

THE INVOLVEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN ARCTIC GOVERNANCE

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I. Introduction

The Arctic today is confronted with increasing environmental and geopolitical challenges. At the forefront of climate change, the region is warming at a rate four times faster than the global average.¹ As a result of warming waters, melting ice and emerging resources, the Arctic has become more accessible to new shipping routes and economic possibilities, which has increased the geopolitical stakes in the region. Therefore, legitimate and effective global governance institutions are needed to address these changes and ensure that they are managed appropriately. Global governance is taken in this paper to be ‘the totality of the ways, formal and informal, in which the world is governed’.²

The Arctic is considered to be the geographical region contained within the Arctic Circle (see figure 1). This region includes the Arctic Ocean and the northernmost parts of the eight Arctic states—Canada, Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands, although they are extensively self-governed), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States.³ The Arctic is governed by a mosaic of intersecting layers of global, regional and local institutions, as well as agreements and actors.⁴ Within these many institutional layers, the Arctic Council is the main governance body that regulates cooperation between the eight Arctic states. It also grants permanent status to six Indigenous Peoples’ organizations and either permanent or ad-hoc observer status to so-called non-Arctic states (those other than its eight members), international organizations and non-state actors.

The governance of the Arctic has traditionally been state-centred but has increasingly opened up to non-state actors, including civil society organizations (CSOs). CSOs, which can be defined as non-state, independent and not-for-profit organizations, are a diverse set of actors with different roles in governance.⁵ There are a variety of CSOs engaged in Arctic governance,

SUMMARY

● The Arctic is faced with growing environmental and geopolitical challenges, which require international governance involving a range of actors. Existing research has a limited understanding of the role played by civil society organizations (CSOs) in the emerging governance of the region. This SIPRI Insights paper has reviewed the existing literature and used novel survey data to analyse the involvement of CSOs in terms of their roles and their beliefs in Arctic governance. It finds that CSOs monitor agreements and push for regional accountability, support the implementation of policies, engage in advocacy work, support information sharing and provide input during geopolitical crises. It also finds that CSOs have weak levels of belief in the legitimacy of Arctic governance institutions, or in the appropriateness and impact of their governance of the region. Based on these findings, the paper makes recommendations for the further involvement of CSOs in Arctic governance.

¹ Fountain, H., ‘Arctic warming is happening faster than described, analysis shows’, *New York Times*, 11 Aug. 2022.

² Weiss, G. T. and Wilkinson, R. (eds), ‘From international organization to global governance’, *International Organization and Global Governance* (Routledge: London, 2018), p. 9.

³ National Geographic Society, ‘Arctic’, [n.d.].

⁴ Young, O. R., ‘Governing the Arctic: From cold war theater to mosaic of cooperation’, *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, vol. 11, no. 1 (Aug. 2005).

⁵ Scholte, J. A., ‘Civil society and the legitimation of global governance’, *Journal of Civil Society*, vol. 3, no. 3 (Dec. 2007).



Figure 1. The Arctic Circle

Source: CIA World Fact Book, adapted version.

but this paper focuses specifically on the roles played by environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Indigenous Peoples’ organizations. Failing to understand the involvement of CSOs in Arctic governance risks missing an important piece in the puzzle of how to make governance in the region more legitimate and effective.

This SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security therefore studies the involvement of CSOs in Arctic governance and considers their various activities in connection with it. CSOs have, for instance, provided alternative routes to cooperation on the various cross-border governance challenges facing the Arctic, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, unsustainable fishing practices and human insecurity. The paper also considers the beliefs of CSOs regarding the extent to which existing political institutions are governing the Arctic appropriately or are legitimate. Legitimacy is a relational attribute bestowed on governance institutions by others when



they believe in the appropriateness of the institution.⁶ When individuals feel confidence and loyalty towards particular institutions, they are more likely to engage constructively with them, comply with their rules, and internalize the norms promoted within their socially constructed systems of values and beliefs.⁷ These social legitimacy beliefs are understood as important resources that allow Arctic governance institutions to make and enforce decisions.⁸ Global governance institutions, unlike national governments, are typically unable to enact laws and rely on a police force, so they depend instead on the voluntary compliance of states, and of other institutions and citizens.⁹ In the case of Arctic governance institutions, it is thus reasonable to assume that legitimacy—or people’s beliefs that the governance is appropriate—is an important resource for sustainable and effective governance.

As stakeholders in the Arctic, members of CSOs also hold legitimacy beliefs about the appropriateness and rightfulness of the region’s governance institutions, which may impact on their involvement with them. Further, they engage in practices that legitimate or delegitimize these institutions, and these practices may be based on their own beliefs.¹⁰ As a result, CSOs can be sources of legitimacy for governance institutions, with the ability to provide new perspectives and resources to address certain failings in governance.¹¹

In order to analyse CSO involvement in Arctic governance, this paper addresses two main research questions:

1. How are CSOs involved in Arctic governance?
2. To what extent do the members of CSOs, taken as representatives of their organizations, believe in the legitimacy of Arctic governance institutions?

To answer these questions, the discussion is divided into four main sections. Section II conceptualizes what is meant by Arctic governance at the global and regional levels, and details some of the ways that CSOs can gain access to this governance. Section III draws on previous research on Arctic governance and non-state actors to examine the main ways that CSOs are involved in and contribute to Arctic governance. Section IV uses data from the Mistra Geopolitics Arctic Governance Survey to assess the legitimacy beliefs held by members of Swedish CSOs about Arctic governance institutions, and compares them to the legitimacy beliefs held by other Swedish state and

⁶ Burke, D. C. and Bondaroff, T. N. P., ‘Becoming an Arctic Council NGO observer’, *Polar Record*, vol. 54, nos 5–6 (Sep. 2018).

⁷ Easton, D., ‘Are-assessment of the concept of political support’, *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 5, no. 4 (Oct. 1975); and Suchman, M. C., ‘Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches’, *The Academy of Management Review*, vol. 20, no. 3 (July 1995).

⁸ Suchman (note 7); and Tyler, T. R., *Why People Obey the Law* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, May 2006).

⁹ Hurd, I., ‘Legitimacy and authority in international politics’, *International Organization*, vol. 53, no. 2 (1999); and Dellmuth, L. and Tallberg, J., ‘The social legitimacy of international organisations: Interest representation, institutional performance, and confidence extrapolation in the United Nations’, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 41, no. 3 (July 2015).

¹⁰ Bexell, M., Jönsson, K. and Uhlin, A. (eds), *Legitimation and Delegitimation in Global Governance: Practices, Justifications, and Audiences* (Oxford University Press: Oxford/New York, July 2022).

¹¹ Scholte (note 5), p. 310.



non-state stakeholders drawn from the same survey.¹² Based on the research conducted for this paper, Section V then concludes with recommendations for how to strengthen Arctic governance institutions.

II. Conceptualizing Arctic governance

This paper conceptualizes Arctic governance (see figure 2) as a mosaic of institutions and networks working at the global and regional levels to develop and implement rules and norms for the management of collective problems in the Arctic.¹³ Some of the institutions have Arctic governance as their core mandate, but most are international institutions with activities and agreements relevant to the Arctic that can be grouped at global and regional levels.

The global level of governance is understood as involving those institutions whose mandates cover the whole of the world, but which have activities relating to the Arctic. In contrast, the regional level refers to those core institutions whose activities are focused only on the Arctic, as well as other regional institutions whose mandates include the Arctic region, as defined earlier in this paper. At the global level, the institutions most relevant to the Arctic are the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The three regional institutions taken to be the core Arctic governance institutions are the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Arctic Five (the five Arctic coastal states: Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the USA). Beyond these core institutions, other regional institutions include the European Union (EU), the Barents Regional Council and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In addition, four regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) are important for highly migratory and straddling fish stocks and biodiversity in the Arctic: the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO).

The involvement of CSOs in these different layers of governance has generally been at the discretion of the Arctic states. However, research has argued that states can be resistant to greater involvement from non-state actors, including CSOs, for a number of reasons. For instance, states

¹² The survey was conducted as part of research under the theme of ‘Sustainable Oceans’, carried out by Mistra Geopolitics, an independent research programme that examines the dynamics of geopolitics, human security and environmental change. The programme brings together an interdisciplinary team consisting of 6 Swedish core consortium partners, 2 high-profile international research institutes (Adelphi and E3G) that are involved as further research and networking partners, and 15 Swedish stakeholder partners. See Mistra Geopolitics, ‘Mistra geopolitics: Navigating towards a secure and sustainable future’, [n.d.].

¹³ Powell, R., ‘Lines of possession? The anxious constitution of a polar geopolitics’, *Political Geography*, vol. 29, no. 2 (Feb. 2010); Young, O., ‘The Arctic in play: Governance in a time of rapid change’, *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law*, vol. 24, no. 2 (Jan. 2009); and Weiss, T. and Wilkinson, R., ‘Rethinking global governance? Complexity, authority, power, change’, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 58 (May 2013).

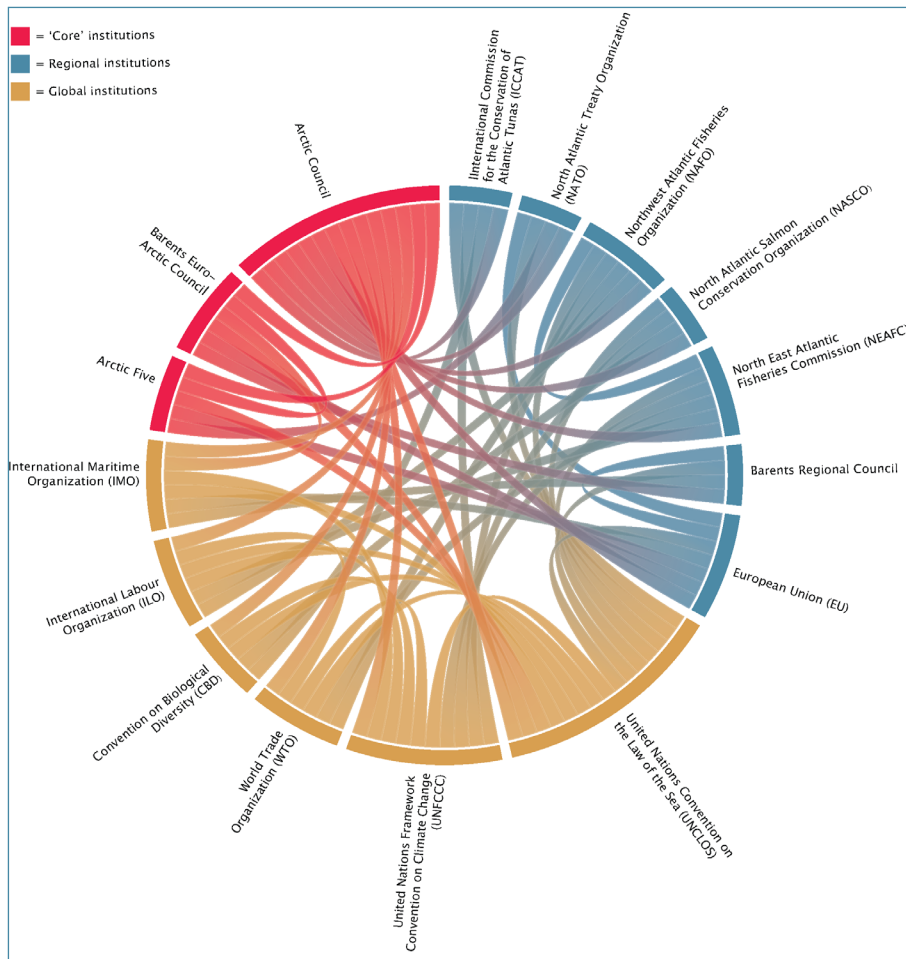


Figure 2. Arctic governance institutions

Notes: This figure provides an overview of the institutions at different levels of Arctic governance and an approximation of how these institutions are connected to each other. Each arc represents an institution that develops and implements rules and norms for the management of collective problems in the Arctic. The size of each arc shows the scope of connections to other institutions and networks concerned with governing the Arctic. Each chord represents the authors' own identified general connections between institutions and networks working at the global and regional levels.

Source: Authors' own visualization.

may want to have control over issues related to national security and be reluctant to involve CSOs in discussions that relate to this. They can also perceive involvement in governance through zero-sum mentalities, where the increased engagement by one group would limit that of the others (in this case, the states themselves).¹⁴ This resistance from the state actors that dominate Arctic governance has meant that CSOs' access to governance institutions is typically relegated to an observer role. They can participate in international meetings but have limited speech rights.

This section examines Arctic governance at the global and regional levels and details some of the main ways in which CSOs have access to governance institutions at each level. This will then form the basis of the discussion in

¹⁴ Perrez, F. X., 'How to get beyond the zero-sum game mentality between state and non-state actors in international environmental governance', *Consilience*, no. 21 (2019).



the subsequent section on the specific ways that CSOs have been involved in Arctic governance.

At the global level

At the global level, the main institutions governing the Arctic are part of the UN system, which is primarily a state-based form of international governance. CSOs can gain access to the UN system and its various frameworks and bodies in two ways. First, CSOs can apply for consultative status (either general, special or roster) under the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which grants them access to ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, other UN human rights mechanisms, and special events organized by the president of the UN General Assembly.¹⁵ With consultative status, CSOs can attend UN conferences and meetings, submit written and oral statements during events, organize their own side events and engage in networking at UN premises.¹⁶ ECOSOC is the main entry point for CSO involvement in the UN, and remains the only UN body with a formal framework dedicated to NGO participation. Second, CSOs can gain access to the UN by forming associations with the UN Department of Global Communications, which enables them to obtain and disseminate information about UN-related issues, conduct activities and raise awareness in support of the UN Charter.¹⁷

In the Arctic, global maritime rights, shipping activities and fishing regulations are governed by customary international law and legal frameworks. UNCLOS grants legal status to the Arctic Five, with sovereignty over their continental shelves, internal waters and exclusive economic zones (the water column up to 200 nautical miles from shore).¹⁸ Under UNCLOS, Article 76 sets out that the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf will process and make recommendations on additional country claims to parts of the central Arctic Ocean that lie in the outer limits of the Arctic states' continental shelves (the seabed and subsoil up to 200 nautical miles from shore)—also called 'extended continental shelves'—which are not fully mapped out yet.¹⁹ Alongside UNCLOS, maritime activities, ocean management and fishing are also governed by a number of other international agreements, for example, the IMO's 2017 Polar Code and the 2018 International Agreement to Prevent Unregulated Fishing in the High Seas of the Central Arctic Ocean.²⁰

With the increase in shipping possibilities and resource extraction in the Arctic Ocean, marine biodiversity is increasingly at risk. International negotiations are currently ongoing for the creation of a legally binding amendment to UNCLOS that would govern the conservation and use of

¹⁵ United Nations, 'The UN and civil society', [n.d.].

¹⁶ United Nations, *Working with ECOSOC: A NGOs Guide to Consultative Status* (United Nations: New York, 2018).

¹⁷ United Nations (note 15).

¹⁸ US Department of State, 'Frequently asked questions—US Extended Continental Shelf Project'.

¹⁹ Landriault, M. et al., *Governing Complexity in the Arctic Region* (Routledge: London, Nov. 2019); and United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, opened for signature 10 Dec. 1982, entered into force 16 Nov. 1994, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 1833 (1994).

²⁰ Long, Z., 'Arctic governance: Challenges and opportunities', Council on Foreign Relations, 29 Nov. 2018; and Heininen, L. et al. (eds), 'Governance & governance in the Arctic: An introduction to Arctic Yearbook 2015', *Arctic Yearbook 2015* (Northern Research Forum: Akureyri, 2015).



marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (known as the BBNJ treaty).²¹ If endorsed, this amendment will complement the CBD by strengthening legal frameworks for conservation beyond national jurisdictions, including in the Arctic.

Another aspect of international governance in the Arctic is the protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights and self-determination. This area of governance is covered through both domestic policies and international human rights frameworks, including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.²² However, the ratification of these agreements has not been consistent across the Arctic states, which has led to significant pushback and critique by Arctic Indigenous Peoples.²³

At the regional level

The Arctic is governed by different sets of stakeholders and institutions at the regional level. This regional governance is led by the eight Arctic states, or the Arctic Five plus those states considered part of the region but lacking an Arctic coastline. These states grant special status to non-state actors and non-Arctic states within the main governance institutions.²⁴

The main regional forum for governance is the Arctic Council. It is the leading intergovernmental institution for Arctic cooperation on biodiversity loss, climate change, emergency prevention, sustainable oceans and the rights of people living in the region, in particular Indigenous Peoples.²⁵ To date, the Arctic Council has negotiated three legally binding agreements: the 2011 Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic, the 2013 Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic, and the 2017 Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation. The first two legal agreements were adopted ad hoc during the Arctic Council's ministerial meetings in Nuuk (2011) and Kiruna (2013), with limited input from the non-state actor participants in the Arctic Council.²⁶ The Search and Rescue Agreement does not include any role for non-state actors at all, while the Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Agreement refers to the roles of Indigenous Peoples and local communities but without clarifying what those roles are in the agreement's enforcement.²⁷

As with governance at the global level, governance at the regional level is primarily state led. This is because the eight Arctic states form the core permanent members of the Arctic Council and have voting rights. However,

²¹ Balton, D., 'What will the BBNJ agreement mean for the Arctic fisheries agreement?', *Marine Policy*, vol. 142 (Aug. 2022).

²² Greaves, W., 'Indigenous peoples', eds G. H. Gjørsv, M. Lanteigne and H. Sam-Aggrey, *Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security* (Routledge: Abingdon, 2020).

²³ Heininen, L., 'Security perspectives from Finland: An Arctic case', eds G. H. Gjørsv, M. Lanteigne and H. Sam-Aggrey, *Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security* (Routledge: Abingdon, 2020).

²⁴ Landriault et al. (note 19).

²⁵ Arctic Council, 'Arctic Council', [n.d.].

²⁶ Duyck, S., 'Polar environmental governance and nonstate actors', eds J. G. Speth, R. Pincus and S. H. Ali, *Diplomacy on Ice: Energy and the Environment in the Arctic and Antarctic* (Yale University Press: New Haven, CT, Jan. 2015).

²⁷ Duyck (note 26).

alongside the Arctic states, the council also gives considerable access to the region's Indigenous Peoples. This is primarily done through six permanent participants from different Indigenous Peoples' organizations, which enjoy consultation rights but do not have the right to vote.²⁸ The motivation to create the Arctic Council can be linked back to the advocacy of Arctic Indigenous Peoples, who lobbied their governments for the creation of a platform dedicated to regional cooperation and dialogue.²⁹

Other CSOs have access to the Arctic Council as observers. There are currently 38 observers, of which 13 are non-Arctic states, 13 are international institutions and 12 are NGOs.³⁰ Although the Arctic states have exclusive rights to make decisions in the Arctic Council, observers can be invited to attend Arctic Council meetings and make statements after both entities have spoken, contribute to working groups and other subsidiary bodies, and propose projects linked to their support. CSOs can also participate as invited experts in the Arctic Council's working groups, task forces and expert groups.³¹

The inclusion of CSOs in the Arctic Council can be partly traced back to its precursor, the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy.³² During the negotiation process for the creation of the strategy in 1989, three Indigenous Peoples' organizations were granted observer status due to the recognition that the impacts of environmental pollution directly affected their livelihoods and therefore warranted their involvement.³³ This was one of the first instances in which Indigenous Peoples participated in the preparatory work of an intergovernmental agreement. The Task Force on Sustainable Development and Utilization, which paved the way for the Arctic Council, highlighted the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local actors, recognizing that their inclusion would bring more legitimacy to the decision-making process and create greater compliance.³⁴ Although the USA was opposed to granting rights to Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic Council, increasing pressure from CSOs meant that when the council was formed in 1996, Indigenous Peoples were incorporated with full consultation rights, although not the right to vote.³⁵

²⁸ The Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council include the following Indigenous Peoples' organizations: the Arctic Athabaskan Council, the Gwich'in Council International, the Aleut International Association, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, and the Saami Council.

²⁹ Greaves (note 22), p. 366.

³⁰ The 12 NGO observers to the Arctic Council are the Advisory Committee on Protection of the Sea, the Arctic Institute of North America, the Association of World Reindeer Herders, the Circumpolar Conservation Union, the International Arctic Science Committee, the International Arctic Social Sciences Association, the International Union for Circumpolar Health, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, the Northern Forum, Oceana, the University of the Arctic, and the World Wide Fund for Nature Arctic Programme.

³¹ Ingimundarson, V., 'Managing a contested region: The Arctic Council and the politics of Arctic governance', *The Polar Journal*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Jan. 2014); and Landriault et al. (note 19).

³² Coates, K. S. and Broderstad, E. G., 'Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic: Re-taking control of the Far North', eds K. S. Coates and C. Holroyd, *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics* (Springer International Publishing: Cham, 2020).

³³ Landriault et al. (note 19).

³⁴ Duyck (note 26).

³⁵ Nilsson, A. E., 'The United States and the making of an Arctic nation', *Polar Record*, vol. 54, no. 2 (Mar. 2018).



However, despite increasing CSO access to the Arctic Council, it remains dominated by states. In general, CSOs' participation in the Arctic Council comes through involvement in working groups or interactions in the corridors and other spaces outside council meetings.³⁶ As observers, NGOs such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) must first be invited to speak before they can intervene in the main meetings. Although the permanent participants enjoy more power and influence than observers, they are also second tier to the Arctic states and do not have the same voting rights.³⁷ Moreover, the number of permanent participants can never exceed the number of Arctic states. In the task forces, because agreements require the consensus of all Arctic states, these states are able to reject or water down proposals without having to incorporate the expertise or critical discussions of other stakeholders.³⁸ In considering applications to become an observer to the Arctic Council, non-Arctic states also tend to have advantages over non-state actors.³⁹ Decisions about whether to accept states as observers often have political implications, meaning non-Arctic states are granted priority over applications made by international institutions and non-state actors.⁴⁰

As a result of these barriers, the participation of observers in the Arctic Council remains relatively low. A 2016 study of stakeholder group participation in the council between 1998 and 2015 found that there was less participation by observer NGOs and international institutions, with NGOs attending 27 per cent of meetings and international institutions attending 25 per cent.⁴¹ The study also found that 61 per cent of observer NGOs attended all of the council's ministerial meetings, while 54 per cent attended the Senior Arctic Officials meetings, 19.5 per cent attended the working group meetings and 5.6 per cent attended the task force meetings.⁴² Overall, these attendance figures suggest that CSOs participate in a rather passive way, attending mainly the high-level meetings where they only observe proceedings and have little actual influence on the Arctic Council's activities.

Other regional forums

Beyond the Arctic Council, other regional forums have also been established that engage CSOs to some degree. For example, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council is a forum that engaged CSOs in Arctic governance very early on; it was established in 1993, three years earlier than the Arctic Council, through the Kirkenes Declaration.⁴³

Moreover, there are various RFMOs with mandates to govern highly migratory and straddling fish stocks and marine biodiversity in the high seas of the Arctic. Within these, there are four relevant RFMOs whose conventions cover areas in the North Atlantic and that operate under the

³⁶ Civil society respondent, Interview with authors, 10 Oct. 2022.

³⁷ Landriault et al. (note 19).

³⁸ Wehrmann, D., 'Non-state actors in Arctic Council governance', eds K. Keil, and S. Knecht, *Governing Arctic Change: Global Perspectives* (Palgrave Macmillan: London, Dec. 2017).

³⁹ Burke and Bondaroff (note 6).

⁴⁰ Burke and Bondaroff (note 6).

⁴¹ Knecht, S., 'The politics of Arctic international cooperation: Introducing a dataset on stakeholder participation in Arctic Council meetings, 1998–2015', *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 52, no. 2 (June 2017).

⁴² Knecht (note 41).

⁴³ Duyck (note 26).

auspices of the UN: ICCAT, NEAFC, NASCO and NAFO. CSOs typically have access to RFMOs as observers. For instance, in ICCAT and NAFO, CSOs with a demonstrated interest in the species managed within their purview can get access as observers to the meetings of the commissions and their subsidiary bodies. However, in both of these RFMOs, observers must pay a participation fee, which can make it harder for smaller CSOs with budgetary constraints to participate.⁴⁴

III. CSO involvement in Arctic governance

Drawing on previous research on Arctic governance and non-state actors, this section examines the main roles of CSOs in Arctic governance, namely monitoring, contributing to policymaking, advocacy work, information sharing and providing input during geopolitical crises. It gives an overview of what each role entails and considers how CSOs have performed.

Monitoring

CSOs can act as ‘watchdogs’ in the Arctic, providing sources of ‘vigilant monitoring rather than uncritical endorsement’ of governance institutions.⁴⁵ They can support institutions, but also challenge them and hold them accountable. For example, if CSOs lack trust in an institution or are dissatisfied with its decision making, they can expose its governance failings and encourage it to correct mistakes.⁴⁶

Once international agreements are in force, CSOs can help to ensure that institutions and their representatives fulfil their regional commitments. For instance, WWF, through its observer role in the Arctic Council, has acted to hold the council accountable for its conservation, biodiversity and sustainable development priorities.⁴⁷ In addition, WWF publishes regular status reports on Arctic ice coverage, marine conservation and the protection of polar species.⁴⁸ In 2017 it released its first-ever WWF Arctic Council Conservation Scorecard, which assessed the council’s commitments to biodiversity and conservation goals between 2006 and 2013.⁴⁹ More concrete and legally binding actions, such as cooperation on oil spills, and black carbon and methane emissions reduction, received higher scores, while less tangible actions received lower scores.⁵⁰ As a result, WWF recommended that the Arctic Council become more ambitious and specific in its actions.

CSOs can use different tactics to carry out their watchdog function, such as ‘inside strategies’ that lobby decision makers and members from within institutions like the Arctic Council, or ‘outside strategies’ that exert influence through external events. These outside strategies usually take the form of

⁴⁴ Dellmuth, L. et al., ‘Empowering NGOs? Long-term effects of ecological and institutional change on regional fisheries management organizations’, *Global Environmental Change*, vol. 65 (Nov. 2020).

⁴⁵ Scholte (note 5), p. 310.

⁴⁶ Scholte (note 5).

⁴⁷ Prip, C., ‘Biodiversity governance under the Arctic Council: The role of science, business and NGOs’, *Polar Record*, vol. 56 (2020).

⁴⁸ Landriault et al. (note 19).

⁴⁹ WWF Arctic, ‘2017 WWF Arctic Council Conservation Scorecard: Overview’, 2017.

⁵⁰ Prip (note 47).



so-called focusing events, which help CSOs draw media attention to social problems and issues.⁵¹ Focusing events can include tactical innovations like boycotts and sit-ins, where media coverage of these events can help CSOs gain legitimacy around their participation in social issues. Another type of focusing event involves highlighting potential blunders, where CSOs identify vulnerabilities in institutions that could lead to future mistakes and attract media attention to them.⁵²

Moreover, the Arctic Council's permanent participants (Indigenous Peoples' organizations) have used their position to hold state representatives accountable, particularly through 'naming and shaming', which can be a powerful tool.⁵³ For example, during the Arctic Council's 2013 Kiruna ministerial meeting, the international chair of the Arctic Athabaskan Council criticized the Arctic Council's slow progress and lack of concrete action on addressing black carbon in the Arctic and asked the Russian foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, to explain why his country continued to push back against taking action.⁵⁴

The permanent participants have also employed naming and shaming tactics to gain greater recognition for Arctic inhabitants and their rights.⁵⁵ In 2013 the Swedish Sami used the Kiruna ministerial meeting to draw attention to the negative impacts of Swedish mining on local Sami people and to criticize the Swedish government.⁵⁶ The Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) has also used the Arctic Council to hold Russian government officials accountable and advocate for better rights.⁵⁷ In fact, RAIPON has used its position in the council to negotiate issues directly with Russian government officials, which is something it cannot do domestically. During the 2010 Senior Arctic Officials meeting, for example, RAIPON requested that it be more involved in Russia's Arctic work, including in the Arctic Contaminants Action Program.⁵⁸ Even when the Russian Department of Justice deregistered RAIPON as an NGO in 2012, RAIPON continued to participate in the Arctic Council. The Arctic Council also released a statement in 2012 supporting RAIPON's continued participation. Russia re-accredited RAIPON in 2013.⁵⁹

Contributing to policymaking

CSOs can actively participate in the implementation of policies in the Arctic. Before an international agreement is adopted, CSOs can influence the agenda-setting and problem-formation stages to ensure that specific topics

⁵¹ Hein, J. E. and Chaudhri, V., 'Delegitimizing the enemy: Framing, tactical innovation, and blunders in the battle for the Arctic', *Social Movement Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2 (Mar. 2019).

⁵² Hein and Chaudhri (note 51).

⁵³ Rowe, E. W., 'Non-state actors and the quest for authority in Arctic governance', *Arctic Governance: Power in Cross-border Cooperation* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2018).

⁵⁴ Rowe (note 53).

⁵⁵ Rowe (note 53).

⁵⁶ Rowe (note 53).

⁵⁷ Rowe (note 53).

⁵⁸ Rowe (note 53).

⁵⁹ Charter, A., 'Change and continuity among the priorities of the Arctic Council's Permanent Participants', ed. D.C. Nord, *Leadership for the North: The Influence and Impact of Arctic Council Chairs* (Springer: Cham, 2019).

and provisions are included. After agreements have been reached, CSOs can help to support their implementation and monitor their enforcement.

In terms of support, CSOs can use their expertise and resources to help strengthen the cooperation, leadership and policy implementation of governance institutions.⁶⁰ Institutions can even request that CSOs criticize certain policies and actions in order to generate media attention that will trigger more public awareness of their policies.⁶¹ Their inclusion in governance institutions can also help to generate more legitimate policy results.⁶² In the negotiations that formed the Arctic Council, there was considerable debate about whether to include Indigenous Peoples' organizations in the council. Countries such as Canada strongly supported their inclusion, while others such as the USA were reluctant to include them or accord them any special status.⁶³ Ultimately, Indigenous Peoples' organizations were included as permanent participants, but on the condition that they would never outnumber the Arctic states.⁶⁴ This decision to include Indigenous Peoples is argued to have strengthened the legitimacy of the Arctic Council since they represent the original inhabitants of the region and have unique knowledge and contributions that are critical to the work of the council.⁶⁵

Encouraging countries to reach international agreements

CSOs have actively lobbied the governments of the countries in which they are based to reach international agreements. Social movements from the 1960s through to the 1980s, for example, saw Indigenous Peoples stand up for their rights and increasingly engage with decision-making processes in the Arctic. They also led to the creation of formal negotiation processes to settle claims between Indigenous Peoples and their states.⁶⁶ For example, the long-running Sami protests in the 1970s and 1980s against the Alta Hydroelectric Power Station in Norway paved the way for the passing of the Finnmark Act in 2005, which granted the Sami co-management rights over their ancestral lands and led Norway to become the first country to ratify ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.⁶⁷ ILO Convention No. 169—which is a legally binding international agreement that recognizes Indigenous Peoples' rights to self-determination within states and sets political, economic, land-based and sociocultural standards that

⁶⁰ Scholte (note 5); and Chan, S. et al., 'Assessing the effectiveness of orchestrated climate action from five years of summits', *Nature Climate Change*, vol. 12, no. 7 (July 2022).

⁶¹ Bäckstrand, K. and Kuyper, J. W., 'The democratic legitimacy of orchestration: The UNFCCC, non-state actors, and transnational climate governance', *Environmental Politics*, vol. 26, no. 4 (July 2017); and Civil society respondent (note 36).

⁶² Bäckstrand, K., Kuyper, J. and Nasiritousi, N., 'From collaboration to contestation? Perceptions of legitimacy and effectiveness in post-Paris climate governance', *Earth System Governance*, vol. 9 (1 Sep. 2021).

⁶³ Nilsson, A. E. (note 35); and Keskitalo, E. C.H., *Negotiating the Arctic: The Construction of an International Region* (Routledge: New York/London, 2004), pp. 89–90.

⁶⁴ Nilsson, A. E. (note 35).

⁶⁵ Cambou, D., and Koivurova, T., 'The participation of Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Organizations in the Arctic Council and Beyond', eds T. Koivurova et al., *Routledge Handbook of Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic* (Routledge: London, 2020); and Koivurova, T., 'The status and role of indigenous peoples in Arctic international governance', *Yearbook of Polar Law*, vol. 3 (2011).

⁶⁶ Rowe (note 53).

⁶⁷ Environment & Society Portal, 'The Alta Dam Controversy', [n.d.]; and Environmental Justice Atlas, 'Alta River Hydro Power Plant, Norway', [n.d.].



countries must adhere to—has only been ratified by Norway and Denmark at the time of writing, but Arctic Indigenous Peoples have actively lobbied their national governments to ratify it.⁶⁸ At the global level, Indigenous Peoples' organizations like the Inuit Circumpolar Council and the Sami Council have lobbied the UN since the 1980s for the greater protection of Indigenous rights, including by taking leading roles in the negotiations that created the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.⁶⁹

CSOs have also supported the creation of new biodiversity agreements that cover the Arctic. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature, which is an observer to the Arctic Council, has engaged in the preparations of the CBD and drafted legal texts to support negotiations around other biodiversity conventions.⁷⁰ WWF, another observer, has helped the council prepare for its possible future role as steward of the BBNJ treaty, providing knowledge about how to translate the requirements of the agreement to the Arctic context.⁷¹

Further, CSOs have pushed for the inclusion of certain topics and provisions during the agenda-setting stages of new international agreements. For example, during the creation of the terms of the 2017 Polar Code, environmental groups and NGOs, such as Pacific Environment, actively pushed for the inclusion of the impacts of commercial fishing, a ban on the combustion and transport of heavy fuel oil, and greater regulation of shipping in the Arctic to prevent ships from interfering with marine wildlife.⁷² The Pew Charitable Trusts, an organization focused on improving public policy, was also active in pressuring governments to establish the 2018 Central Arctic Ocean Fishing Agreement. This agreement aims to conserve the Arctic's environment and species until better levels of scientific knowledge and understanding have been reached.⁷³

Advocacy work

Protecting the Arctic's physical environment and inhabitants is a core aspect of CSO advocacy in Arctic governance. NGOs, for example, often aim to balance both the protection of the environment and the promotion of human well-being in their work in the Arctic.⁷⁴ This balance helps them to build trust and credibility in the eyes of their stakeholders and to create a brand for themselves.⁷⁵ In terms of environmental protection, CSOs have actively lobbied the governments of the countries they are based in. They have called for the greater regulation of oil, gas and energy developments in the Arctic and have protested against unsustainable developments.⁷⁶

⁶⁸ Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), opened for signature 1989.

⁶⁹ Cambou and Koivurova (note 65).

⁷⁰ Prip (note 47).

⁷¹ Civil society respondent (note 36).

⁷² Young, O. R. and Kim, J.-D., 'Next steps in Arctic Ocean governance Meeting the challenge of coordinating a dynamic regime complex', *Marine Policy*, vol. 133 (Nov. 2021).

⁷³ Young and Kim (note 72).

⁷⁴ Burke, D., 'Trust and the WWF in the Arctic', eds J. C. Pereira and A. Saramago, *Non-Human Nature in World Politics: Theory and Practice* (Springer: Cham, Aug. 2020).

⁷⁵ Burke (note 74).

⁷⁶ Landriault et al. (note 19).

Advocating for protection of the Arctic environment and its inhabitants

CSOs have historically advocated against unsustainable developments and extractive projects in the Arctic and pushed for greater recognition of human rights for its inhabitants. One example of this advocacy work is the 1989 Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, which was one of the worst oil spills the world had seen, releasing more than 11 million gallons of crude oil into the Gulf of Alaska and killing thousands of birds and marine animals.⁷⁷ The incident saw CSOs such as WWF and Greenpeace mobilize against long-range pollution in the Arctic and push for greater environmental protection and safeguards.⁷⁸ Through media tactics and small groups of ‘information fighters’, Greenpeace tried to shape public perceptions of the Exxon Shipping Company and delegitimize its activities in the region.

In 2012 Greenpeace launched its ‘Save the Arctic’ campaign, which led to several major accomplishments in halting unsustainable energy projects and unsustainable oil drilling. In 2015 the campaign successfully stopped the oil company Shell from offshore drilling in Arctic waters near Alaska. It used celebrity endorsements, viral videos and media tactics to gain public support and delegitimize the oil company’s actions in the Arctic.⁷⁹ The campaign also pressured the administration of Barack Obama in the USA to adopt a five-year ban on all new oil drilling in US waters in 2016.⁸⁰ In 2018 the ‘Save the Arctic’ campaign led to the creation of the ‘People vs Oil’ campaign, which continues to protect the Arctic from future oil spills and find solutions to reduce emissions.⁸¹

Public pressure campaigns have also been used by Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic to create more stringent social and environmental standards for global extractive industries and renewable energy projects.⁸² Projects like the Trans-Alaska Pipeline system, the Alta Hydroelectric Dam in Norway and the James Bay Project in Northern Quebec have seen Indigenous Peoples push back against extractive projects and developments on their lands. These movements have advocated in favour of greater international protection and recognition of Indigenous human rights and the environment in the Arctic.⁸³

Supporting the protection of biodiversity

CSOs have specifically supported actions to protect endangered marine species from overfishing. For example, the Marine Stewardship Council, a non-profit organization, has certified several Arctic fisheries, including the Barents Sea cod and pollock fisheries, to demonstrate that they meet international best practices for fishing and to protect the Arctic from unsustainable commercial fishing.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, WWF has established its own Arctic Ocean Network of Priority Areas for Conservation (ArcNet), which maps out marine areas in the Arctic Ocean and adjacent seas that

⁷⁷ History.com, ‘Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, History’, 9 Mar. 2018.

⁷⁸ Wehrmann (note 38).

⁷⁹ Hein and Chaudhri (note 51).

⁸⁰ Hocevar, J., ‘Seven years of saving the Arctic’, Greenpeace USA, 14 May 2019.

⁸¹ Greenpeace, ‘People Vs Oil’, [n.d.].

⁸² Hanaček, K. et al., ‘On thin ice—The Arctic commodity extraction frontier and environmental conflicts’, *Ecological Economics*, vol. 191 (Jan. 2022); and Martinez-Alier, J. et al., ‘Is there a global environmental justice movement?’, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 43, no. 3 (May 2016).

⁸³ Rowe (note 53).

⁸⁴ Young and Kim (note 72).



should be conserved and makes concrete planning recommendations.⁸⁵ The International Union for the Conservation of Nature—the only official nature-oriented body under UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention—has similarly participated by designating marine sites in the Arctic that should be protected or receive world heritage status. It has also led projects on microplastics in the Arctic Ocean and raised awareness about the impacts of these on the region’s ecosystem.⁸⁶

Striking a balance in advocacy

In general, CSOs in the Arctic seek to advocate on behalf of both the human (Arctic inhabitants) and the non-human (physical environment) aspects of Arctic governance.⁸⁷ Striking this balance gives them an image that is trustworthy and credible in the eyes of their stakeholders.⁸⁸ When this balance is not struck, however, it can have negative consequences and restrict their participation in Arctic governance. One example is Greenpeace, which has actively campaigned for environmental protection in the Arctic but has been denied observer status in the Arctic Council. Council members did not give a reason for rejecting Greenpeace’s application, but there are a number of possible reasons related to issues with its involvement in Arctic governance. In 2013, for example, Greenpeace campaigned against the Russina Prirazlomnaya oil platform in the Pechora Sea, placing it at odds with Arctic Council member states, particularly Russia.

The Arctic Council’s permanent participants also have ongoing reservations about Greenpeace’s campaign against commercial seal hunting in the region.⁸⁹ As part of its advocacy for greater environmental and biodiversity protection, Greenpeace campaigned for an end to seal hunting in Canada during the 1970s and 1980s. This led to the 1972 US ban on the import of seal products and other marine mammals. Thereafter, in 2009, the EU also banned seal products.⁹⁰ By campaigning on environmental grounds, Greenpeace did not anticipate the negative impacts this would have on the traditional, land-based economy of Indigenous communities in North America, who relied on seal fishing for their livelihoods. Yet the bans have had long-term consequences for local Indigenous Peoples.⁹¹ Consequently, the reputations of both Greenpeace and the EU have been tarnished in the eyes of the permanent participants.⁹² Ever since, they have only been allowed limited involvement in aspects of Arctic governance. Today, the EU is an ad hoc observer to the Arctic Council and has seen its application to become a permanent observer deferred several times.⁹³ Meanwhile, Greenpeace has still not been accepted as an observer.

⁸⁵ WWF Arctic, ‘ArcNet’, [n.d.].

⁸⁶ Prip (note 47).

⁸⁷ Burke (note 74).

⁸⁸ Burke (note 74).

⁸⁹ Prip (note 47).

⁹⁰ Burke (note 74).

⁹¹ Burke (note 74).

⁹² Prip (note 47), p. 7.

⁹³ Prip (note 47), p. 9.



Information sharing

CSOs can contribute to Arctic governance through the production and dissemination of scientific expertise and information in order to support state-led decision making. In the Arctic Council, for example, science-based NGOs and scientists have provided their expertise and knowledge about the impacts of climate change in the Arctic and the importance of framing it as a region that must be protected.⁹⁴ Research has shown the ways in which CSOs may also serve as conveyors of information between different layers of governance, including through organizing side events at high-level state meetings.⁹⁵ By transferring and sharing information, CSOs can act as key links between citizens and governance institutions.⁹⁶

Supporting state-led decision making

CSOs have provided new tools and information, as well as facilitated knowledge exchanges, to support state-led decision making in the Arctic. For example, following the adoption of the Polar Code in 2017, which established safety and environment-related requirements for ships sailing in Arctic waters, CSOs have supported its implementation. They have primarily done so by providing polar certificates to ships sailing through the Arctic Ocean, which is something that the IMO cannot do on its own.⁹⁷ The International Association of Classification Societies, an NGO whose classification standards cover more than 90 per cent of the world's cargo ships, has helped by checking whether ships meet the requirements for a polar certificate to sail in the Arctic. Private companies like Google and SpaceQuest have also supported the implementation of the Polar Code by providing automatic information systems that track individual ships in real time and monitor whether they are complying with the agreement.⁹⁸

In terms of facilitating knowledge exchanges between different Arctic stakeholders, WWF, for example, has convened side events linked to Arctic Council meetings. These have aimed to bring NGOs together around topics of joint interest and create greater awareness.⁹⁹ WWF has also organized meetings between Russian and American scientists so that they can work together on the governance of the Arctic Ocean and find ways to implement the BBNJ treaty when it is enforced in the Arctic context.

Contributing to knowledge production in the Arctic Council

In the Arctic Council, CSOs have specifically participated through inputs related to biodiversity and scientific expertise. In fact, the council's work on biodiversity is an area that has been led by scientific observers and CSOs.¹⁰⁰ Much of this work is conducted through the Arctic Council's working group

⁹⁴ Landriault et al. (note 19).

⁹⁵ Landriault et al. (note 19).

⁹⁶ Stephen, M. D. and Zürn, M. (eds), 'Rising powers, NGOs, and demands for new world orders: An introduction', *Contested World Orders: Rising Powers, Non-Governmental Organizations, and the Politics of Authority Beyond the Nation-State* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, July 2019).

⁹⁷ Young and Kim (note 72).

⁹⁸ Young and Kim (note 72).

⁹⁹ Landriault et al. (note 19).

¹⁰⁰ Prip (note 47).



on the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF).¹⁰¹ One of CAFF's major products has been the 2013 Arctic Biodiversity Assessment, which was the result of contributions from around 252 scientists and Indigenous participants.¹⁰²

Another important scientific product was the 2005 Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA). The report was co-produced by CAFF, the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme, and the International Arctic Science Committee. The ACIA is a leading example of how scientists and CSOs can contribute to the Arctic Council through knowledge production. Indeed, the ACIA report was pivotal in shaping public understanding of the Arctic as a barometer for the impacts of climate change on the rest of the world and in portraying the region not as a barren polar wasteland but as an ecologically diverse region inhabited by different groups and species.¹⁰³ The report also established the importance of recognizing Indigenous and local knowledge of the impacts of global environmental change.¹⁰⁴

The scientific report was largely credited as the work of the Arctic Council's scientists and CSOs, who were able to keep science separate from politics by linking their work to other established processes, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and avoiding political obstacles to their participation.¹⁰⁵ During the 2001 Arctic Council ministerial meeting in Espoo, discussions were held on whether the ACIA report would include policy recommendations.¹⁰⁶ By April 2003, because the policy recommendations had significantly expanded into a policy document of their own, a special Arctic Council meeting needed to be convened to find ways to link the ACIA scientific report with the policy recommendations. Countries such as the USA pushed for the report to remain purely scientific and exclude all calls for action, which was partly linked to the George W. Bush administration's oil lobby and general stance against climate action at that time, as it prepared itself for the 2004 presidential elections.¹⁰⁷ In the end, the scientific report was published separately from the policy report (which was released in November 2004 after the US elections and in a condensed version) and this decision helped the scientists involved to avoid political obstacles in the Arctic Council around their participation.

The scientists further established credibility around the process of producing the ACIA report by including all eight Arctic states and the Arctic Council's permanent participants in discussions on its assessments and recommendations.¹⁰⁸ After it was published, the report generated positive attention for the Arctic Council, initiated further research on the impacts of climate change in the Arctic and created a sharper focus within the council's workstreams on related topics.¹⁰⁹ It also demonstrated the importance of scientific contributions by the Arctic Council's observers.

¹⁰¹ Prip (note 47).

¹⁰² Prip (note 47).

¹⁰³ Landriault et al. (note 19).

¹⁰⁴ Argüello, G., 'Large-scale collective action in the Arctic Ocean: The role of international organizations in climate governance', *Ocean & Coastal Management*, vol. 211 (Oct. 2021).

¹⁰⁵ Landriault et al. (note 19).

¹⁰⁶ Landriault et al. (note 19).

¹⁰⁷ Landriault et al. (note 19).

¹⁰⁸ Landriault et al. (note 19).

¹⁰⁹ Landriault et al. (note 19).



Providing input during geopolitical crises

CSOs can provide input during times when geopolitical events impact on Arctic governance. However, they are not usually directly involved in the security and military dimensions of the Arctic, with states tending to guard over these issues. As a result, within international relations and security studies, most research on Arctic security and geopolitics has focused on state-centred perspectives, and there has been little examination of the role played by non-state actors, particularly Indigenous Peoples.¹¹⁰ This could mean that these research disciplines overlook some of the important roles that CSOs and Indigenous Peoples play in governance responses to geopolitical developments affecting the Arctic.¹¹¹

Despite the limited research on CSO involvement in Arctic geopolitics, CSOs have been found to provide input during times of geopolitical crisis. They have adopted activist approaches that disrupt 'business as usual' politics, pushed for people-centred perspectives on different geopolitical issues affecting the Arctic and raised awareness about the importance of continued regional cooperation. As such, it is useful to consider CSO involvement in three examples of geopolitical crises that have affected the Arctic: Russia's planting of a flag on the North Pole seabed in 2007, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022.

Russia's flag planting in 2007 sparked international interest in the Arctic and its geopolitical possibilities. That same year, the Northern Sea Route and the Northwest Passage shipping routes became ice-free for the first time in history.¹¹² The growing international interest in the Arctic also led CSOs, particularly Indigenous Peoples, to give greater attention to the region's political issues, realizing how they could be affected by competition over territory in the Arctic, as well as other geopolitical developments.¹¹³ In 2009 a delegation of Indigenous Peoples from Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Russia issued the Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Arctic Sovereignty. This statement stressed the unity of Inuit people across the four Arctic states and noted the importance of their involvement in Arctic international relations and the resolution of disputes. It argued that these issues were no longer solely the purview of states and, given that discussions of sovereign rights in the Arctic were increasingly linked to issues of self-determination, the Arctic states needed to work together with the Inuit people.¹¹⁴

Russia's 2014 invasion and annexation of Crimea also incited a response by CSOs in the Arctic. During the Arctic Council's 2015 ministerial meeting in Iqaluit, several permanent participants voiced support for continued cooperation despite the annexation.¹¹⁵ The president of the Saami Council highlighted that in times of geopolitical crisis it is the Indigenous communities that are the first to be negatively affected, and called on the

¹¹⁰ Greaves (note 22); and Powell (note 13).

¹¹¹ Greaves (note 22); and Powell (note 13).

¹¹² Shadian, J., *The Politics of Arctic Sovereignty: Oil, Ice, and Inuit Governance* (Routledge: London, Jan. 2014).

¹¹³ Greaves (note 22).

¹¹⁴ A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic, adopted Apr. 2009.

¹¹⁵ Rowe, E. W., 'Commentary: Indigenous peoples are safeguarding Arctic cooperation', High North News, 11 Oct. 2016.



states of the Arctic Council to continue working together.¹¹⁶ The chief of the Arctic Athabaskan Council similarly remarked, ‘We are not naïve, but this council and its individual members should shield our cooperation from broader political and geopolitical rivalries’.¹¹⁷ Partly because of such pressure, Arctic Council cooperation continued, although some forms of security cooperation were suspended.¹¹⁸

At the start of 2022, Russia’s full invasion of Ukraine again prompted responses from the permanent participants in the Arctic Council. Prior to the invasion, the Arctic Athabaskan Council issued a statement in reference to the Crimean Tartars, the largest Indigenous group in Ukraine. The statement highlighted the importance of recognizing state commitments made by those who had signed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The statement particularly emphasized Article 30, which stipulates that military activities should not be conducted in lands and territories inhabited by Indigenous Peoples unless they are in the public interest of, or are agreed on or requested by, the Indigenous groups concerned.¹¹⁹ The statement also remarked on the importance of the Arctic Council’s work on climate change and the relationship with Russia in this regard.¹²⁰

Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Russian section of the Saami Council also issued a statement. This statement said that there was no justification for Russia’s military action and urged the Arctic Council to continue cooperating with the Russian Sami people.¹²¹ RAIPON, on the other hand, issued a statement supporting the Russian government’s actions. However, this was then rebutted by the International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia in a statement which included signatures by seven Indigenous leaders in exile.

Despite this increased CSO involvement, security and geopolitics generally remain within the purview of the Arctic states. In March 2022 the Arctic Council decided to pause its activities due to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The decision was made by the seven Arctic states (excluding Russia), without consulting the permanent participants. This decision interrupted a long-standing tradition in the council of meaningfully including its permanent participants.¹²² In June, the member states issued a joint statement on the limited resumption of Arctic Council cooperation in areas that do not include Russian participation.

Beyond the roles identified in this paper, CSOs can also be agents for the legitimation and delegitimation of governance institutions, engaging in discursive or behavioural practices that impact on general social legitimacy

¹¹⁶ Arctic Council, ‘Statement by Ms Áile Javo, President of the Saami Council, on the occasion of the Ninth Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council, Iqaluit, 24 Apr. 2015’, 24–25 Apr. 2015.

¹¹⁷ Arctic Council, ‘Remarks by Michael Stickman at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting, Iqaluit 2015’, 24–25 Apr. 2015, p. 4.

¹¹⁸ Koivurova, T., ‘Is it possible to continue cooperating with Russia in the Arctic Council?’, *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 29 June 2022.

¹¹⁹ Zellen, B. S., ‘The Arctic Council pause: The importance of Indigenous participation and the Ottawa Declaration’, Arctic Circle, 14 June 2022.

¹²⁰ Zellen (note 119).

¹²¹ Saami Council, ‘The Russian section of the Saami Council has issued a statement regarding the current situation in Russia’, 27 Feb. 2022.

¹²² Zellen (note 119).



beliefs about Arctic governance.¹²³ The extent to which a CSO perceives a governance institution to be legitimate can influence the ways in which it carries out its legitimation practices.¹²⁴ The next section draws on the Mistra Geopolitics Arctic Governance Survey in order to understand CSOs' perceptions of the legitimacy of Arctic governance institutions, which can also help explain their involvement with these institutions.

IV. CSOs' perceptions of the legitimacy of Arctic governance institutions

In the literature on the social legitimacy of global governance, the beliefs that individuals hold regarding the appropriateness of governance institutions have been shown to impact their involvement with these institutions. In order to analyse these legitimacy beliefs, this section uses data from the Mistra Geopolitics Arctic Governance Survey to map the perceptions of Arctic governance institutions held by members of Swedish CSOs and compare them to those held by a range of other Swedish state and non-state stakeholders mapped by the same survey.¹²⁵ A growing body of literature suggests that legitimacy beliefs can be captured through survey questions about political support, satisfaction or confidence.¹²⁶ This paper defines legitimacy as the belief that a governing institution has the right to rule and does so appropriately. Using confidence as a measure captures this definition well and does not overlap with the sources (such as institutional effectiveness) or the consequences (such as compliance) of legitimacy.¹²⁷ In line with the literature, this survey uses multiple operationalizations by relying on measures of both political satisfaction and confidence. Before engaging in a descriptive analysis, the following subsection introduces the survey and provides a demographic overview of the respondents.

Survey design and demographics

Conducted in Sweden in October and November 2022, the Mistra Geopolitics Arctic Governance Survey recorded 100 respondents' views about the Arctic, with a focus on the views of Swedish state and non-state stakeholders.¹²⁸ Although Sweden is not part of the Arctic Five, it has Arctic territory and is heavily involved in international cooperation on the Arctic, so it is an

¹²³ Bäckstrand, Kuyper and Nasiritousi (note 62); and Bäckstrand, K. and Söderbaum, F., 'Legitimation and delegitimation in global governance: Discursive, institutional, and behavioral practices', eds J. Tallberg, K. Bäckstrand and J. A. Scholte, *Legitimacy in Global Governance: Sources, Processes, and Consequences* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, Sep. 2018).

¹²⁴ Dellmuth and Tallberg (note 9).

¹²⁵ The survey was conducted in Swedish, and the Swedish questionnaire is available from the authors on request.

¹²⁶ Dellmuth, L. and Schlipphak, B., 'Legitimacy beliefs towards global governance institutions: A research agenda', *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 27, no. 6 (June 2020); Easton (note 7); and Inglehart, R. and Welzel, C., *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Sequence* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2005).

¹²⁷ Dellmuth, L. et al., 'Mapping Elite Legitimacy Beliefs', *Citizens, Elites, and the Legitimacy of Global Governance* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, July 2022).

¹²⁸ The survey was approved by the Swedish Ethics Board (Dnr. 2022-04265-01) and conducted through the platform 'Survey Monkey', under conditions of confidentiality. It was conducted in Swedish and translated for the purpose of this Insights paper.



important case to consider. Within Sweden, the survey sampled societal and political stakeholders who could be expected to shape the discourse on the Arctic. These stakeholders were individuals who held leading positions in six different sectors: civil society, business, media, politics, public administration and research.

Stakeholders in these sectors are assumed to perceive different levels of legitimacy, and they are compared in the empirical results section below. CSOs, whose main purpose is often to engage critically with existing governance institutions and who often have very little access to global governance, can be expected to have relatively weak levels of belief in the appropriateness of Arctic governance. In contrast, actors who are at the core of the global governance institutions, such as governmental authorities or actors with structural power such as businesses, can be expected to have relatively strong levels of legitimacy beliefs.¹²⁹

The sampling consisted of two steps. First, relevant organizations in each category were selected based on the advice of individual stakeholders and in-house expertise. Second, a selection procedure identified individuals who held coordinating or strategic functions in targeted organizations.¹³⁰ For example, in the political category, elected politicians from all the major political parties whose work was relevant to the Arctic were invited to participate; in public administration, senior figures across middle and top management in local and national agencies were invited; and in the civil society category, selected directors and leading activists were invited.

The survey was sent to 374 different individuals, with the aim of surveying an equal number of respondents in each of the six sectors. Of the individuals contacted, 100 responded, although the number of responses reported in this paper may be lower as some respondents did not answer all the questions.¹³¹ The survey sought to achieve diversity in terms of respondents' work orientation (subnational, national or international). As a result, 11 people in the sample mainly worked with subnational issues, 35 with national issues and 53 with international issues.¹³² The bulk of the respondents were interested in Arctic questions (91 per cent), making it more likely that they answered the questions about Arctic governance with care.

¹²⁹ Dellmuth et al. (note 127); and Bäckstrand, Kuyper and Nasiritousi (note 62).

¹³⁰ Dalton, R. J. et al. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior* (Oxford University Press: Oxford/New York, July 2009).

¹³¹ Of the 100 respondents, 18 were civil society elites, 16 bureaucratic elites, 13 political elites, 4 media elites, 29 research elites, and 20 business elites. The 2 representatives of public-private partnerships were included in the 'political' category, given the political nature of the work of these partnerships. The 4 media respondents were included in the 'civil society' category, given that the media is non-state in Sweden and that meaningful analysis cannot be carried out on the basis of 4 responses.

¹³² In terms of demographics, in line with the sampling strategy used, the majority of survey respondents were persons in formal leadership positions (54%), and other respondents had coordinating or strategic functions but not in formal leadership positions (46%). Most respondents were born in the 1960s (38%) or 1970s (32%). There were very few that are born either earlier (12%) or later (18%). In terms of gender, 50% of the respondents identified as male, 49% as female and 1% as non-binary. As expected, the survey respondents tended to be well educated and most held a university degree (56%) or a PhD (35%). Far fewer of the respondents had completed only secondary or post-secondary education (5%).

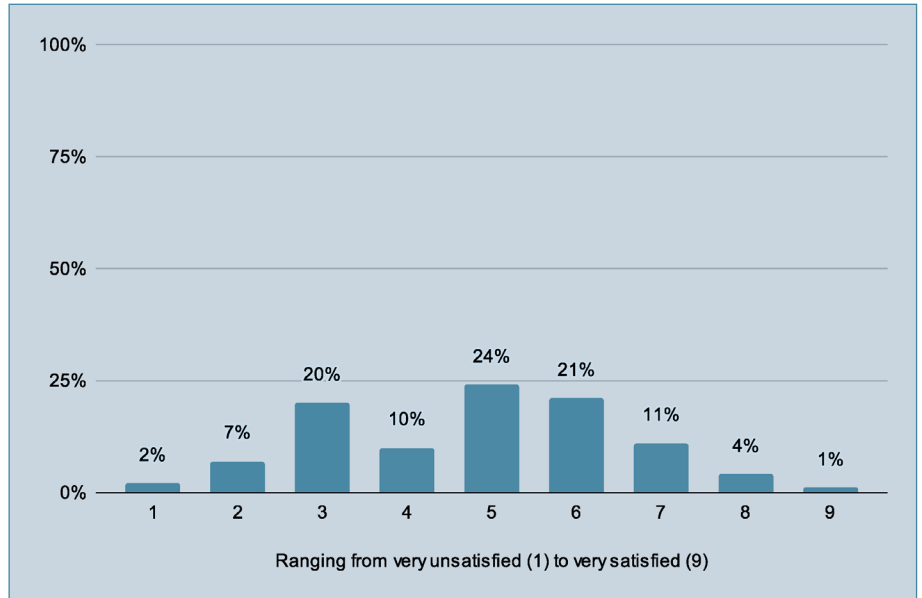


Figure 3. Satisfaction with international cooperation in the Arctic

Notes: N=82. Percentage of respondents. Question wording: How satisfied are you with the international cooperation on transboundary issues in the Arctic over the past years? Quasi-continuous scale ranging from ‘very unsatisfied’ (1) to ‘very satisfied’ (9).

Source: Mistra Geopolitics Arctic Governance Survey, Oct.–Nov. 2022

Empirical results

Based on the survey questions, this subsection maps the legitimacy beliefs of Swedish CSOs regarding Arctic governance institutions. The first page of the survey defines the Arctic as the region north of the polar circle, in line with the definition in this paper. It explains that the survey questions concern international cooperation on transboundary issues in the Arctic. In addition, the survey uses two main measures of perceived legitimacy. The first aims to determine satisfaction with Arctic governance, and the second aims to capture confidence in Arctic governance institutions. These measures capture a person’s positive predispositions that go beyond their self-interest. Therefore, they simultaneously assess whether respondents support Arctic governance on moral grounds.¹³³

Overall, the survey results suggest that Swedish stakeholders hold moderately strong beliefs in the legitimacy of Arctic governance. Figure 3 shows that, based on the survey questions, almost 24 per cent of respondents are neither ‘satisfied’ nor ‘unsatisfied’ with international cooperation related to the Arctic in recent years. About 37 per cent of respondents gave international cooperation in the Arctic a score of between 6 and 9, which suggests that their views range from ‘rather satisfied’ to ‘very satisfied’. In contrast, about 39 per cent gave international cooperation a score of between 1 and 4, which indicates that they are either ‘rather unsatisfied’ or ‘very unsatisfied’. When these responses are broken down further, only a few respondents stated they were either ‘very unsatisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’. The findings that only a few of these disaggregated scores reach the level of ‘very

¹³³ Dellmuth and Schlipphak (note 126).

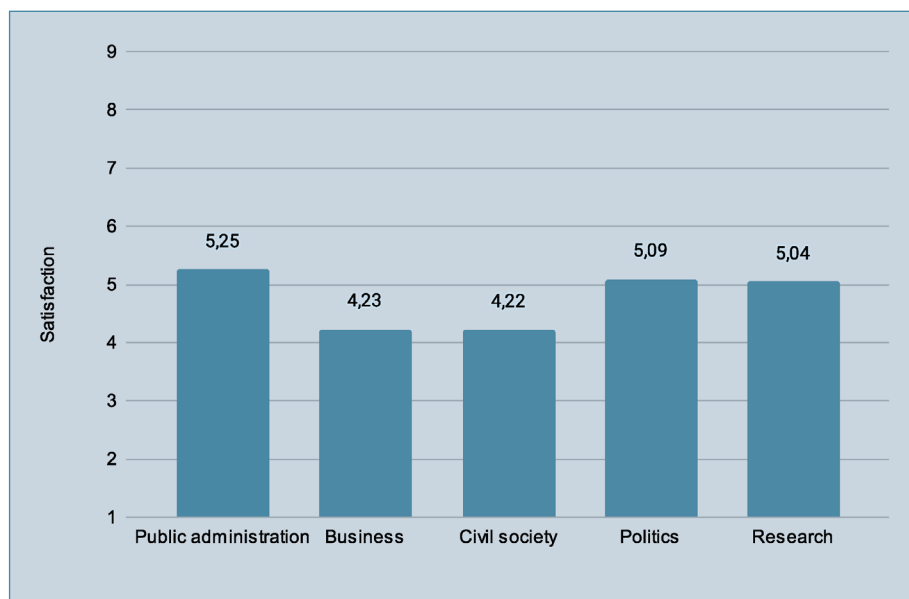


Figure 4. Satisfaction with international cooperation in the Arctic, by sector

Notes: N=82. Mean satisfaction. Question wording: How satisfied are you with the international cooperation on transboundary issues in the Arctic over the past years? Quasi-continuous scale ranging from ‘very dissatisfied’ (1) to ‘very satisfied’ (9).

Source: Mistra Geopolitics Arctic Governance Survey, Oct.–Nov. 2022.

unsatisfied’ (score 1) or ‘very satisfied’ (score 9) suggest that respondents do not tend to hold extreme views on this question.

Next, stakeholder satisfaction with Arctic cooperation is broken down by stakeholder sector. This allows for analysis of how the levels of perceived legitimacy of CSO stakeholders compare with other types of stakeholders. Figure 4 suggests that, on average, respondents working in public administration and in politics are the most satisfied with international cooperation related to the Arctic; meanwhile, respondents working in civil society and business are the least satisfied. That civil society is the least satisfied corresponds to the way in which CSOs function as critical watchdogs and as key links between citizens and policymakers.¹³⁴ As elaborated on earlier in this paper, CSOs can help to hold states accountable in various ways.¹³⁵

The survey results can also be used to examine stakeholder confidence in particular institutions and in their contributions to Arctic governance. Figure 5 shows the average levels of confidence in the contributions to Arctic governance by the six international institutions that were most known to the respondents. These institutions have different core mandates, and only the Arctic Council has a core mandate in Arctic affairs. The other institutions are involved to varying degrees in the governance of climate change, sustainable oceans and human security in the Arctic.

There is notable variation in the average assessment of these six different institutions. The institution which instils the most confidence is the Arctic

¹³⁴ Steffek, J., ‘Why IR needs legitimacy: Arejoinder’, *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 10, no. 3 (Sep. 2004).

¹³⁵ Kuyper, J. W., Linnér, B.-O. and Schroeder, H., ‘Non-state actors in hybrid global climate governance: Justice, legitimacy, and effectiveness in a post-Paris era’, *WIREs Climate Change*, vol. 9, no. 1 (Nov. 2017).

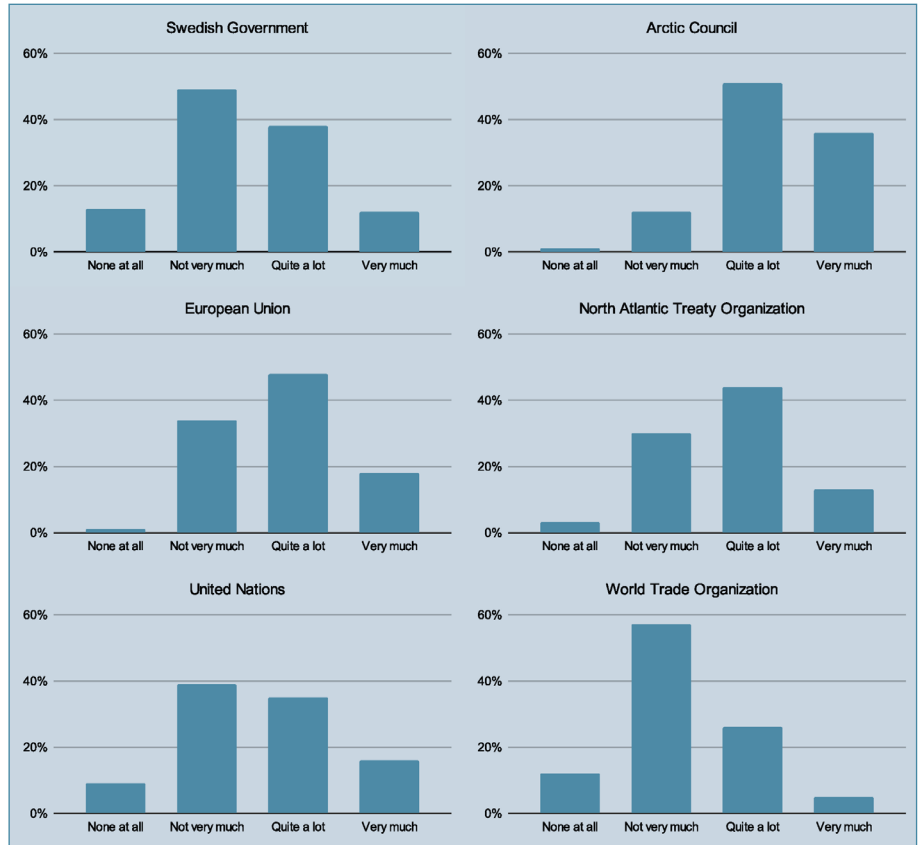


Figure 5. Confidence in international actor contributions in the Arctic

Notes: *N*(Swedish Government)=78; *N*(European Union)=80; *N*(United Nations)=74; *N*(Arctic Council)=73; *N*(North Atlantic Treaty Organization)=71; *N*(World Trade Organization)=58.

Question wording: How much confidence do you have in the contribution of the following organizations to Arctic governance? Quasi-continuous scale: ‘none at all’ (1), ‘not very much’, (2), ‘quite a lot’ (3), ‘very much’ (4), and ‘haven’t heard enough to tell’ (5). Responses coded as ‘don’t know’ are not shown.

Source: Mistra Geopolitics Arctic Governance Survey, Oct.–Nov. 2022.

Council, with about 87 per cent of respondents having ‘quite a lot’ or ‘very much’ confidence in it. After this, high levels of confidence are recorded for the EU (about 66 per cent have ‘quite a lot’ or ‘very much’) and NATO (about 57 per cent). Stakeholders have the lowest levels of confidence in the WTO (about 69 per cent do not have very much or any confidence in it), the Swedish government (62 per cent) and the UN (about 48 per cent). It is also notable that as many as 13 per cent of respondents do not have any confidence at all in the Swedish government, 12 per cent not at all in the WTO, and 9 per cent not at all in the UN. Meanwhile, 57 per cent of respondents indicated ‘not very much’ confidence in the WTO, and 49 per cent in the Swedish government. The variation in confidence between institutions suggests that, in forming their opinions, stakeholders are reacting to something about a particular institution, such as its mandate, reputation, procedures or impact.

The fact that the Arctic Council received the highest confidence scores from respondents does not necessarily mean that respondents think this ought to be the only institution in which Arctic cooperation takes place. The vast majority of respondents mostly agreed (52 per cent) or fully



agreed (23 per cent) with the statement that the ‘Swedish government should cooperate to a larger extent on Arctic issues in fora outside the Arctic Council’. Nonetheless, the Arctic Council is considered to be the most important forum in Arctic governance, followed by NATO. Looking at perceived importance more closely, most of the respondents indicate that the Arctic Council plays a very important role for Arctic governance (61 per cent). A similarly large share thinks NATO is very important for Arctic governance (51 per cent). The importance that respondents ascribe to NATO might be connected to the fact that 85 per cent of respondents think the risk of a military confrontation in the Arctic has increased, while only 15 per cent think this risk has remained unchanged. None of the respondents thinks this risk has decreased. Moreover, 89 per cent of the respondents agree or very much agree that the ‘Swedish government should increasingly engage in bilateral cooperation to ensure proper air and sea surveillance in the Arctic’. This finding underlines the importance of geopolitics in people’s views about the Arctic.

In summary, the overall survey results suggest moderate legitimacy beliefs in the current Arctic governance institutions. Making comparisons across stakeholder types, CSOs are the least satisfied with Arctic cooperation, while stakeholders in public administration are the most. Making comparisons across different institutions, the Arctic Council’s contribution to Arctic governance instils the most confidence and the WTO instils the least. The results also highlight the fact that the international institutions considered here tend to attract more stakeholder confidence in terms of their contribution to Arctic governance than the Swedish government, irrespective of a respondent’s ideological orientation.

V. Recommendations for the legitimacy and future of Arctic governance

This Insights paper has examined the role played by CSOs in the governance of the Arctic. It has found that they have been involved in a range of different ways, including putting pressure on institutions to protect the environment and respect Indigenous People’s rights, holding international institutions and politicians accountable, and supporting governance institutions through their cooperation. CSOs even appear to have contributed to shaping governance responses during geopolitical events and crises that threaten to impact the Arctic. They have also been engaged in legitimation and delegitimation practices that help shape public legitimacy beliefs regarding the region’s governance.

Moreover, this paper has mapped the legitimacy beliefs held by members of CSOs regarding Arctic governance institutions and argued that these beliefs matter for how CSOs engage in Arctic governance. The key findings are that stakeholders, on average, hold moderate legitimacy beliefs regarding Arctic governance institutions, and that CSOs have the weakest levels of legitimacy beliefs among the stakeholders sampled. Based on this analysis, the paper concludes by giving some recommendations concerning the involvement of CSOs in Arctic governance in the future.



Recommendations

1. Work to increase CSOs' meaningful involvement in all of the main Arctic governance institutions, including the Arctic Council.

This paper noted that although CSOs do participate in the Arctic Council, their participation is limited and tends to be passive. More active and frequent CSO involvement could contribute to strengthening the institution's legitimacy. As well as increasing the overall participation of CSOs, it is important to increase the diversity of this participation. Institutions should strive to incorporate different kinds of CSOs. This would help to counteract 'NGO inbreeding' in the Arctic Council, for example, where policymakers tend to give preference to more reputed and high-level NGOs and exclude other types of civil society actors.¹³⁶ Such exclusion could actually limit the participation of all kinds of civil society actors and delegitimize the Arctic Council, impacting on its ability to rule effectively.

2. Cultivate information flows and build participatory processes for information disclosure and exchange.¹³⁷

This paper found that CSOs play an important role in Arctic governance as transmitters of information, particularly as a bridge between scientific research and policy but also in other areas. Structures could be put in place to develop this role further. For example, the 2018 International Agreement to Prevent Unregulated Fishing in the High Seas of the Central Arctic Ocean included a requirement to incorporate the knowledge of local and Indigenous Peoples regarding marine areas and resources, and to involve them in the development and decision making of its corresponding Joint Program of Scientific Research and Monitoring. As a result, Indigenous Peoples organizations such as the Inuit Circumpolar Council have participated throughout the negotiation process.

3. Foster greater consultative roles for CSOs in governance responses to geopolitical developments and crises.

This paper examined how CSOs have played a role in addressing different geopolitical developments that affect the Arctic. When CSOs were invited to provide input in the aftermath of Russia's annexation of Crimea, for instance, they contributed positively to debates around how regional cooperation should proceed. More research should be dedicated to understanding exactly how this consultative role for CSOs could be actualized in a way that enhances responses to geopolitical issues, while also satisfying all parties involved.

4. Identify the causes of CSOs' weak legitimacy beliefs regarding Arctic governance institutions and seek to remedy them.

The survey analysis in this paper showed that CSOs have comparatively weak legitimacy beliefs regarding Arctic governance institutions. Given the important roles that CSOs play in Arctic governance today and their increased involvement in shaping the activities of the region's governance institutions, it is important to address the governance deficits they identify and thus strengthen their legitimacy beliefs.

¹³⁶ Scholte (note 5).

¹³⁷ Lamers, M. et al., 'The changing role of environmental information in Arctic marine governance', *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, vol. 18 (Feb. 2016).



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SIPRI INSIGHTS ON PEACE AND SECURITY NO. 2023/02

THE INVOLVEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN ARCTIC GOVERNANCE

EMILIE BROEK, NICHOLAS OLCZAK AND LISA DELLMUTH

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