

## 8 International Institutions and Arctic

### Governance

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#### INTRODUCTION

This book has examined the consequences of Arctic institutions on important socio-economic issues related to indigenous concerns, communicable disease control, pollution and conservation, climate change, as well as oil and gas activities.<sup>1</sup> Applying the analytical framework presented in Chapter 2, several case studies have examined the impacts in those issue areas with regard to three circumpolar or sub-regional initiatives that emerged due to improvements in East-West relations two decades ago: the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, and the Baltic Sea Region. Institutional consequences have been studied at three levels: (1) effectiveness, defined as mitigation or removal of specific problems addressed by the institution; (2) political mobilization, highlighting changes in the pattern of involvement and influence in decision making on Arctic affairs; and (3) region-building, understood as contributions by Arctic institutions to denser interactive or discursive connectedness among inhabitants in the region. Those types of impact structure this concluding chapter, which summarizes and compares findings from the five in-depth case studies presented in preceding chapters.<sup>2</sup>

#### INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND NICHE SELECTION

The ‘effectiveness’ of an international institution refers to its ability to contribute significantly to removing or mitigating the problem that motivated its formation. In Chapter 2, we saw that, in the case of Arctic institutions, such effectiveness must be addressed with keen attention to their interplay with the broader set of institutions existing at global or regional levels that already address closely related matters. This is partly because Arctic environmental and socio-economic challenges are entwined with economic activities in other parts of the globe; but also among Arctic institutions, interplay is relevant since these are bodies that cover partly

overlapping issue areas and emerged somewhat haphazardly in the course of only a few years.

The ‘niche’ concept was introduced in Chapter 2 to capture an institution’s specialization as to what part of the problem it deals with and the type of resources it brings to bear on problem solving – and how such specialization relates to activities under other international bodies. I outlined three such niches, based on whether the institution in question specializes in cognitive activities (i.e. seeks to improve the level of knowledge about regional problems), in strengthening norms relevant to those problems, or in enhancing regional capacity to cope with them.

Niche selection revolves around whether the institution concentrates on aspects of problem solving that it is particularly well equipped or positioned to cope with. In this respect, at least three distinctive features of Arctic institutions are relevant. First, they were all set up in response to the cooperative window of opportunity that arose in the late 1980s with the improvement in East–West relations, and were largely motivated by a desire to involve Russia in robust cooperative structures and thereby enhance regional security. Second, Arctic institutions typically address a wide range of issue areas, including environmental protection, commerce and industry, health, education, and cultural affairs. A third feature that sets Arctic institutions apart from many others is participatory heterogeneity. In Chapter 1, we showed that these institutions tend to involve representatives not only of national governments but also of provincial governments, indigenous organizations where appropriate, and other civil society groups.

Taken together, the long-term security objectives and the broad functional scope have generated a willingness among Western participant states to pay a disproportionate share of the costs of Arctic collaborative endeavours. Especially at the sub-regional level, where economic and environmental interdependencies are the strongest, such willingness has also extended to costly capacity-enhancement programmes undertaken in Northwest Russia and the Baltic states. For its part, the participatory heterogeneity of Arctic institutions implies that actors who are marginal in other international arenas relevant to the North have come to see Arctic institutions as promising vehicles for pursuing their political goals. As discussed below, participatory heterogeneity is important for political empowerment and the building of a stronger regional identity, but it also impinges upon the ability

of Arctic institutions to induce changes that can contribute to solving the various problems they address.

### *Environmental research and monitoring*

Grave environmental challenges, not least in the Russian North, were among the driving forces for establishing the institutions examined here. All three institutions are characterized by functional breadth, activities ultimately aimed at alleviating environmental problems were among the first practical outcomes. This was in part because the new institutions were able to build upon pre-existing structures, notably dyads of bilateral environmental agreements drawn up in the late 1980s between the Soviet Union and most other Arctic states (Stokke 1990). Later on, when the Arctic Council was formally established, it subsumed within its purview the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), a mechanism for initiating and coordinating monitoring, normative and capacity-enhancement activities that already had a substantial track record.<sup>3</sup>

While the sub-regional bodies for Arctic environmental governance have focused on capacity enhancement, the Arctic Council has mainly opted for a niche that is cognitive – notably in terms of its environmental monitoring activities, which have emerged as the ‘specialization of the Arctic Council’ (Stenlund 2002: 837). Its Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) examines pathways and levels of hazardous contaminants, including persistent organic pollutants (POPs), heavy metals, radionuclides and hydrocarbons; examines their effects on human health and Arctic flora and fauna; and assesses impacts of climate change (AMAP 2004). Other permanent working groups under the Council focus on protection of the marine environment, emergency prevention, preparedness and control and conservation of Arctic flora and fauna. As noted in Chapter 5, these various working groups have produced a series of high-profiled reports on Arctic challenges, including two comprehensive AMAP Assessment Reports and several more specific ones in areas like as health and oil/gas, with an Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment due in 2008.<sup>4</sup>

The fact-finding endeavour to attract the greatest external attention so far is the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), coordinated jointly by the Arctic Council and the International Arctic Science Committee. As discussed by Hoel in Chapter 6, that assessment has aimed at taking stock of existing knowledge about the regional consequences of climate change. In

the end, substantial new knowledge had to be generated as well, clarifying the diversity of impacts across the Arctic region. It was already known that temperature rises in polar areas would be roughly twice the global average, with potentially strong effects on the heat exchange between land, air and water. The ACIA has spelt out in greater detail the impacts of a distinctly Arctic feedback mechanism, by which receding snow and ice will boost heat absorption and accelerate further melting. Tree-lines are expected to move hundreds of kilometres northwards; shifts in the occurrence of marine and terrestrial living resources are among the consequences of climate change that will affect Arctic residents directly. The dual role assumed by the USA in the global climate regime – rejecting commitments to specific emissions targets but contributing heavily to the scientific assessment work – is evident also here. The ACIA secretariat was placed at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, and the Assessment Steering Committee was headed by a US scientist.

Specializing in environmental monitoring allows the Arctic Council to take advantage of its circumpolar scope and the priority given by its member states to polar science. Involving scientists from all Arctic eight states enables more efficient compilation of environmental and human health data from the entire region than would be possible under bilateral or sub-regional structures. Although the Arctic region is heterogeneous in many respects, it has important commonalities like slow regenerative capacity, certain hot-spots highly vulnerable to disturbances, and joint placement at the receiving end of long-distance contaminant flows (AMAP 2002). At the same time, environmental monitoring is in the interest of all states involved – and, at least in the short run, it does not raise questions that are controversial in Arctic societies or between states, as regulatory issues might do. As such, a niche strategy focused on cognitive rather than normative contributions exploits the particular edge that the Arctic Council has over other bodies, without challenging the interests of any Arctic states.

### *Protecting the Arctic environment*

When it comes to *regulating* the activities that give rise to Arctic environmental problems, Arctic institutions have made far more modest substantive contributions than those in the cognitive, fact-finding domain. Having examined the various types of threats and the scope and strength of international legal instruments in the area, the working group on the matter concluded that there was no compelling need for new binding Arctic-level

instruments on the marine environment (PAME 1996). Instead, as noted in Chapter 5, non-binding and relatively general guidelines have been elaborated for use by national agencies, such as the Offshore Arctic Oil and Gas Guidelines. The standards contained here are derived from and invoke existing and legally binding instruments, including the Law of the Sea Convention, various agreements drawn up under the International Maritime Organization, and regional conventions. Such normative nesting – adaptive and subordinate placement within a broader institution – may contribute to environmental problem solving *if* the Arctic application adds specificity or determinacy to existing commitments, or *if* it engages Arctic states that have failed to join the broader instrument.<sup>5</sup> This is hardly the case for the Oil and Gas Guidelines, given their soft-law nature and low visibility in the relevant bureaucracies. Both for that document, and the more specific guidance provided by Arctic Council working groups on matters like oil transfer, oil-spills response and conservation of certain sea birds, the non-bindingness and lack of systematic review of implementation are likely to limit any impacts on the policies of Arctic states, province-level authorities and vessel operators.<sup>6</sup> Also the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) cooperation has maintained a very low profile with respect to regulating activities that lead to marine pollution.<sup>7</sup>

In some cases, Arctic institutions have played a role in what we may term a ‘catalytic approach’ to regulation.<sup>8</sup> The most prominent instances relate to the documentation provided under AMAP, showing how POPs bio-accumulate in the fatty tissue of fish and mammals that figure prominently in the diet of many Arctic residents. Thanks to close interaction between AMAP and the POPs Task Force under the Convention on Long-Range Transported Air Pollution (CLRTAP), those findings were fed into the process of negotiating the 1998 Århus Protocols on POPs and heavy metals under CLRTAP. The Arctic Council also provided a platform whereby Inuit organizations and other Northern players could strengthen their relations to foreign policy makers – especially in Canada (Fenge 2003) but also in the USA (Huntington and Sparck 2003) – and emphasize the Northern significance of the POPs issue. All considered, Arctic Council activities did contribute – albeit not decisively – to the regulatory clout of the 1998 Århus Protocols and the global Stockholm POPs Convention adopted three years later.<sup>9</sup>

While it should not be overstated, the influence of Arctic-Council based activities on broader regulatory strengthening on POPs was largely based on

the environmental monitoring programme developed under this particular institution. It also resulted from another distinctive feature of the Council – the unusually prominent place given to representatives of indigenous peoples. As Permanent Participants, Inuit organizations obtained direct and regular access to high-level officials in the foreign ministries of Arctic states – and biannually even to ministers. Those two features – coordination of an extensive and widely recognized research and monitoring endeavour, and participatory heterogeneity that provided indigenous representatives with access to decision makers – are unique to the Arctic Council, and indicate that other international institutions could not have triggered the same effect.

Consideration of the advantages that Arctic institutions may have over other levels of international governance is also relevant when evaluating the catalytic approach to POPs regulation – that is, providing inputs to broader, ongoing processes rather than seeking to develop stronger regional rules. Major sources of air- and waterborne contaminants that bio-accumulate in the Arctic lie outside the region, so any regulatory initiative involving only Arctic states could not be adequate. Whereas Arctic institutions have been better placed than broader ones to generate specific information about the threats to Arctic ecosystems, fauna and human health that are posed by hazardous substances, and thus muster support for action, the converse holds when it comes to the potential effectiveness of stronger international rules.

Also in other issue areas it would be unrealistic to expect Arctic institutions to engage in ambitious regulatory work. As Offerdal notes in Chapter 7, the strategic significance of oil and gas resources has meant reluctance among Arctic petroleum states to place binding regulation of such matters on the Arctic agenda. Another case in point is global warming. Although the ‘Arctic eight’, taken together, are responsible for more than half of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions, this is essentially a global challenge, and moreover one that has been addressed under UN auspices for more than a decade. Findings generated under ACIA have been factored into the broader assessment work under the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change (IPPC), whose Fourth Assessment Report will include a separate chapter on the Arctic.

Although such cognitive contributions predominate, there is a normative element to the fact finding conducted under ACIA – it remains vague, however, and involves long and uncertain causal chains. On US insistence,

the policy-recommendation part of the assessment was conducted at Senior Arctic Official (SAO) level rather than by scientists and science administrations, as originally envisaged. Yet, despite US scepticism, especially to those parts of the Policy Document that emphasized the gravity of the climate challenge and the need for domestic mitigation activities, the document was adopted and endorsed in the 2004 Ministerial Declaration. The ACIA reports and the Policy Document, the latter containing some of the clearest statements subscribed to by the present Bush administration on the need for action on global warming, have been widely disseminated in the USA, where policy makers and the general public have traditionally viewed 'climate science' with scepticism.<sup>10</sup> Distinctive features of the Arctic Council, especially the wide recognition of its environmental monitoring apparatus and its long-standing emphasis on indigenous concerns, combined to give saliency to these reports. The leading role played by US scientists in the assessment work, and the fact that indigenous peoples of Alaska are singled out among those most heavily and immediately affected by global warming, also explain why ACIA was received rather positively in this key climate country. The ACIA reports put a face on the climate problem in the USA and were subject to relatively greater media attention than the far more comprehensive assessment reports produced by the IPCC. That said, there is a long way to go from a positive reception of climate-impact reports to actual modification of US positions on international climate commitments.

In Chapter 5, we argued that Arctic Council activities soon outshone the sub-regional structures in Arctic environmental affairs. In the Council of Baltic Sea States, environmental collaboration has not had any strong Arctic dimension. For its part, the BEAR started out ambitiously with the establishment of an Environmental Task Force charged with developing multilateral environmental capacity-building initiatives in areas such as nuclear safety and reduction of industrial pollution in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk *oblasti* (Stokke 1994; Scrivener 1995). However, since state funding of proposed projects remained voluntary and was decided on a case-by-case basis, the lack of substantial financial contribution from countries other than Norway reduced the practical significance of decisions made at the sub-regional level. In practice, the centre of gravity for international capacity-enhancement decisions in the area returned to the bilateral level of governance or to fora that allocate funds from the EU or the USA. Under the Arctic Council, capacity enhancement was not salient in the early years. As we saw in Chapter 5, however, both the Regional Programme of Action for

Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities, which emphasizes development and implementation of Russia's National Plan of Action, and the Arctic Council Action Plan (ACAP) to Eliminate Pollution in the Arctic place considerable emphasis on the need for projects that can reduce regional discharges of harmful substances. ACAP in particular has produced tangible results, including the collection and safer storage of large amounts of PCBs and obsolete pesticides in Northwestern Russia, and the introduction of methods for cleaner production in the metallurgical complex in Norilsk.

### *Indigenous affairs*

The perception that new tools were needed in order to alleviate socio-economic and other problems among its relatively large indigenous population was among the foremost motivations for Canada to launch the initiative for the Arctic Council. Many of the capacity-enhancement projects developed under its Sustainable Development Working Group address indigenous issues in particular. In Chapter 3, Wilson and Øverland argued that among the most important and lasting contributions of the Council has been to substantiate the special vulnerability of indigenous peoples to certain hazardous substances discharged mostly outside the region, and to raise awareness about those vulnerabilities in decision-making arenas that are broad enough to act effectively on them. This has been achieved primarily by ensuring that monitoring and research programmes, especially AMAP, include indicators and thematic foci that are relevant to indigenous concerns. In turn, indigenous organizations have used the widely accepted research findings emerging from these activities to develop their policy and arguments.

There is no doubt that, compared to other international bodies relevant to indigenous affairs, such as the ILO, the Arctic Council has been particularly well placed to assume such a fact-finding role. This is due mainly to the Council's broad functional scope, whereby studies of how indigenous peoples are affected by global environmental change have been able to benefit from a comprehensive environmental monitoring programme set up primarily for other purposes. More broadly, Wilson and Øverland argue, the Arctic institutions have created 'thematic bundles' in which indigenous matters are tied to issues higher up on the political agendas of Arctic states.



That the Arctic Council has emphasized knowledge generation does not mean that it has been irrelevant to normative advances in matters of indigenous concern – only that such advances have not been decided at the Arctic level. The clearest instance of Arctic institutions being used in efforts to catalyze normative change in other institutions in areas of indigenous interest are the POPs cases outlined above, in which the access of Inuit organizations to Canadian, and later US, foreign policy makers were important. According to Wilson and Øverland, that normative impact would not have been likely if the USA, whose large and complex foreign bureaucracy is less accessible to indigenous organizations, had occupied the driver's seat with respect to the Council's involvement in international POPs politics. More generally, by demonstrating that the physical health and ways of life of Arctic indigenous peoples are highly vulnerable to certain types of trans-boundary pollution, ice decline, and other impacts of global environmental change, Council activities have enabled indigenous organizations to forge a credible link between environmental protection issues and global norms on human rights.

That said, Wilson and Øverland point out that neither the Arctic Council nor the BEAR have paid much attention to the most immediate problem faced by indigenous peoples in northern Russia, Scandinavia and elsewhere: unrecognized or poorly implemented rights to land and water resources. Might such avoidance, as in the case of POPs regulation, be accounted for in terms of niche advantages based on the distinctive capacities of Arctic institutions? Although conceivable, this is by no means self-evident. True, indigenous organizations do pursue land-right issues under the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations and there is some merit to the argument that this aspect of Arctic indigenous affairs can be appropriately addressed within the larger context of Fourth World politics. On the other hand, the participatory heterogeneity of Arctic institutions, with their blend of indigenous representatives and high-level government officials, could make these fora relevant for such matters as well. To a large extent, this blind spot of Arctic institutions regarding indigenous affairs reflects the hesitation of leading states to let such domestically contested issues, closely linked to extraction of oil, gas and mineral resources and not as clearly trans-boundary as pollution or threatening epidemics, be subject to political deliberations in intergovernmental bodies.<sup>11</sup>

### *Combating communicable diseases*

In the area of public health care, most of the activity generated by Arctic regimes has occurred at the sub-regional level. In Chapter 4 Rowe and Hønneland showed how programmes under the Barents and Baltic Sea Regions, and recently also under the EU's Northern Dimension initiative, have strengthened the capacity in Northwest Russia and the Baltic states to cope with alarming rises in certain diseases that might spread across boundaries, especially HIV and tuberculosis. As to the Arctic Council, its work in the health sector has largely been confined to fact-finding activities under the AMAP.

The focus of sub-regional Arctic institutions on capacity enhancement exploits three competitive edges enjoyed by the Barents and Baltic Sea Regions over other international bodies that might play a role in connection with public health in Northwest Russia and the Baltic states. First, placing capacity enhancement initiatives at the Arctic (rather than the global) level pinpoints health differentials that are alarming enough to trigger action – whereas they would be dwarfed if placed alongside those that motivate costly WHO programmes in Third World countries. Second, nesting the health collaboration in regional initiatives with objectives that go well beyond health care – ultimately the involvement of post-Soviet states in European cooperative structures – has made possible Western funding for health purposes in Russia and the Baltic that would otherwise have been very difficult to obtain. From the perspective of region builders in the BEAR and the Council of Baltic Sea States, the near-collapse of the public health systems in those regions, associated with the transition from planned to market economies in the early 1990s, provided opportunities to demonstrate the ability of those new structures to produce tangible and visible benefits for Northern residents. Even with this additional motivation, it has not been easy to secure the financial basis for health programmes. As noted in Chapter 4, the Task Force on Communicable Disease Control in the Baltic Sea Region received considerably less for the entire five-year period of its existence than its initiators had envisaged for only the first year, and large regional states like Germany failed to contribute funds.

Finally, the participatory heterogeneity of Arctic institutions has provided direct access to province-level officials and health personnel, indicating that funds and proposed alterations in medical diagnostic and treatment procedures reached the ground level without being filtered through the central authorities. This feature is especially salient since resistance to behavioural change is stronger at the central level than in the provinces, as

we saw in the case of the combat against tuberculosis in Northwest Russia. Among the most significant changes brought about by the Baltic Sea Task Force and the Barents Health programme was the regional implementation of the WHO tuberculosis strategy, widely considered as more cost-efficient than the traditional Russian approach.<sup>12</sup> Cost efficiency is a major advantage because of severe cuts that had been implemented in health budgets in Northwest Russia and the Baltic states, but that strategy has met with considerable resistance from the central medical establishment in Russia. This was in part because the strategy, originally developed for Third World countries, had not been adequately adapted for application in a relatively advanced – albeit troubled – health structure. It was therefore dismissed by many as a ‘Western’ (i.e. non-Russian) approach inappropriately presented as a ‘magic formula’. At the regional level, however, no similar opposition was voiced. Instead, the new diagnostic and treatment scheme championed under Arctic institutions was perceived as a useful new tool which – importantly and unlike many procedural instructions arriving from Moscow or St. Petersburg – was accompanied by the financial resources needed for implementation.

Rowe and Hønneland point out that, although the Barents Health Programme identified as priority areas such lifestyle-related health problems as alcoholism and smoking, most actual programme activities concerned communicable diseases. This might be explained in niche terms as capacity enhancement being limited to trans-boundary issues, where direct interdependences are involved. However, scanty attention to non-communicable health problems has characterized global assistance initiatives as well, including the Millennium Development Goals (Rechel et al. 2004), so also in those areas regional initiatives would have helped to fill a void.

Due to the causal complexities involved, it is difficult to determine how much of the recent stabilization and (in areas like tuberculosis occurrence) improvement in the state of public health in Northwest Russia and the Baltic states is due to programmes under Arctic institutions. Rowe and Hønneland show, however, that the Barents and Baltic Sea Region initiatives raised fresh funds and permitted coordination of programmes that induced more cost-efficient approaches to fighting communicable diseases in the area. Those new approaches originated in institutions beyond the region, but implementation would not have occurred without the programmatic contributions of the Arctic institutions.

## POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

Among the striking features of Arctic institutions is their openness to actors that do not usually play prominent roles in international diplomacy – notably province-level governments, civil society groups and business organizations. Many have held high hopes that these institutions may empower new actors and contribute to a broadening of actual participation in decision making on Arctic affairs. This section sums up experiences thus far.

### *Indigenous peoples*

Given the emphasis of the Arctic Council on indigenous representation and environmental monitoring, it is not surprising that it is the Arctic indigenous peoples and various scientist and expert communities that are most directly affected by this new institution. As argued by Wilson and Øverland in Chapter 3, this has been especially visible in the case of indigenous groups whose organizations had not been oriented towards trans-national or international affairs. The formation of the Arctic Athabaskan Council and the Gwich'in Council International were direct consequences of the opportunities afforded by the Arctic Council for representation in an intergovernmental body whose deliberations and projects could be significant for these groups.

Even indigenous organizations with a strong tradition of trans-national work, notably the ICC and the Saami Council, have been further empowered by their status as Permanent Participants in the Council. This status involves practical access to the negotiations table on all issues addressed by the high-level forum. The ICC in particular has been receiving considerable attention from various governmental actors who perceive this organization as a potentially useful partner, or even ally, in international deliberations on Arctic affairs. Although participatory heterogeneity also marks the BEAR, indigenous representation here is limited to the province-level Regional Council. The latter body is salient for developing project work-priorities but does not permit, to the same extent as the Arctic Council, the development of contacts and partnerships with governmental decision makers.

An interesting feature of the Arctic Council is its institutional dynamism with respect to involving participants relevant to its activities. At first only

three indigenous organizations were given status as Permanent Participants. The subsequent inclusion of the recently formed Athabaskan, Gwich'in, and Aleut organizations indicates that the Arctic Council has not fallen prey to a malady often attributed to intergovernmental institutions: it has not preserved or enhanced initial differences among domestic groups in terms of influence by involving only the leading organizations. The conditions for such dynamism were favourable, however, not least since the case for openness to newcomers was consistently and forcefully championed by the USA.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond its formal inclusiveness of indigenous organizations, the Arctic Council has also triggered efforts to enable actual participation. The Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat, located in Copenhagen, was set up to assist indigenous representatives in their preparations for meetings and other activities under the Council (Bloom 1999: 719). Moreover, for firmly established indigenous organizations like the ICC and the Saami Council, the status of Permanent Participants has yielded incentives and opportunities to engage in capacity-enhancement work with the nascent indigenous movement in Russia.

Indigenous involvement has also been considerable in the environmental monitoring and impact assessment. The AMAP in particular has provided a vehicle for indigenous organizations to ensure that parameters of special importance to them have been included in data collection and research. In the ACIA, several Permanent Participants were involved in the Assessment Steering Committee, and programme work was tailored to take account of indigenous experience and knowledge on climate change. Several chapters in the Science Report deal with on indigenous issues in particular.

Participatory capacity enhancement is also within the mandate of the BEAR Working Group of Indigenous Peoples. Although the only working group to have been in continuous existence since the mid-1990s, its dynamism has been moderate and, as noted by Wilson and Øverland, the group itself has recently complained that the funding level is thoroughly inadequate to enable it to implement its work programme.

### *Scientists and experts*

Environmental researchers are another actor category favourably affected by the niche orientation that characterizes Arctic institutions. As noted in

Chapter 5, the collaborative monitoring activities coordinated under the Arctic Council, especially by AMAP but also by the working group on Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), have induced Arctic states to allocate more resources for such purposes than before. Arctic institutions have enabled the development of fairly stable trans-national networks, maintained through working- and expert-group participation and drawing on an impressive number of scientists, experts and research institutions. Each of the two comprehensive AMAP Assessment Reports involved more than three hundred researchers whose outputs have attracted considerable attention from bureaucratic and political decision makers as well as the general public. Similar numbers of climate researchers in various disciplines have contributed to the ACIA project. The network thereby created, as Hoel argues in Chapter 6, now amounts to a trans-national scientific constituency on Arctic climate issues with a remarkably high level of agreement on the nature and severity of the regional risks flowing from global warming. Through ACIA, international funds were also made available to involve a sizeable number of Russian experts, whose participation might otherwise have been constrained by the financial weakness of many research institutions in that country today.

Albeit on a smaller scale, the Oil and Gas Assessment has provided similar networking opportunities and is likely to enhance the societal visibility of research on hydrocarbon-environment relationships. As argued by Offerdal in Chapter 7, that study shows how deliberations under Arctic institutions can change state attitude to collaborative assessment projects. Although at first negative to the initiative, the USA ultimately assumed lead responsibility for two of the key science chapters, which will contribute to the prominence and visibility of the Oil and Gas Assessment. Similarly, data input from Russia had been low in the first part of the project, but reactions to this triggered stronger involvement of the Russian Ministry of Education and Science, and the situation improved markedly. In other words, the initially lukewarm responses of some important powers failed to slow down or stop an assessment that can be expected to draw considerable attention to Arctic oil and gas issues.

As pointed out by Rowe and Hønneland in Chapter 4, the involvement of regional health officials and medical expertise in broader networks is among the major and most lasting achievements of the health collaboration in the Barents and Baltic Sea Regions. Those collaborative programmes have strengthened lines of direct communication between regions and across

health sectors within Russia. For the duration of those programmes, financial flows through the same networks have meant greater independence from central health authorities, especially in Northwest Russia. Whether such networks will be able to thrive after the sub-regional programmes have been completed, however, remains an open question.

### *Drivers and limitations*

Although the Arctic institutions have been open to other societal organizations besides indigenous peoples and issue-specific experts, there is little evidence that they have significantly triggered greater participation in Arctic affairs by environmental groups and business representatives. In the Arctic Council, only the Advisory Committee on Protection of the Seas (ACOPS) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has participated on a regular basis at meetings and contributed to programme activities.<sup>14</sup> One reason is that participation is costly and enabling funds have been directed at indigenous peoples' representatives. Moreover, deep and regular involvement in Council activities can be difficult to reconcile with the position of a critical outsider relative to state or province-level governments whenever there is disagreement about project contents.<sup>15</sup> A presumably even weightier explanation for the lack of a broad mobilizing effect of Arctic institutions on environmental and industry-group participation is their niche orientation toward non-controversial matters like fact finding and capacity enhancement, rather than politically contested issues related to regulation of economic or military activity. For instance, although the WWF, through its newsletter *Arctic Bulletin*, disseminates information about Arctic Council and BEAR activities to environmental communities throughout the Arctic, Offerdal reports in Chapter 7 that neither this organization nor other leading environmental groups make much reference to the Arctic Council when addressing oil and gas issues currently of great topical interest in several Arctic states, in the broader media.

In part because the Arctic Council has been seen as largely focusing on indigenous issues and environmental fact finding, the business sector has been even less involved in the work of this institution than have environmental groups. In the sub-regional institutions, industry actors have played a greater role but not within the issue areas examined here. The ACIA implied some change in this respect, since that assessment was designed to address not only physical and biological systems but also social and economic ones. Through this programme, several industry organizations

from sectors such as fisheries and shipping became directly involved in the work of the Arctic Council.

In examining the significance of Arctic institutions to this empowerment of certain societal groups and actors, external factors must be taken into consideration. Most obviously, Gorbachev's reshuffling of the Soviet state and its foreign-policy orientation – and the subsequent dissolution of the USSR – enabled cross-border contacts at a level and scope previously unthinkable. To a substantial extent, therefore, regional institutions and increased trans-national interaction are both premised on the same historical watershed. Moreover, the growing attention to Arctic natural resources, and the rising appreciation of this region's vulnerability to climate change, would probably have highlighted environmental and indigenous issues even if there had been no new circumpolar and sub-regional institutions.

In the case of indigenous peoples, perhaps the clearest evidence that their empowerment is partially caused by broader international processes is the gradual improvement of the quality of their representation in Arctic institutions, as pointed out by Wilson and Øverland in Chapter 3. The role assigned to indigenous representatives in the 1993 BEAR structure was considerably more prominent than it had been in the various Nordic institutions set up in earlier decades; and still more prominent in the Arctic Council. This development reflects the growing success of the Fourth World movement, most notably through the ILO and the activities of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations.

That said, distinctive features of the Arctic institutions, and the niches they have opted for in the various issue areas, have also shaped political mobilization in Arctic affairs. Although the tendency had been toward greater indigenous involvement, the participatory heterogeneity of the Arctic Council was no necessary outcome. Right from the outset, the US had been sceptical to the important role assigned to indigenous peoples in the Canadian proposal for an Arctic Council. That position was reasserted after the formation of the Council during the protracted negotiation of the rules on procedure (Archer and Scrivener 2000). This attitude was in part due to worries in the influential US environmental movement that indigenous rights might be used to counter the country's restrictive national legislation on marine-mammal protection (Keskitalo 2004: 72). The other leading Arctic state, Russia, had fewer direct reservations about profiled indigenous representation in the Council, but it was no driving force either:



in effect, Russia supported US attempts to dilute the special status of indigenous representatives when elaborating the rules of procedure (Scrivener 1999). Hence, the participatory heterogeneity of the Arctic Council is the outcome of a process that could have yielded a different structure. It was Canada, a middle-sized power in Arctic affairs, and to some extent also Denmark, that pressed for and ultimately managed to obtain a strong indigenous stamp on the new institution.

The financial basis for enabling participation at meetings or in programmes, and for costly environmental monitoring and public health programmes, has been secured by the ability of Arctic institutions to trigger funds from the wealthier Arctic states to support activities whose main impacts will be felt in other parts of the region. The relatively high agenda ranking of indigenous affairs in Canada and Denmark goes far in explaining why the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat has been funded largely by those two states (Langlais 2000: 14). Similarly, we saw above that monitoring and capacity enhancement in the environmental and health sectors has been fuelled by the broader objectives, especially among Nordic states, on creating sustainable political infrastructure and economic integration across the former East–West boundary.

## ARCTIC REGION BUILDING

Regularized meetings among decision makers at political and bureaucratic levels, in combination with substantial ground-level, trans-national networks on indigenous, health, science, and environmental affairs, are important steps in the building of a political region. As argued in Chapter 2, whether the Arctic qualifies as a 'political region' is more than an academic question. Regionality is in part a matter of functional interaction, but it also concerns whether regional actors see the challenges they face as distinctively Arctic and warranting regional responses – rather than geographically narrower or broader ones. The question of regionality thus impinges on the political and socio-economic bases for pursuing collaboration among Arctic states, provinces and civil society organizations.

There is much to indicate that the high prominence of indigenous affairs in the Arctic Council has enhanced the perception in broader fora that the Arctic is a distinctive region in need of special attention and separate treatment. This highlights the discursive side of regionality – the extent to which the Arctic is seen and spoken of as unit. As pointed out by Wilson

and Øverland in Chapter 3, especially the ICC has promoted the idea in various international organizations and conferences, including in the UN, that the Arctic is tied together by the presence and particular vulnerability of indigenous peoples to global environmental change. As noted above, the link between environmental protection and indigenous human rights is made explicit in such contexts and with increasing persuasiveness.

Keen awareness of the discursive aspect of regionality is evident in the many BEAR projects that involve 'regional statements' – visible institutional expression of regional community. Consider for instance Norway's establishment of the Barents Secretariat in Kirkenes, the city that hosted the founding meeting in 1993; and more recently the creation of a Barents Institute to conduct multidisciplinary research on regional affairs. Similarly, some of the most costly and highly profiled BEAR projects on indigenous issues have targeted buildings and activities at the Choom National Cultural Centre in the Russian Saami 'capital' of Lovozero – which might reflect an emphasis on activities with high *symbolic* content. Indeed, in Chapter 3 Wilson and Øverland question the instrumental, problem-solving contributions of these and similar projects. In Chapter 5 we also note that in Barents Region rhetoric, any distinction between accomplishments under bilateral or trilateral collaborative vehicles and those arising from BEAR bodies has tended to be under-communicated. This may be seen as an effort to maximize the region-building effects of any tangible results of regional collaboration, whether bilateral or multilateral.

Even more striking is the impact on discursive regionality that arises from singling out the Arctic as a key region for monitoring and research in such salient issue areas as POPs and climate change. The ACIA's Overview Report and Policy Document disseminated and lent credibility to information about climate change that will affect monitoring and research activities among Arctic states; it might even affect the priority given to mitigation and adaptation activities in some countries. As Hoel pointed out in Chapter 6, those reports also gave the Arctic Council more media attention than any previous event, in part due to the tangibility and visibility of climate impacts in this region. The 2004 Arctic Council Ministerial was the first to be attended and extensively covered by global news agencies, and ACIA outputs continue to provide substance for widely broadcast news and feature articles on the relationship between the Arctic region and global warming. In contrast, as argued by Offerdal in Chapter 7, the low profile of Arctic institutions so far with respect to oil and gas development has

precluded any strong impacts on region building. That said, the growing political saliency of Arctic petroleum resources is now encouraging regional states to pay greater attention to their northerly territories, and activities such as the Oil and Gas Assessment should contribute to a framing of issues surrounding those resources as distinctly 'Arctic'.

As to the Baltic health collaboration, Rowe and Hønneland maintain in Chapter 4 that its placement in a multilateral, sub-regional framework proved highly useful by enabling closer ties between the medical communities in Russia and in the Baltic states. Those ties had been severely strained by the general animosity that followed the short-lived Soviet occupation of the Baltic capitals in 1991, and there is much to suggest that the notable improvement in Russian–Baltic relations in the health sector since then can be credited to the external impulse provided by the Arctic sub-regional institutions.

Promising as these developments are, the Arctic cannot be said to constitute a political region in the strict meaning of the term. The sense of common identity among the four million residents of the area remains generally weak, as is public awareness of activities under Arctic institutions. For many problems, other governance levels will be more important than the Arctic one – whether because bilateral or sub-regional interdependencies are more intense, or because problem solving requires participation by a broader set of states. From a functional point of view, the Arctic is often either too big or too small. Despite this, there is no doubt that the institutions examined in this book have succeeded in establishing Arctic affairs as a distinctive international policy area that merits regular attention by decision makers at state, provincial and societal levels. Increasingly also, that distinctiveness is gaining recognition in broader international fora.

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has summed up findings from five case studies of Arctic institutions and their impacts on regional connectedness, political involvement, and specific problem solving in issue areas that rank high on Arctic political agendas. Starting from a low level, functional and discursive regionality is now on the rise in the Arctic. The institutions examined here have contributed to the development and maintenance of networks that nurture both aspects. Interaction within such networks is broadened by the involvement of province-level authorities and civil society groups, including

indigenous organizations. Discursively, the emphasis of the Arctic Council on circumpolar environmental monitoring and indigenous issues has directed greater attention – within the region, and beyond – to the Arctic dimension of some global issues, like hazardous substances and climate change. Whereas circumpolar and the sub-regional institutions provide means for addressing common or similar challenges, other levels of governance will continue to offer equally or more powerful instruments on many issues.

Arctic institutions are the most effective – make the biggest difference – when they focus on activities or problem aspects where they enjoy niche advantages: where distinctive features of Arctic institutions make them better placed than others to extract or utilize the resources needed for problem solving. The cognitive, or fact-finding, niche is the one most widely chosen in the issue areas examined here, especially within the Arctic Council. This niche orientation makes it possible to reap the gains that arise from coordination of data collection and analysis among states governing adjacent territories with certain shared biophysical characteristics. It also exploits the preparedness of states otherwise opposed to the development of strong international institutions in the Arctic to at least support environmental monitoring.

With respect to normative contributions, the Arctic approach has been far more limited, largely echoing broader international regimes already in existence. In no cases have institutions examined here provided legally binding rules, or review procedures that could give political teeth to non-binding ones. Sometimes, but not always, such nesting is justified by the fact that broader regimes involve a more relevant set of actors, or already apply to all Arctic states. In the regulation of hazardous pollutants, Arctic institutions have served as platforms for efforts to influence spatially broader regulatory processes – partly by feeding in research findings on Arctic vulnerabilities, and partly by prodding Arctic states to take a more common stand on issues of concern. In the regulation of POPs and, to a lesser extent, in international climate politics, such catalytic efforts have made use of the environmental monitoring capacity of the Arctic Council and its external credibility as a acknowledged conveyor of indigenous concerns.

Finally, a capacity enhancement niche has been carved out in certain areas such as communicable diseases, cleaner production in process industries,

and safer storage and treatment of hazardous waste. These are areas with a trans-boundary component, so that support from other Arctic states to projects in Russia and the Baltics has in part been driven by self-interest. However, the willingness to pay for such capacity-enhancement efforts also derives from the fact that Arctic institutions have been significantly fuelled by broader security and economic objectives, centred on the goal of involving – enmeshing – Russia and the Western Arctic states within common cooperative structures.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank David Scrivener, Oran Young and my fellow contributors to this book for very helpful comments. By 'Arctic' international institutions is meant those that involve several Arctic states and have among their priority areas the challenges and opportunities that arise or become visible in the Arctic. We apply the spatial boundary of the Arctic defined in the *Arctic Human Development Report* (ADHR 2004: 17–18); see Chapter 1.

<sup>2</sup> As noted in Chapter 1, this book does not aspire to cover the full range of priority areas defined under the relatively new Arctic institutions. The development of stronger economic ties among the northerly territories of the states involved, an important goal of especially the sub-regional institutions, is not addressed explicitly.

<sup>3</sup> On the transition from AEPS to the Arctic Council, see Scrivener (1999).

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<sup>4</sup> The comprehensive reports were published in 1997 and 2002, the health report in 2002; the oil and gas assessment is due in autumn 2006.

<sup>5</sup> On nesting, see Aggarwal (1983) and Young (1996).

<sup>6</sup> On the Guidelines for Transfers of Refined Oil and Oil Products in Arctic Waters, the Field Guide for Oil Spills Response, the International Murre Conservation Strategy and Action Plan and the Circumpolar Eider Conservation Strategy and Action Plan, see Chapter 5 by Stokke, Hønneland and Schei.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 5; also Stokke (2000).

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 5; also Chapter 3 by Wilson and Øverland.

<sup>9</sup> For accounts and assessments of these cases of institutional interplay, see Downie and Fenge (2003).

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 7 by Hoel.

<sup>11</sup> Depending on the level of specificity of any measure considered, indigenous organizations not currently active in the Arctic Council might also object to such issues being placed on the Arctic agenda; see below on the requirements for eligibility to be considered for status as Permanent Participant.

<sup>12</sup> As outlined by Rowe and Honneland in Chapter 4, the traditional Russian approach to tuberculosis detection and treatment differs from WHO's Directly Observed Treatment with Short-course Therapy (DOTS) strategy by pursuing active case finding through mass screening of the population (instead of self-reporting patients); hospitalization and isolation (instead of out-patient treatment); long-term, individualized multi-drug approaches (instead of short-course standard cure); and the use of surgery no longer employed in the West.

<sup>13</sup> Only organizations that represent an Arctic indigenous people resident in more than one Arctic state or more than one Arctic indigenous people resident within a single Arctic state are eligible for consideration as Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council; see Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council, Art. 2, and Rules of Procedure, Part V.



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<sup>14</sup> See Chapters 5–7; these organizations also have formal observer status within the Arctic Council. On WWF contributions to work under CAFF and the working group on Protection of the Marine Environment (PAME), see Archer and Scrivener (2000).

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter 7 by Offerdal. For a discussion of this dilemma in the context of global climate politics, see Andresen and Gulbrandsen (2005).