

2 Examining the Consequences of Arctic Institutions

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INTRODUCTION

How should we go about evaluating whether Arctic institutions matter significantly to governments and others in their efforts to cope with regional challenges? In Chapter 1, we identified three types of impact that are especially relevant to the institutions examined here: (1) effectiveness, defined as mitigation or removal of specific problems; (2) political mobilization, highlighting changes in participation and influence in decision making on Arctic affairs; and (3) region building, understood as contributions by Arctic institutions to denser functional or discursive connectedness among the inhabitants of the region. ‘Functional connectedness’ refers to flows of commodities, people and ideas, whereas ‘discursive regionality’ is the extent to which the region is thought and spoken of as a distinctive unit.¹ The actors involved in the creation and operation of Arctic institutions have differed in the emphasis they place on each of those categories of impact, but all three figure prominently in the rhetoric surrounding cooperative initiatives.

In developing an analytical framework for the case studies that follow, this chapter proceeds in four steps. First, I pinpoint some challenges associated with substantiating causal connections between Arctic regimes and any changes in problem solving, political participation or regionality. There are various ways of making such substantiation, but all involve serious consideration of rival explanations for such changes. Then I elaborate on the concept of regime effectiveness, notably the objects one may focus on when assessing effectiveness, and the need for explicit evaluative yardsticks. Because many of the problems addressed by Arctic institutions are also targeted by other international bodies, some comments are made about institutional interplay. The third step is to explain how political mobilization on Arctic affairs may be influenced by certain structural features of Arctic

institutions. Finally, I discuss relationships between the functional and discursive dimensions of regionality and relate them to activities under Arctic institutions.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Practitioners and scholars pay attention to international institutions because they are believed to contribute to the attainment of desired goals. Much of the early work on international institutions focused on regime formation and maintenance (Krasner ed 1983). Indirectly, these studies also dealt with regime consequences, by highlighting how international institutions enable states to coordinate their actions in mutually beneficial ways (e.g. Keohane 1984). Not until around 1990, however, were systematic and empirically based inquiries into the actual impacts of international regimes launched; and it is only recently that several more ambitious investigations into the consequences that flow from regimes have been reported.²

It follows from the causal nature of a claim about regime impacts – i.e. that an institution matters significantly in solving specific problems, empowering new actors, or strengthening interactive or discursive regionality – that simply observing change along those dimensions will not suffice. Substantiating a causal effect requires examination of other causal processes that might be at work alongside the institution and that could suggest alternative explanations. In an effectiveness assessment, for instance, the problem addressed – whether defined in terms of the environmental, economic, or societal state of affairs – will normally be affected by a number of factors other than social institutions, like changes in demand and supply, technological innovations, and societal beliefs. Moreover, with social institutions, the institution under study is usually only one among several.

One way to assess causal impacts in such complex situations is to trace certain processes that mediate between the institution and the consequence under scrutiny. This approach is often taken in studies involving a small number of cases (Yin 1989). Here evidence for a particular causal account is built by bringing out the fine details of how an outcome came about through a sequence of events, each of which has a causal history less complex than the ultimate outcome and hence is easier to control (George and McKeown 1985). To be persuasive, such tracing must relate the institution to causal mechanisms, i.e. certain constellations of agency and context generally

believed to trigger behavioural adaptation (Stokke 2004). In fact, most of the large-scale trans-national projects on regime effectiveness conducted since the early 1990s have been structured as intensive, loosely comparative case studies that embrace such a 'mechanism approach' to the formulation and substantiation of causal claims.

The sets of mechanisms proposed in regime effectiveness studies have varied considerably in specificity and comprehensiveness, but at the high end of generality they can be subsumed under three categories. First, regimes may affect behaviour by cognitive means, i.e. by influencing actors' awareness about certain problems and how they are affected by them, or their knowledge about ways in which they can be mitigated. Second, regimes may affect perceptions about what is right and proper conduct within an issue area: that is, by making regime norms more compelling. There can be various reasons for such compellingness. Franck (1990: 16) defines legitimacy in the international domain as 'a property of a rule or rule-making institution which itself exerts a pull towards compliance on those addressed normatively because those addressed believe that the rule or institution has come into being and operates in accordance with generally accepted principles of right process'. He goes on to extract from the legal literature on international legitimacy certain 'building blocks of due process', including various types of procedural validation which in the context of environmental issues would highlight matters like transparency and involvement of stakeholders or relevant impartial expertise (Bodansky 1999). A third general way in which regimes may affect behaviour is by altering the utility that actors assign to behavioural options within an issue area, for instance by providing incentives for rule adherence or by adding costs to non-compliance.³

The stylized model of behavioural drivers implied by this trichotomy is simple, but the cognitive and normative components sensitize the analysis to processes which are frequently downplayed in the study of international relations: those associated with legitimacy and changes in beliefs and perceived interests. While they will not be equally relevant in each given case, such a broader range of mechanisms can be useful for substantiating the impacts of international regimes on specific problem solving, mobilization or changes in discursive or interactive regionality.

EFFECTIVENESS AND INTERPLAY

The effectiveness of international regimes is usually understood as the extent to which an institution helps in solving or ameliorating the specific problem it was set up to address.⁴ Such problem solving is a matter of degree; it is not unusual that changes occur over time, as a result of a gradual strengthening of the regime in question, whether because of more elaborate or more restrictive rules, or because greater resources are made available for regional programmes.

Views differ as to what should be in focus when measuring degrees of problem solving. David Easton's distinctions between outputs (decisions), outcomes (behaviour) and impacts (on policy objectives) have been used to characterize the various objects that may be focused on (Underdal 1992). Early contributions had a distinct output focus: environmental institutions, for instance, were evaluated by the extent of environmental protection activities conducted within them (Kay and Jacobson eds 1983). Later on, the outputs in focus were broadened to include also state-level activities taken in response to international regimes. By encouraging empirical investigation of relevant activities conducted at international (regime) or national levels, the output approach to regime effectiveness is already far removed from the 'old institutionalism' which concentrated on the formal structure of the bodies involved (Thelen and Steinmo 1992). It would be difficult to find effectiveness studies today that try to do without analysis of institutional outputs.

That said, many scholars highlight the need to go beyond institutional and governmental outputs and examine critically the causal relevance of those outputs to furthering the goals pursued by the regime. This requires expanding the analysis to include the behavioural outcomes that flow from regime-induced rules or programmes. The range of actors whose behaviour is examined will depend on the purpose of the regime and the particular challenges faced in the activity system that a regime seeks to influence. Always included is the behaviour of target groups – those actors, frequently industrial groups, who engage in activities that generate the problems addressed by the regime. As shown by Stokke (1998), for instance, various efforts within Arctic institutions to deal with the threat of nuclear contamination stemming from Soviet-era dumping of nuclear reactors have focused on engaging parts of Russia's military complex in monitoring and preventive activities.⁵

Important as it is to elicit behavioural change in desired directions, in the end regimes are intended to solve, or at least ameliorate, certain socio-economic, political or environmental problems that regional players are struggling with. To evaluate whether behavioural impacts contribute to such improvement, we need explicit yardsticks of effectiveness. Obviously, such yardsticks must reflect the stated objectives of Arctic institutions, or of regime participants, but there are other concerns as well. Notably, the yardstick should mirror the extent to which the behaviour that generates regional problems is within the reach of Arctic institutions or is regulated under other institutions. The interconnectedness of many Arctic challenges (for instance in the environmental area) with activities that occur in other parts of the globe suggests that the effectiveness of Arctic institutions will be contingent on their interplay with other, usually broader, institutions that address the same or closely related issues.

Systematic attention to such institutional interplay, in which the contents or operation of one institution are significantly affected by another, is relatively recent.⁶ Whereas the regime literature in general has been criticized for painting a rosy picture of world affairs, with insufficient attention to turf struggles and conflictual interests (Mearsheimer 1995), early studies of institutional interplay were often rather negatively framed. Typical points of departure were instances of normative discord, duplication of work and institutional competition; hence the frequent appearance in the literature of negatively charged terms like ‘treaty congestion’ and problems associated with increased ‘regime density’.⁷ One reason for this negative framing lay in certain widely publicized cases of inter-regime tension along the trade–environment border (Runge 1994; Schoenbaum 1997). In contrast, an important finding from recent empirical studies of regime effectiveness, conducted in a wide range of issue areas, is that cross-regime inefficiency or discord are not predominant aspects of interplay.⁸

The approach to institutional interplay taken in this book employs the notion of institutional niches. In ecology, a ‘niche’ denotes the position of a species or population in an ecosystem, notably that segment of a resource domain where it out-competes other local populations. Used as a metaphor in organizational analysis, the niche concept highlights the relationship between institutional features and ability to extract the resources necessary for organizational survival (Hannan and Freeman 1977). According to the principle of competitive exclusion, no two species can occupy the same niche for a long time, because competition between species or populations

will force the weaker party either to adapt, by carving out another niche, or to abandon the ecosystem. It would be imprudent to assume that the competitive exclusion principle operates as forcefully in the realm of social institutions as in natural ecosystems. Nevertheless, it is usually expected of new institutions, like those examined in this book, that they add unique value compared to existing problem-solving efforts. Without such added value, institutions will be vulnerable to charges of wastefulness or redundancy which may ultimately undermine support for their maintenance.

Applied to our cases, a niche approach to interplay inquires whether the Arctic institutions concentrate on aspects of problem solving that are not adequately dealt with by other institutions or that Arctic bodies are particularly well equipped or positioned to address. Here, the three mechanisms of influence can be useful in structuring the analysis. As shown in the case studies that follow, the Arctic institutions have all carved out a *cognitive* niche for themselves, in that generation of knowledge not provided elsewhere has been an important task and meant to form a basis for taking action in areas such as radioactive pollution, the spread of hazardous contaminants, or the state of public health. Only rarely have these institutions sought to occupy a *normative* niche, which would imply active moves to strengthen the contents or application of existing international rules or establish new ones. With respect to the third, utilitarian mechanism, the following chapters provide several instances where Arctic institutions serve to enhance the *capacity* of states and other actors to behave in ways that can further problem solving.⁹

To summarize, an assessment of institutional effectiveness will start out from regulatory and programmatic activities and delve as deeply as possible into their impacts on the behaviour of actors relevant to the problem that the institution was set up to address, and the state of that problem. The parallel emergence of several international institutions attending to a broad range of Arctic challenges, and the fact that many Arctic problems originate in other parts of the world, suggest that institutional interplay will impinge upon the effectiveness of Arctic institutions. Examining such interplay in terms of institutional niches means inquiring whether Arctic institutions focus on aspects of problem solving where they have particular advantages compared to other international bodies.

POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

For purposes of empirical analysis, the narrow, issue-specific lens of regime effectiveness analysis is a strength as well as a liability. Other things being equal, a sharp focus on specific problem solving permits better causal substantiation of regime impacts. Increasingly, however, students of international regimes have begun exploring a broader set of consequences, including whether regimes influence patterns of decision making between and within states, regional cohesion, or the conditions for peaceful change (Underdal and Young 2004). In this book about Arctic institutions and regional cooperation, the question of participation in decision making is salient, notably whether regional institutions affect bureaucratic or societal involvement.

The structural component of Arctic institutions involves how they differentiate among current and potential participants with respect to substantive rights and duties or procedural roles in decision making.¹⁰ In Chapter 1 we pinpointed the vertical aspect of this: how the new institutions serve to connect the various layers of Arctic regionality – the international, trans-national, and sub-national. It is one of the distinctive features of Arctic institutions that they involve not only representatives of national governments but also provincial governments, organizations of indigenous peoples where appropriate, and other civil society groups. This participatory expansion originated with the Finnish initiative to establish the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy. Prior to this, the Saami Council had for years – and in vain – sought formal involvement in the various regional bodies of Nordic cooperation. In 1989, three indigenous peoples' organizations, among them the Saami Council, had at Canadian insistence been invited to participate as observers in the set of meetings that created the AEPS. This circumpolar process created a path that would have been difficult to deviate from when Norway subsequently launched the BEAR initiative. Indeed, recognition of the legitimacy of indigenous participation has arguably been brought one step further in the BEAR's Regional Council, since no differentiation is made between the indigenous peoples' representative and the county-level leadership assembled in this body, designated as the 'engine' of the Barents Region.¹¹ Similar comments apply to the participation of the European Commission in the Barents Council and in the Council of the Baltic Sea States. In the early 1990s, all the frontier regions in Europe straddling the old East–West border had explicitly aimed at arousing the interest of the European Union – but only those two succeeded in eliciting a formal EU response (Veggeland 1994). The Commission does not, however, have a formal role in the work of the Arctic Council.

The horizontal dimension of how Arctic institutions structure their decision making is also of interest and stems from the broad functional scope of these new institutions. Covering a wide range of issue areas, especially the sub-regional institutions are well placed to allow various issues to be integrated when considering options for regional projects. In the formative stages of the BEAR, for instance, a subtle linkage was apparently drawn between the realization of broader economic cooperation in the region (desired by Russia), and progress in the environmental area (a Nordic priority) (Stokke 1994).¹² Foreign ministry representatives are the leading governmental players in all the institutions examined here, but field ministries are involved in delegations and at working-group level. A review of the Arctic Council structure concluded that the active and strong involvement of a range of ministries will be decisive for its success (Haavisto 2001: 36). The frameworks of the Barents Council and the Council of the Baltic Sea States also provide for separate meetings of field ministers.

REGION BUILDING

Another type of broader consequences important for evaluating Arctic institutions concerns the extent to which they contribute to constructing the Arctic as a political region. The term 'region', when used about political entities, is closely linked to the study of integration – a growth industry in the 1960s. Trying to condense past efforts to define political regions, Thompson (1973) first identified 21 much-cited and rather different meanings. He then restricted the term to clusters of at least two actors, finally narrowing in on geographic proximity, interaction and recognition. It would violate everyday language to term a cluster of territories 'regional' unless they were linked by either land or water. Similarly, no region has been claimed that does not involve considerable interaction within one or more spheres, whether conflictual or cooperative. This does not imply, of course, that the territories in question must be self-sufficient in economic, political or other terms; or that flows of communication and trade beyond regional boundaries are insignificant. What it does mean is that individuals, groups and state representatives view problems and opportunities in the area through a regional prism, and that outsiders too recognize the region as standing out from its surroundings.

In essence, therefore, the core of regionality is the interactive and discursive distinctiveness of more or less clearly defined geographic areas. Moreover,

regionality is not simply a condition to be assessed by fixed criteria. As captured by the notion of region building, this phenomenon can also appear as a project or goal pursued by political entrepreneurs who seek to enhance regional framing among industrialists, policy makers and others.¹³ Neumann (1994: 59) may exaggerate the point when positing that regions are ‘talked and written into existence’, but the discursive aspect of regionality is to some extent separable from density of functional interaction. For instance, in the area now termed the Barents Region, the idea of the Northern hinterlands being joined together by their distinctiveness from the South was kept alive on the Nordic side by the North Calotte cooperation and widened geographically by the fact that the Pomor trade era was only a few generations past.¹⁴

The two faces of regionality will often stimulate one another: images and memories of historic ties are often mobilized to muster support for region-building efforts and to boost interaction among groups and individuals within a region in the making.¹⁵ Those who have pushed for greater cooperation under the Council of Baltic Sea States have frequently made references to the medieval Hansa trade networks that connected regional cities.¹⁶ Often, those who favour an Arctic framing of problems and opportunities seek to counter-balance the predominant centre–periphery framing inherent in the fact that Arctic territories form segments of several larger countries whose centre of gravity and national priorities tend to lie elsewhere (Young 2000). Underlying our interest in region building is a concern about the conditions for peaceful change in the region. A more or less explicit objective of all the initiatives that were to give rise to new Arctic institutions was to facilitate the peaceful integration of Russia into cooperative structures – structures that had been wanting, or that had involved only Western states.

An obvious approach to studying evolving regionality is to examine changes in patterns of regional interaction at political levels or in the economic and cultural spheres. All the case studies in this book address such changes within their respective issue areas. However, the phenomena referred to by ‘discursive distinctiveness’ can be more difficult to measure. Such distinctiveness will sometimes be reflected in institutional features like separate bureaucratic bodies responsible for regional matters. Indeed, the establishment of circumpolar and sub-regional structures for cooperation is itself an indication that Northern territories are becoming recognized as distinctive in significant ways. It is equally clear that such formal-

institutional regionality must have a substantive counterpart at the level of civil society if it is to remain a stable feature of Arctic affairs, in that regional-level solutions are regularly explored as relevant (if not always adequate) when responding to problems and opportunities. A political region requires a measure of common identity among state representatives, groups and individuals, and this must to a considerable extent be reflected in flows of interaction.

CONCLUSIONS

The analytical framework advanced in this chapter has three main components. Effectiveness is assessed by examining whether an institution contributes significantly to the removal or mitigation of the problem that motivated its formation. Such contributions may occur by generating information about the severity of the problem or ways to mitigate it, by making international norms more compelling, or by altering the ability of relevant actors to behave in desirable ways or the cost associated with failure to do so. The same underlying causal mechanisms – shorthand as ‘cognitive’, ‘normative’ or ‘utilitarian’ – are drawn upon when examining impacts on political participation in Arctic decision making and the development of closer ties between governments, organizations and individuals in the North. Such regional ties show up not only in direct interaction but also in how problems and opportunities are framed by players inside and outside the region.

In the following chapters, this framework structures the case studies of Arctic institutions at work in five important policy areas: indigenous affairs, communicable diseases, pollution control and biodiversity, climate change and environmental concerns in the oil and gas sectors.

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NOTES

¹ These notions are elaborated below.

² See Young (1999), Brown Weiss and Jacobson (1998), and Miles, Underdal et al. (2002); trans-national effectiveness projects reported earlier include Haas et al. (1993) and Stokke and Vidas (1996).

³ The second of those mechanisms is essential to the 'logic of appropriateness' articulated by March and Olsen (1989: 21–6) the third to their 'logic of consequentiality', whereas the cognitive mechanism is an essential ingredient in both logics. My reason for treating cognitive influence as a separate mechanism is that improvement of factual knowledge about the problem at hand is among the most prominent activities under international institutions. Note that a rather parallel trichotomy has emerged in the literature on policy instruments, which tends to distinguish between economic means, regulation, and information (Vedung 1998: 30–1).

⁴ See for instance Keohane et al. (1993: 7), Bernauer (1995: 364), Young and Levy (1999: 4–5), and Underdal (2002: 11).

⁵ See also Chapter 5 in this book.

⁶ See Underdal and Young (eds 2004) and Oberthür and Gehring (eds 2006). In focus in this book is horizontal interplay: i.e. that involving institutions at the same level of governance. Vertical interplay concerns the relationship between, for instance, international and national levels of governance; see Young (2002).

⁷ See for instance Brown Weiss (1993: 697–702) and Andresen (2001).

⁸ See in particular Young (ed 1999), Stokke (ed 2001), Miles, Underdal et al. (2002), and Oberthür and Gehring (eds 2006). This finding corresponds with earlier observations from single-regime evaluations: summarizing a set of case studies on environmental governance, Keohane et al. (1993: 15)

found it ‘somewhat surprising, but heartening, to discover that in our cases, cooperation among agencies is more salient than interinstitutional conflict’.

⁹ The negative version of this mechanism – sanctions in reaction to undesired behaviour – has not been relevant for Arctic institutions.

¹⁰ On the distinction between the normative and structural components of international regimes, see Stokke and Vidas (1996).

¹¹ On the other hand, the Saami and the Nenets do not have a seat in the intergovernmental Barents Council.

¹² The clearest evidence of this linkage is found in the Joint Declaration from the Meeting of the Ministers of Environment of the Nordic Countries and the Russian Federation, Kirkenes 3–4 September 1992, which states that ‘The Ministers recognize that solving the existing major trans-boundary environmental problems will be central in realizing the potential for broader cooperation in the Barents Region...’.

¹³ On the distinction between (top–down) ‘regionalism’ and (bottom–up) ‘regionalization’, and the attempt to transcend that distinction by a ‘region-building’ approach, see for instance Neumann (1994) and Keskitalo (2004: 6–11).

¹⁴ On the Russian side, this would be true for Arkhangelsk oblast in particular. Unlike the inhabitants of Murmansk, who moved into the region only after the Russian Revolution, many in Arkhangelsk still use the Pomor era as an important frame of reference in judging the behaviour of foreigners (Castberg et al. 1994: 72). The Pomor trade between the northerly parts of Russia and Norway lasted for nearly two centuries up till the Russian Revolution, and mainly involved the exchange of Norwegian fish for Russian grain and wood products from the area around Arkhangelsk For a presentation of the North Calotte partnership, see www.nordkalottradet.nu.

¹⁵ See for instance Keskitalo (2004).

¹⁶ On this *Mare Balticum* rhetoric, see Chapter 4 by Hønneland and Rowe, this volume.