). Indeed, CanNor’s projects map (Figure 2) suggests that the territorial north was central to any consideration of a “Northern” development plan and that three territories stood to benefit from the prioritized development agenda. At stake were jobs, training projects, infrastructure, and

corporate investment. Although the Arctic Council would not “provide” all of this, the development thrust coincided with a broader national strategy concerning the North, its importance and its resources. This was a decidedly Federal plan and it served, arguably, as the model for the Arctic Council economic development program.

Early indications concerning the transition of the Chair from Canada to the US in 2015 were that the US also supported Canada’s priorities in 2013. Anticipating Canada’s Chairmanship, the US seemed, at first, quite enthusiastic. In 2012, for example, Richard Steffens, a US Embassy official explained that “[d]eveloping natural resources like oil, gas, and minerals in Canada’s North – and making sure that this development is maintained over the long term by bolstering the regional economy – is a big objective for the US.... Attracting US partners and investors to promote sustainable development of Canada’s North is going to be a major priority of the US mission in Canada...I’m here for three more years, and working with all of you on developing Northern Canada is going to be probably my number one goal.” (David and Humpert, 2015).

Steffens did not anticipate that this focus on economic development would become out of step with US national or domestic policies when the US took the Chair in 2015. But by 2014, such hopes for seamless support of Canada’s economic development seemed to have been dashed. Disappointment with the Canadian Chairmanship, as well as the appointment of retired US Admiral Robert Papp as US Special Representative for the Arctic, for example, suggested that the US would take the Council, under its chairmanship, in a different direction than Canada. Papp’s appointment also suggested that, unlike Canada, the U.S. was placing less emphasis on economic development and is focusing more on maritime issues, security, and shipping. And possibly to ensure that issues like environmental protection and science do not take a back seat, the State Department also created a new position of Special Advisor on Arctic Science and Policy, to be filled by Fran Ulmer, current Chair of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission and former Lieutenant Governor of Alaska (David and Humpert, 2014). So as it turns out, it was not just the Federal Government of Canada that championed an economic development focus. It appeared at first as if the US State department might follow suit. In doing so it would have supported what was then a growing consensus among northern sub-state and non-state actors that economic development was sorely needed in the North, and that it should be on the political agenda. Amidst talk of revival of the Northern Forum, the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission formed to discuss priorities in policy-making for the US Arctic.

The actors and politics which populate the Arctic are diverse, however, and have diverse interests (Lawson, 2014). Moreover, the landscape of US politics is divided by the issue as well - drawing into play a series of sub-state and non-state actors and agencies. Alaska, particularly the Alaskan Policy Commission (AAPC), has long lobbied for greater federal government attention to regionally-specific development problems. Among them are issues of royalties, infrastructure and oil and gas development. The roster of issues, which reads in a comparable way to other discussions of sustainable development among Arctic states, was published in the Final Report of the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission in January 2015, in an attempt to promote sustainable development as a US Arctic Chairmanship priority. Exner-

Pirot (2015b) reminds us that “the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission (AAPC) co-chairs published a letter they wrote to Admiral Robert Papp (US Special Representative to the Arctic) and Ambassador David Balton (expected to chair the Arctic Council SAO) on the AAPC website saying they were “very concerned” that their top priority, jobs and economic opportunity, was “being ignored”, and that Alaskans’ voices were “being overlooked” (<http://www.rcinet.ca/eye-on-the-arctic/2015/01/06/arctic-council-the-evolving-role-of-regions-in-arctic-governance/>) . This point is raised too by non-governmental agencies like the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, who see economic development and support for the AEC as vital to the well-being of the region, particularly as climate change opens new areas to what is seen as an inevitable and increased demand for shipping and shipping infrastructure, and see little incompatibility between US national strategic goals and those of sustainable development (Lawson, 2014). On the other hand, there are significant lobby groups and internal government agencies, like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) or the US Arctic Research Commission and Arctic 21, a consortium of scientists, which champion climate change as the first priority of US Arctic Policy.

Because there were many actors whose perspective on the Arctic needed both recognition and harmonization at the domestic level, the US Arctic Executive Steering Committee was created to coordinate White House Arctic policy. The Committee’s agenda represents activities of a different nature than the Arctic Council Portfolio. It deals in “domestic policy” – but ostensibly in ways that also help to formulate international policy. The Executive Steering Committee has, for example, established working groups, several of which embed concepts of sustainable development (Table 1). Still, these are not Arctic Council working groups, nor are many of the issues promoted beyond the level of “domestic”, or are seen as anything but engaged with meeting the US 2014 Implementation of the National Strategy for the Arctic Region (see <https://www.arctic.gov/aesc/publications/Progress%20Report%20on%20the%20Implementation%20of%20the%20National%20Strategy%20for%20the%20Arctic%20Region.pdf>)

Navigating US state power and interest: the climate change agenda

For Ebinger (2015) and others, the Arctic Council creates a peculiar American problem. It reifies the difference between the US Arctic and the international Arctic, in the sense that it affects the US: “The chief problem that U.S. Arctic policy must resolve is that while in the Arctic Council we have to address issues affecting the entire Circumpolar North, our domestic Arctic policy centers only on Alaska, where a slew of domestic agencies have overlapping and often conflicting oversight and regulatory responsibilities.”

(<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/planetpolicy/posts/2015/04/23-us-arctic-challenges-ebinger>). Arguably, such divisions exist within other Arctic nations as well. Indeed, Exner-Pirot (2015a) suggests that this is the tip of the iceberg for a more chronic problem: “The Arctic Council is struggling even now, at a very practical level, to accommodate everyone who wants to be included in its work. Eight states and six Permanent Participants is a workable number for constructive discussion, but as anyone who has ever been on a committee knows, probably at the

higher end of the scale. Having a formal role for sub-national governments could lead to the development of smaller in-groups where the actual decisions get made, and necessarily a larger group where they are not.” So it would seem that in the case of the US, more than a distracting internal problem of politics but an inherent weakness – the US Arctic Council platform reifies state centrality and hegemony over a more organic and bottom-up process of region-building. And this bottom-up process, represented by contestation and questioning of legitimacy of state actors, lacks flexibility. While some Arctic states seem to have the inherent flexibility to do so – the Canadian Chairmanship being a case in point - the US cannot. This is particularly the case because of the relationship cultivated between US Arctic policy and national security, which remains embedded in the 2014 National Arctic Strategy document whose three stated goals are, in order, Advance United States Security Interests, Pursue Responsible Arctic Region Stewardship and Strengthen International Cooperation. Indeed, the US has dozens of different agencies with Arctic portfolios (see https://www.arctic.gov/portal/us_gov.html). This means that the way in which Arctic issues emerge, are politicized, and play out in the US is peculiar to the US. Arguably the same was true of the Canadian Chairmanship whereby a series of Northern strategy documents and “action plans” led to a codified perspective on the federal government position, which was often quite at odds with that of its territorial governments or indigenous peoples Governments. In other words, despite Arctic cooperation, national and foreign policies still matter in setting the Arctic Council agenda and this can lead us to understand where the fault lines lie - and why. This argument has been previously made by a number of researchers and all indications are that it remains true (Keskitalo, 2004; Heininen and Nicol, 2007. Bailes and Heininen, 2012; Nicol, 2015).

It also suggests that the problem of sustainable development versus environmental protection is more than a matter of transient competing interests; it is a deeper landscape of interest and agency. The fusion of science and national interest in the US is particularly acute – and has been since the inception of the Arctic Council, if not before. Indeed, science has long provided the excuse for Arctic and Antarctic exploration and the deployment of military in the Arctic throughout the Cold War era (Dodds and Nuttall, 2015). Arctic science and technology are mutually supportive discourses, feeding into a broader understanding of the North as a testing ground and a site for exhibiting national prowess of scientific agendas. So it is important to recall that not only did science drive the initial cooperation which led to the establishment of the Arctic Council (Fenge, 2013; Keskitalo, 2004) and its various environmental agreements, it was the idea of scientific cooperation on environmental issues that created the region in the first place. Even though environmental challenges, including first pollution and then climate change are compelling, it is well to remember as Kesitalo (2004) reminds us, that they were first and foremost constructed narratives deployed in the region-building process, and not universalized, pre-determined “truths – even though they might have been perceived as such”.

If science and environment were constructed as the appropriate foundations of international cooperation, one important reason why they were readily accepted by the most reluctant of Arctic states – the US – was their appeal to more general American nation-building narratives. There is a sense in both the US and the rest of

the world that US scientific institutions are powerful, globally hegemonic institutions. Science is constructed as a neutral, depoliticized activity, and coincidentally supportive of promoting American interests – specifically those articulated in Obama’s National Strategy for the Arctic Region (13 pp), which “recognizes that participation in the Arctic Council is a central element of protecting the U.S. Arctic and its unique ecosystem and cultures”. Arctic economic development, on the other hand, is not similarly positioned. This is as historically true (Keskitalo, 2004; English, 2013; Heininen and Nicol, 2007) as it is today. The prominence of American scientific agencies in the work of the Arctic Council is undisputable – from the situation of the Arctic Council in Oceans and Polar Affairs to its engagement with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/National Ocean Services, and the US Arctic Science Research Commission which advises both the president and Congress on international and domestic Arctic research. Exner-Pirot (2015) argues that, indeed, the US only became interested in the Arctic as a consequence of climate change: “It was not until the Arctic assumed greater geopolitical importance in the mid-2000s, as a consequence of climate change and its conspicuous effects in the Arctic, that the United States began to devote more protracted attention to the region. Its chairmanship comes at an important time for the region as the Council is evolving from a policy-shaping institution with the primary outcomes of high quality scientific reports to a policy-making institution, with influence if not responsibility for regional environmental governance and regulatory implementation at the national level.” Similar rhetoric is found on the preamble to the US Arctic Council Chair’s website, which outlines its regional agenda: “The U.S. will be chairing the Arctic Council at a crucial moment when the effects of climate change are bringing a myriad of new environmental, human and economic opportunities and challenges to the Arctic. During the U.S. Chairmanship, the State Department will focus the Arctic work it carries out through the Arctic Council, various international scientific cooperation mechanisms and, in some cases, domestic initiatives led by U.S. states or other U.S. government agencies.”(US State Department: <http://www.state.gov/e/oes/ocns/opa/arc/uschair/index.htm>)

The positioning of Sustainability Development under the US Chairmanship is now very clearly focused on science in support of engineering and infrastructure, or health and technology, not regional capacity-building in terms of economic well-being or lifting standards of living. Similar to the Canadian Chairmanship, the US Chairmanship views economic development as a domestic issue - meaning that the northern specificity of economic development disqualified it from a broader US Arctic policy in the eyes of US Arctic Council policy-makers. For Young (2016), who recently noted that there is an imbalance in the organization of the Arctic Council arising from what he calls “the normal practice of treating environmental protection as one of the three pillars of sustainable development ” - this imbalance is embedded in the problem that “most of the Council’s Working Groups deal with matters of environmental protection and the Sustainable Development Working Group lacks a coherent program and a well-defined constituency. What is needed is a reconfiguration of the Council to identify sustainable development as its overarching theme or mandate and to recognize environmental protection as a critical element of sustainable development.” For Young this would result in giving that economic integrity and sociocultural well-being the same degree of recognition and the same level as environmental protection (Young, 2016, 14).

Turning the region on its head: the World Economic Forum and the Arctic Investment Protocol

Because the US has consistently presented roadblocks to the incorporation of economic development interests in any meaningful way (Keskitalo, 2004) - the loss of support for economic development which happened after the transition from Canadian Chairmanship has contributed to a recent “rescaling” of the sustainable development issue by sub-state and non-state actors. By 2014, even as economic development increasingly became isolated from the general concept of sustainable development within the Arctic Council program, and offshored to the AEC, it had resurfaced in the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) Arctic Global Agenda Council (AGAC) and the larger circles of transnational capitalism. This amounted to an unparalleled loss of capacity. As Young suggests, one way forward in resolving the impasse that has resulted from the development-environment gap in the Arctic Council “would be to treat the AEC as the mechanism for addressing the economic pillar of sustainable development, a development that would highlight the need to devise similar mechanisms to address critical issues of cultural vitality and health, education, and welfare as the third pillar.”(Young, 2016,14). This is not to say that the WEF effort directly resulted from the US Chairmanship agenda, but that it has gained traction and credibility as a result. The WEF and its Arctic Investment Protocol deftly sidesteps the issue of domestic versus international policy.

Indeed, nothing signaled the problem of sustainable development as an Arctic Council theme as much as the failure of the AEC to be associated directly with the Arctic Council forum. The Council, while established under the Canadian Chair and represents regional interests, falls under Alaskan leadership which has been active in contesting the Washington consensus of Arctic policy (see the Alaskan Policy Commission). It is intended to work through regional business stakeholders, rather than represent a global forum. Early in 2016, as some feared the Arctic Economic Council would fail as a viable initiative, its Chair, Tara Sweeny, noted that “One of the antidotes to poverty is through economic and employment opportunity and small and medium-sized businesses help fuel that. That track is extremely important to the future of the organization.” (<https://www.adn.com/article/20160128/how-will-arctic-economic-council-shape-business-future-north>). Sweeny’s leadership of the AEC reflects an Indigenous and Alaskan perspective on the circumpolar North and is, in so many ways, dissimilar from the perspective of the US federal government in terms of its prioritization of themes for governance within the region. Still, the future of the AEC has made some of its proponents nervous. The Council suffers from a lack of profile and a lack of clarity as to the strength and interest in its role. Indeed, given the struggle faced by the sustainable development working group, and the marginalization of the AEC to a “linked” council but not a body of the Arctic Council, this is understandable. While the goals of the AEC are to foster business development in the Arctic, engage in deeper circumpolar cooperation, and provide a business perspective to the work of the Arctic Council, one wonders how this will proceed without deep buy-in from all Arctic States.

There is clearly another group of business interests with similar concerns. The World Economic Forum, and its Global Agenda Council on the Arctic, produced a

substantial report known as “Demystifying the Arctic” in 2014. Painting the Arctic as a neoliberal investment frontier, it uses much of the normative discourse on Arctic environments to cultivate an argument for economic development. Identifying five “persistent myths” about the Arctic, the document’s goal is to shift conversation to another level – to identify the Arctic “as a global asset that should be maintained” in the language of neoliberal globalization, as “an emerging market”. In December of 2015, the AGAC produced another document known as the Arctic Investment Protocol (AIP – see

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Arctic_Investment_Protocol.pdf). Building upon the foundations of the larger document, the AIP outlined what it identified as six “guidelines for responsible investment in the Arctic” (WEF, 2015). Clearly a document which defines the Arctic as a field for economic resource development and large scale investment, the document provides a roadmap for the creation of an Arctic Development Bank, specifically targeted to provide funding for regional infrastructure. The motivation is the potential development of shipping lanes and infrastructure for resource extraction industries supported by global investors. Presumably, the AIP will form the basis of loan terms for the AGAC’s goal of the creation of an Arctic development bank. The Arctic Investment Protocol, the companion document produced by the GACA the next year, expands upon the concept of best practices and protocols. In doing so it calls for the promotion of “sustainable and equitable economic growth in the region that furthers community well-being and builds resilient societies in a fair, inclusive and environmentally sound manner.”

(http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GAC/2014/WEF_GAC_Arctic_DemystifyingArctic_Report_2014.pdf)

At its core, then, the AIP is a document embedded in neoliberal understandings of economic regionalism applied to Arctic contexts (see Dittmer et. al. 2011). It speaks to the way in which both Alaskan and global capital has managed to rescale the problem of sustainable development with reference to the Davos process and global finance. Its board is diverse and includes leadership from a variety of agencies, states and actors which all claim to have legitimate regional interests. And yet at its heart the initiative is led by the same actors which have promoted the Alaskan economic development agenda and Arctic Economic Council, as well as a broader community of business and development partners already cultivated through forums like the Arctic Circle – including the Arctic Economic Council. The goal is to create standards which integrate science and economy within the larger global forum, presumably to create leverage not only for investment, but to circumnavigate the politics of an increasing economic-environment firewall erected by US national strategy for the Arctic. The aim is a regional investment bank, and the scope global, as witnessed by the range of Members of the Global Agenda Council on the Arctic.

Conclusion

Clearly national agendas remain important to what might otherwise appear to be a broad-based regional cooperation. And borders remain the referent point for national strategies which orient the Arctic policies of all Arctic states (Bailed and Heininen, 2012; Heininen and Nicol, 2007). Still, such arrays of power and influence are constantly challenged, within states as well as by other states. The successive

contestations concerning climate change and economic development which have marked Arctic Council deliberations since its establishment continue to play to a coterie of competing domestic, global and state/non-state interests. The economic focus of the Canadian Chair, between 2013 and 2015, for example, resulted in a situation of business and investment interests upon and within the circumpolar region, making specific reference to Arctic communities and regional enterprises. Under the US Chairmanship, however, as the agenda shifts focus from regional economic development to climate change, so has the scale of enterprise. A “squeezed out” regional economic development agenda has rescaled and reorganized globally – drawing upon structures of investment and influence at the global level, and appealing to non-Arctic as well as Arctic states. Here borders, even between the circumpolar North and the non-Arctic actors, are being smoothed by growing networks of financial interest and investment.

This fusing of the goals of specific sub-state and non-state actors situated within the circumpolar North with larger, global frameworks of interest has left the sutures of what was a carefully constructed regional dialogue and identity now more vulnerable to more global development interests. An exclusive focus on either environment or development policy agendas has had different boundary effects. The World Economic Forum’s Arctic Investment Protocol and its global momentum turns the ambitions of the Arctic Council on its head – prioritizing large extraterritorial agency for regional investment and infrastructure. Here the edges of the region are increasingly poorly defined as the North is positioned within a broader world of investment and flows, moving within a global economy. The failed movement to build a powerful and embedded sustainable development program, as witnessed by the marginalization of the Arctic Economic Council (AEC) has likely meant that the World Economic Forum’s process, with its appeal to global wealth, power and investment will continue to move agency from regional actors to global actors in the interests of the North.

But if the Arctic Council focus on climate science under the US Chairmanship seems to have served to continue a well-bounded regional interest in environment and health – this is somewhat deceptive. The impacts of environmental change will be worldwide and present a challenging security scenario for American interests. There is a degree of reflexivity here, as well, in the scaling of the Arctic as a field for intervention. Motivation for the GLACIER meetings in Alaska, in 2015, were described by some (see for example, Higginbotham in Falsey, 2015) as an appeal for global interest in Northern climates – and a means of overcoming resistance to the US climate change agenda within the Arctic Council though direct appeal to actors outside the Arctic region. In other words, in the wake of the Canadian Chairmanship agenda, the AEC and pressure by large environmental lobby groups to shift the US State Department’s emphasis to climate change, assistance from a non-Arctic global community was solicited. Indeed, if the WEF rescales Alaskan regional will be interests as global, then so does the science agenda, albeit in different ways. So it would seem, and this point is key, that in many ways these developments turn what Dodds and Steinberg (2014) have argued is the key characteristic of the Arctic region-building on its head. They note that “whereas in most intergovernmental organizations the key divide is between states (which are members) and non-state entities (which are observers), in the AC it is between actors with a territorial stake and those that, although interested in the region’s outcome, are fundamentally

outsiders.” It now would seem, in the case of the Arctic region, that the shoe is on the other foot. Differences are now being resolved by an appeal to make the community of interest larger and broader to gain authority. Now those with an interest in economic development have appealed to the global community of interest – notably through the WEF and AIP, while the climate change community in addition to defining national interest through a strong climate science agenda, references the global impacts of climate change to sharpen its regional focus.

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Tables

Table 1: US Arctic Executive Steering Committee Working Groups

1. The Community Resilience Working Group provides overall guidance and direction relating to federal actions that address the imminent threat of the impacts of climate change, including coastal erosion, flooding, and permafrost degradation on Alaskan Arctic communities.
2. The Energy Working Group enhances coordination of Federal efforts, coordination of Federal investment with non-federal partners, and collaboration with international partners, with the aim of improving remote energy access, increasing clean energy deployment, and reducing energy costs in Alaska.
3. The Alaska Native Working Group improves dialogue with Alaska Native communities through an agency-tribal consultation process consistent with EO 13175, and provides greater cross-agency coordination and a venue for communicating the larger federal portfolio of activities.
4. The Digital Elevation Model Working Group produces models and products from high-resolution commercial satellite imagery data provided by the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency for regional planning and emergency preparedness and response.
5. The Arctic Science Ministerial Working Group advises on the planned minister-level international summit in 2016 that will catalyze international cooperation in Arctic science, and support the effective use of science investments among Arctic States and key partners through stronger coordination.
6. The Communications and Digital Products Working Group coordinates external communications efforts on behalf of the AESC to build increased understanding of how the changing conditions in the Arctic are impacting people and resources in the region and beyond.

Figure captions

Figure 1: the Circumpolar north defined by the the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP). Available at:

<http://arcticstudies.pbworks.com/w/page/13623280/amap?revision=42689133>

Figure 2: Natural resource development and infrastructure projects in the North (CanNor, 2013). Available at:

<http://www.cannor.gc.ca/eng/1386004855342/1386004881540>