Strengthening the Arctic Council: Insights From the Architecture Behind Canadian Participation

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Abstract: The Arctic has gone from being on the periphery of world affairs, as a venue of fading military tensions between two Cold War superpowers, to holding a prominent global profile and importance triggered by the dramatic environmental changes being observed. It is in this context that the Arctic Council has garnered international attention as a prominent player in the region. This article argues that exploring *how* the Arctic Council works is critical for understanding what the Council is and what it has the potential to be—in particular, by exploring how the internal organization of a state, such as Canada, serves to define the nature of a member state's contribution and ultimately plays a critical role in shaping what the Council is. This analysis exposes that there are, in fact, two modes of work at the sub-state level that support Canada's involvement in the Council: first, the centralized and hierarchical systems and structures that support Canada's participation as a unitary actor in the Arctic Council, and second, a system of horizontal and informal function-specific networks. This article concludes that the unit of analysis and the approach adopted to analyze how the Council works fundamentally alter not only our understanding of this international forum but also our understanding of the forces that have the potential to contribute to the Council's success and evolution in the future.

> Since its inception, the Council has undertaken important work to address the unique challenges and opportunities facing the Arctic Region. As these challenges evolve, so must the Arctic Council. Canada will work collaboratively with its Arctic Council partners to strengthen the Council. The aim is to enhance the capacity of the Permanent Participant organizations, improve the Council's coordination and maximize efficiencies. (Government of Canada, 2013)

Canada's acquisition of the Arctic Council Chairmanship in May 2013 holds particular symbolic significance because of the country's pivotal role in championing its creation, its role as the first Council Chair, and the fact

that Canada is now reacquiring this leadership role after each of the eight Arctic member states has held the Chairmanship[1]. The transfer of the Chair is an opportune time for Council members to take stock of what has been accomplished, and determine what the priorities should be in the next 24 months. This is especially true because, by many accounts, the Arctic Council now rests at a critical juncture and leadership is needed once again to clarify its future path(s). As part of the priorities of its current Chairmanship (2013–15), Canada has recognized the need to "strengthen" the Council to address the unique challenges and opportunities facing the Arctic; however, at this time, how the Council should direct its efforts to achieve this goal of "strengthening" seems to be contained in a "vaguely defined wish to increase the Arctic Council's legitimacy, recognition and influence" (Breum, 2012, p. 119). These are three very different objectives that offer no clear guidance on how efforts to strengthen the Council should be measured or assessed and that remain disconnected from a longer-term vision for the role the Council can or should play in the region. As a result, the question remains: As the Arctic Council Chair, will Canada kindle a thoughtful assessment of what the Council has the potential to be and how it can best serve the Circumpolar Region into the future?

This article seeks to support an enhanced understanding of what the Arctic Council is by exploring *how* the Council actually works. This article will explore, in some depth, the idea advanced by Klaus Dodds that "understanding the how of an organization not only enables evaluations of why particular future visions emerge from the institutions as praxis, but also how human resources are deployed and arranged in certain ways in order to stabilize such visions that are then used to lend credence to particular courses of action" (2012, p. 8). However, whereas much of the international relations literature focuses on how international governance regimes influence states' foreign policies, I will explore how the internal organization of states, such as Canada, shape intergovernmental organizations. It is important to note, however, that this article does not propose to deal with many of the important and high profile issues that the Council now faces, including the participation of permanent participants[2], local and regional governments, and organizations seeking observer status.

Instead, this article begins by considering how our understanding of the Arctic Council is affected by the specific unit of analysis adopted to examine it—in other words, the entity that is the focus of study. In particular, I compare the types of analyses available at the international, state-to-state, and sub-state levels, thereby demonstrating that the unit of analysis and the approach adopted to analyze how the Council works can fundamentally

alter not only our understanding of this international forum but also our understanding of the forces that will contribute to the Council's success and evolution in the future.

Subsequently, Canada's current sub-state organization is examined in some detail to assess how the Canadian government advances the priorities and projects of the Arctic Council. To support this analysis, interviews were conducted with representatives of the seven key federal departments[3] that currently play a role in supporting the Council's work. These representatives were asked a series of questions related to the role of their department in supporting Canada's participation in the Arctic Council, their department's decision-making process for providing advice and guidance, and how their department works with other federal departments and stakeholders involved in this work. This analysis exposes that there are, in fact, two modes of work at the sub-state level that support Canada's involvement in the Council: first, the centralized and hierarchical systems and structures that support Canada's participation as a unitary actor in the Arctic Council, and second, a system of horizontal and informal function-specific networks. This sub-state analysis highlights alternative levers for change that can be used by the Canadian Chair to inform work to strengthen the Council—signalling specific opportunities for, and potential limits to, its transformation.

1. Why Study The Arctic Council Now?

When the Arctic Council was officially established in 1996, it attracted little attention on the global stage. World leaders had little time for peaceful efforts to establish a discussion forum on the environment and sustainable development in the Arctic when they were preoccupied with wars in the Gulf, Yugoslavia, and Chechnya. However, the world has changed over the last sixteen years. The Arctic has gone from being on the periphery of world affairs, as a venue of fading military tensions between two Cold War superpowers, to holding a prominent global profile and importance triggered by the dramatic environmental changes being observed in the region (Bravo & Rees, 2006; Heininen, 2010; Young & Kankaanpää, 2012). These environmental changes have attracted attention to the area in their own right; at the same time, the highly anticipated economic opportunities resulting from these changes make the Circumpolar Region valuable because of its potential as a new source of natural resources and its growing accessibility.

Given its quickly evolving natural environment, many experts agree that the Circumpolar Region is undergoing a political transformation—a "state change" that sees the international community wanting to be involved in

the governance of a region that has largely been left to the Arctic states for the last two decades (Young, 2009). The variety of environmental and socio-economic issues do more than attract attention to the area; they also foster a growing awareness of the complexity of the Arctic and its interdependence with the rest of the planet. Given the speed with which this region continues to change, that attention and interest will only increase. As Ebinger and Zambetakis describe, "global climate change has catapulted the Arctic into the centre of geopolitics, as melting Arctic ice transforms the region from one of primarily scientific interest into a maelstrom of competing commercial, national security and environmental concerns" (2009, p. 1215).

Not surprisingly, the complexity and interdependence of the Arctic can also be understood as a source of internal and external tension, which in turn is perceived as providing the area's states and other key players with incentives to foster mechanisms for co-operation or, at the very least, as a means to contain potential conflict (Huebert, 2009; Keohane, 1984; Young & Kankaanpaa, 2012). This co-operation takes many different forms. In the Circumpolar Region, there are currently a variety of issue-specific arrangements, such as the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) or the International Union for Circumpolar Health, where states, communities, NGOs, business interests, and other stakeholders can engage; however, in this complex environment, no mechanism presently exists to support a comprehensive policy agenda for the region and the current arrangements remain disaggregated (Young, 2013).

It is in this context that the Arctic Council has garnered international attention as a prominent player in the region (Young & Kankaanpää, 2012). In the opinion of many observers, the Arctic Council has exceeded expectations as a forum for generating regional knowledge; framing the issues; and setting scientific, socio-cultural, and political-economic agendas. It has successfully attracted the attention of key policy-makers to the importance of specific environmental and economic development issues, and, as a result, it has influenced member states and even policy-makers outside the area (Young & Kankaanpää, 2012; Young, 2013). With this success in mind, some experts believe that, as an international governance body, the Council offers the best potential to be the forum for managing issues and relationships in the region, as well as the strongest potential to be transformed into a comprehensive international regime or treaty-based organization.

The arguments in favour of strengthening and broadening the role of the Arctic Council are also supported by institutional and governance specialists who point to the fact that it is easier to leverage existing governance regimes

than establish new bodies (Ebinger & Zambetakis, 2009; Keohane, 1984; Thelen, 1999)—a simple case in point: it took almost ten years for the Arctic Council to go from initial conception (c. 1987) to its formal creation (1996). This is a logic that resonates with the littoral Arctic states, who take the position that no new international regimes are necessary to manage the region's marine environment (Koivurova, Molenaar, & Vanderzwaag, 2009; "The Ilulissat Declaration," 2008).

So what does all of this mean for the future(s) of the Arctic Council? What role is it best positioned to play in an international arena? How effective has it really been over the last sixteen years? And how effective can it be at contributing to managing a broad range of challenging issues facing the Circumpolar Region? Does the Council have the capacity to move from reacting to issues and challenges to actively influencing the changing circumstances in the area? These important and timely questions are currently being raised in different forums and there are a variety of answers coming back, but do we have all the information that can help to fully answer them? This article is built on the premise that before we attempt to answer these questions, there is value in taking a step back and asking a question that may seem deceptively simple. What *is* the Arctic Council? Or, more specifically, how does the Arctic Council actually *work*?

2. Unit of Institutional Analysis

It is well recognized in public policy literature that the unit of institutional analysis plays a critical role in shaping how problems are defined, what questions are posed, as well as how solutions are characterized (Gregg, 1974; Waltz, 1954; Young, 2002). As an international entity, the majority of the discourse related to the Arctic Council is at the international regime level. Issues related to state-to-state relations are also commonly introduced as important factors to understand the dynamics within the Council and the region. There is even an interesting thread in the discourse related to challenging our current conceptions of state sovereignty and how this might transform our understanding of how the Arctic can be understood and governed (Shadian, 2010). Conversely, the sub-state unit of analysis and the unique questions that this raises are rarely considered or discussed as a means to understand the Council. The subsequent analyses of the Arctic Council are not intended to be comprehensive; rather they are intended to illustrate the impact of examining the Council using different units of analysis.

a. Unit of Analysis: International Regime

Focusing on the Arctic Council as an international entity positions it as a unitary actor that shapes the agenda for the region, sets expectations, and "symbolically legitimizes cooperation" (Keohane, 1984). Discussions at this level of analysis have been largely focused on the formal institutional structures of the Council, and the main debate has been about whether the Arctic would be best served by the Council continuing its evolution from a policy-shaping to a policy-making body.

Given the changing geopolitical environment of the Arctic, some observers believe that the region would benefit most if the Council was transformed into a formal regulatory regime (Exner-Pirot, 2011; Fenge, 2012a). Some writers point to the legal and regulatory certainty required in the Arctic to attract further international investment and development (Ebinger & Zambetakis, 2009); others place primary importance on legal mechanisms needed to ensure that development in the Arctic is undertaken in a responsible and sustainable manner (Fenge, 2012a). In contrast, there are those who are skeptical that the political will exists to empower the Council with the necessary treaty-making and enforcement authority required to make such a transition (Koivurova, 2010). Furthermore, there are other prominent international regimes, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), which co-exist in the region and are recognized as holding legal authority that the Council lacks.

Other observers argue that, in this complex and overlapping institutional environment, what has made the Arctic Council successful up to this point is the unique, inclusive, and consensus-based governance structure that provides the Council with the flexibility to adjust to changing priorities and to ensure that quality scientific analysis is not hindered by regional, "lowest common dominator" treaty-making politics (Young & Kankaanpää, 2012). From this perspective, it could be argued that the Arctic Council should avoid being subsumed into conventional international political mechanisms and regimes, and instead be looked upon as an alternative governance model that is successful in its own right.

b. Unit of Analysis: State-to-State Relations

As an alternate unit of analysis, we can look at the dynamics at play between the different players *within* the Arctic Council. This approach brings to the fore a growing number of management and sovereignty issues and a recognition that world politics is decentralized—in other words, in the international arena, states hold a special status because they are not subject

to a superior government (Ebinger & Zambetakis, 2009; Keohane, 1984). Using this layer of analysis, the institutional discourse tends to be heavily focused on questions of sovereignty, authority, and accountability, as well as the dynamics between the states both inside and outside of the region.

In this context, it is interesting to note that, although people are often attracted to studying the Arctic Council as a unitary actor, state-to-state relations and issues hold a unique place in the region's political dynamics that it would be a mistake to underestimate or ignore. For example, in 2008, after participating in a meeting of ministers, the five Arctic Ocean littoral states released the Ilulissat Declaration. This document confirmed these states' commitment to the Law of the Sea as a sufficient legal framework and took the position that there is no need for a new comprehensive international legal regime ("The Ilulissat Declaration," 2008). This meeting of "The Arctic Five" was a source of controversy and tension with the remaining three Arctic Council member states (Finland, Iceland, and Sweden) and the permanent participants that were left out of these discussions (Timo Koivurova, 2010). Similarly, it is interesting to observe that, even now, bilateral issues can play a role in high-level Arctic Council discussions—for example, the recent deferral of the European Union's observer application until Canada's concerns about the European Union's seal ban are resolved (Arctic Council, 15 May 2013).[4]

c. Unit of Analysis: Sub-State Dynamics

Finally, given that most of the work of the Arctic Council is actually coordinated and managed by member states, the sub-state unit of analysis is also critical. However, given the international focus of the Council, this type of analysis has received limited attention in the literature.

To examine the sub-state unit of analysis, this article examines Canada's participation in the Arctic Council. The analysis demonstrates that we cannot fully understand Canada's contribution to the Council or its position on specific issues in the region without considering the state's internal policy-making environment, systems, and structures (Hall, 1993). Although Keohane's analysis shows that the ways in which a government organizes itself to deal with foreign policy is affected by how issues are organized internationally (1984), I would like to shift the focus to how an international governance regime, such as the Arctic Council, can be shaped by how member governments are internally organized to coordinate and manage their participation.

There is an interesting analysis to be undertaken regarding how Canada's inner workings serve to define the nature of its contribution to the Arctic Council and its relationship to other actors involved or interested in the work of the Council. As well, I show that the political-administrative architecture *within* each member state can play a critical role in shaping what the Council is and what it has the potential to be. In particular, this article concentrates on the systems and structures within Canada. It explores what this analysis tells us about Canada as a member state, as well as the institutional opportunities and challenges that exist for it as the current Chair in order to deliver on its priority to "strengthen" the Arctic Council.

3. The Architecture Behind Canada's Participation

Because the Arctic Council is an issue and project-driven forum, the number of federal departments directly involved in supporting Canada's participation varies. Departments may become involved by proposing that a project or issue linked to its mandate be considered by the Council, or the department may be asked to participate because the Arctic Council is working on an issue related to its mandate. Alternatively, government departments may be required to support Canada's "high-level" positions and contributions at main table meetings of Ministers and Senior Arctic Officials. However, most of the day-to-day work of departmental officials is dedicated to supporting Canada's participation on the Council's six established working groups or on ad hoc special task forces that are set up to respond to short-term priority issues.

Overall, Canada currently has two primary (but interrelated) modes of participation in Arctic Council work. A significant portion of Canada's contribution is through the Arctic Council Working Groups, and the organizational systems supporting this work are highly decentralized and can best be understood as "function-specific" networks. By contrast, the support to the main table activities of the Council, as well as support for Canada's current Chairmanship, rely on a more traditional, hierarchical, and centralized mode of operation—consistent with how states commonly participate in intergovernmental organizations.

a. Intergovernmental Organization Mode

As previously mentioned, there is a significant body of international relations literature that seeks to understand the dynamics of international institutions, either through an analysis of international governance structures or through studies of state-to-state relations. In this analytic construct,

Canada is understood as a unitary actor that is assumed to take a single position and speak with a single voice on Arctic issues. It is this feature of the analytical construct that creates a clear delineation between the domestic and international realms (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2009).

This form of intergovernmental analysis is complemented by a line of research that acknowledges the role of domestic government structures that serve to support a state's participation in international activities. In this context, a government is commonly supported by a department specifically dedicated to managing a state's diplomatic relations and foreign affairs. The actions and activities of the foreign affairs department are the most visible and are the focus of most analytic efforts to understand a country's foreign policy and international relations. Furthermore, all other sub-state organizations or actors are understood to play a secondary role by feeding advice into the foreign affairs department so as to establish a country's position, or by being tasked with the implementation of international commitments.

Given the Arctic Council's status as an intergovernmental organization, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD) is recognized as the lead in supporting Canada's participation in the Council. As would be expected, DFATD officials bring to bear their knowledge of current international issues and customs of interstate co-operation, as well as their expertise regarding the machinery necessary to coordinate the involvement of other departments, other levels of government, and other stakeholders. This type of organization within the Canadian federal public administration is consistent with its Westminster model of vertical hierarchical organizations that supports ministerial accountability with specific political and legislative mandates (Hubbard & Paquet, 2010).

Being aware of this general model of organization within the Canadian public administration when I began my research, I wanted to explore how this institutional context might influence the trajectory of the Arctic Council's evolution as a governance body in the Arctic. As a result, when I conducted my interviews with officials from all seven departments currently supporting Canada's participation, I was not surprised to learn that main table meetings and discussions of the Arctic Council are primarily supported by hierarchical and centralized modes of organization. Depending on the profile or importance of an issue or policy, advice on Canadian positions can go through a full line of hierarchical approvals and review, both within the department that holds the relevant mandate, and subsequently within DFATD, before being provided to the lead Minister or Senior Arctic Ofp. ficial. For example, DFATD was the lead on ensuring that Canada had the appropriate approvals and authority to sign on to the two binding

international agreements[5] that Arctic Council members recently agreed to; coordinate and consolidate the priorities of the Canadian: Chairmanship; as well as participate in efforts to "strengthen" the Arctic Council, like the recent creation of the Arctic Council Secretariat and the Arctic Council Observer Manual.

However, the Arctic Council was not established to be a policy-making or formal treaty-making international body. As a result, DFATD officials have some flexibility when managing Canada's input, compared to more formal intergovernmental organizations (such as the IMO), and there are clear efforts by DFATD officials to take advantage of that flexibility to best meet the needs of the forum they are supporting—for example, by sharing information across the working groups and, where possible, trying to identify overlaps and facilitate opportunities for synergies. However, institutional scholars would caution against ignoring the very real limitations of working within the overarching rules, norms, processes, and structures of a foreign affairs department. Irrespective of the less formal nature of the Council, these officials must work within DFATD's decision-making processes and protocols, function within the DFATD's rules and norms, and bring to bear a set of established expectations and routines about how Canada's participation in an international forum should be conducted.

b. "Function-Specific" Networks Mode

Over the last twenty years, we have seen the emergence of a new political vocabulary that includes "networked societies," "horizontal policy-making," "policy networks," and "horizontal governance." This new language defines a field of study that is working to understand the implications of the changing nature of society. Academics engaged in this discourse about "networks" and "governance" argue that this changing environment has direct consequences for the dynamics of political life and the characteristics of policy-making (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003). We are no longer part of a political world that can be understood as nested territorial containers cascading from international to national to local levels. Policy issues are defined and managed across and among these territorial containers, and the nature of the connections that are established within and across these different levels are fast-paced, dynamic, and complex (Bulkeley, 2005).

Many authors speak to the conditions and environment that have facilitated the emergence of international networked governance structures and systems, such as highly mobile populations, the growing awareness of global interdependence, or the availability of information and communication technologies (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2009; Hajer &

Wagenaar, 2003; Keohane, 1984). In the "networked societies" discourse, there is a clear assertion that the political and policy-making landscape has been fundamentally altered by the existence of these types of network practices, which facilitate new modes of deliberation and problem solving (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003). As Sorensen and Torfing suggest, "[Networks] have become a necessary ingredient in the production of efficient public governance in our complex, fragmented and multi-layered societies" (2005, p. 197).

While it is more difficult to assess the effectiveness or direct value of the work in these "function-specific" networks, the challenge of assessing them should not lead to the assumption that they are unimportant simply because the causal links are less clear or because they do not participate in regulatory or procedural activities that we often associate with international regimes (Young, 2013).

Although I expected to find the hierarchical and centralized mode of work consistent with Canada's participation in an intergovernmental organization, it was only through my research and interviews that I uncovered a rich and dynamic system of "function-specific" networks—layers of work being done to support the efforts of the Arctic Council that are buried within the Canadian public administration. This system of "function-specific" networks is highly disaggregated and decentralized. Furthermore, these networks seem to be thriving despite the fact that Canada's hierarchical Westminster model does not foster an environment conducive to networked modes of working (Hubbard & Paquet, 2010).

At a domestic level, these "function-specific" networks support lateral ties to collaborate, both within the public administration and with relevant external stakeholders, on Arctic Council projects, and to share information and inform Canada's position on issues in the region. These networks engage a broad range of domestic actors—including federal departments, other levels of governments, Aboriginal organizations, and other private and public sector stakeholders.

In support of Canada's participation in the Arctic Council, the most well-established and stable "function-specific" networks have been actively established and managed by Canadian Heads of Delegation that lead Canada's participation in each of the Arctic Council Working Groups. In addition, my interviews revealed ad hoc networks also grow up in various departments around particular issues or projects. These ad hoc networks appear more like self-organizing systems—complex structures of order that evolve without anyone designing them (Dryzek, 2005, p. 111).

"Function-specific" networks also exist that create lateral ties with governmental officials *across* borders, involving work on issues at a regional or even global scale, often with limited involvement by DFATD officials (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2009). Based on my interviews, these transgovernmental networks also tend to build up around specific issues or projects. These collaborative efforts are often quite technical, and much of the work is low visibility and often perceived as being far removed from high-profile political decision-making; frequently, these efforts have resulted in scientific and technical assessments and reports that have ultimately served to shape our understanding of Arctic issues and which hold substantial influence with policymakers. For example, Koivurova (2010) makes a strong case that the 2004 Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) prepared by the Council's Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (the AMAP Working Group) was critical in changing the image of the Arctic from a "frozen desert" to a region undergoing major transformative climatic change. Recognition of these transgovernmental network systems highlights the limitations of understanding the state as a unitary actor in the context of the Arctic Council.

Furthermore, in the case of Canada, although DFATD remains the lead in managing Canada's participation in the Arctic Council, it is important to note that much of the work that has served to establish the Arctic Council as a credible and legitimate international forum has been dependent on this system of "function-specific" networks. Unlike the formalized government-to-government relations that are centrally managed through DFATD, relations between members of these networks are based on building direct personal relationships, often with people who have similar professional standards, interests, and values. These are relationships based on expectations of reciprocity and depend on high levels of trust (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2009).

This analysis of how Canada is organized at the sub-state level to participate in the Arctic Council highlights the fact that the nature of co-operation in the region and the effectiveness of the Council are impacted by both exogenous factors (such as growing interest from states outside the Arctic or the rapid pace of environmental change) and endogenous factors (such as the priority assigned to Arctic Council issues and projects by federal departments, including the assignment of the human and financial resources required) (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010).

This analysis highlights the value of acknowledging that the contribution of states is not simply about assessing the "goal-oriented activities of state officials"; it is also important to understand the implications of a state's organizational configuration. How the "overall patterns of activity affect

political culture, encourage some kinds of group formation and collective political actions (but not others), and make possible the raising of certain political issues (but not others)" (Skocpol, 1985, p. 21). This would suggest that the institutional structures, procedures, and customs—what Busenberg (2001) refers to as the "institutional learning arrangements"—are critical to either enabling or resisting change. This analysis also encourages us to consider how efforts to transform the Arctic Council may be constrained by culture, values, and the models that exist at the sub-state level—new problems are ultimately solved using the cultural templates available to us (Thelen, 1999). A recognition of both these constraints and the institutional learning arrangements at the sub-state level could provide the Canadian Arctic Council Chairmanship with an enhanced understanding of the levers available to support efforts to "strengthen" the Council, as well as the potential barriers.

4. Strengthening the Arctic Council: What Does this Mean?

Overall, it is fair to say that the Arctic Council has exceeded the expectations of many participants and observers to date. More specifically, in recent research focused on assessing the effectiveness of the Council, Young and Kankaanpää indicate that there is general agreement from participants and observers that "what the Arctic Council has done best is to identify emerging issues, carry out scientific assessments addressing these issues and use the results of the assessments both to frame issues for consideration and to set the agenda in policy settings." However, Young and Kankaanpää (2012) are also quick to point out that the success of the Council in the past is no guarantee that it can continue to be effective in the future—either in its current capacity as a soft law regional forum or, perhaps more importantly, if it is to fulfill the larger role envisioned for it as the region's central, comprehensive governance regime.

As discussed earlier, the geophysical environment of the Arctic is changing, and with it the social, economic, and political pressures facing the region. With these factors in mind, the future trajectory of the Arctic Council remains unclear and, through the decisions or indecision of its leaders, is capable of being strengthened or weakened (Dodds, 2012). Ultimately, the Council's future is dependent on factors such as the pace and predictability of future environmental changes, the global demand for natural resources available in the North, pricing of those resources, as well as extraction, processing, and transportation costs to markets (Dodds, 2010). A complex set of interdependent variables exist that may contribute to, or detract from, important objectives, including the effective stewardship of the North in

securing sustainable northern communities and maintaining a sustainable globe (Exner-Pirot, 2011).

Furthermore, the current discourse would suggest that there are many different opinions about the role that the Arctic Council can or should play in the future, which may augment the lack of clarity about the approach that should be adopted to transform it. This analysis does not presume to take a position in this debate, but rather is intent on contributing to our understanding of the Council in order to support efforts to define what it means to "strengthen" (or potentially weaken) it. So, what does an analysis at the sub-state level expose for those who seek to understand the Arctic Council—both for what it is and what it has the potential to be?

If "strengthening" the Council means building its international status as *the* legitimate decision-making body of the Circumpolar Region, then domestic efforts should focus on supporting DFATD to reinforce and streamline Canada's decision-making mechanisms and structures to support the Arctic Council as a formal intergovernmental organization. This could include dedicating attention to regularizing the means by which Canada relinquishes authority to the Council to make binding agreements; furthering efforts to formalize the public administration's structures and procedures around a comprehensive strategy for the region; and committing sufficient leadership time and attention within departments engaged in Arctic Council work.

But is this a vision that member states, which hold the necessary power and authority to make it a reality, will support and advance? There are indications that there is little or no interest on the part of the member states to transform the Arctic Council into an organization with decision-making authority (Ebinger & Zambetakis, 2009; "The Ilulissat Declaration," 2008). Therefore, it is also useful to consider what it means to "strengthen" the Council if the focus is on building its capacity as a policy shaper for the region. In this context, domestic efforts to strengthen the Council should critically assess the established mechanisms available through the traditional Westminster model. Government officials must be willing to acknowledge that this system is out of step with the policy environment, the needs of the people of the region, and the needs of the Council. As a result, Canada would be well served by centring efforts to "strengthen" its sub-state organization on its system of "function-specific" networks. Ultimately, this would suggest that work should be focused on actively transforming *how* policy is developed—the conscious development and recognition of these new open and collaborative ways of generating policy. This type of transformation would be multifaceted, but it ultimately involves dedicated attention and

effort to systematically break down the internal barriers created by the traditional Westminster model that supports centralized and hierarchical policy-making. This means that it could have important implications for other policy areas and even offer a substantive challenge to a model of government that was devised in a very different time and environment.

Efforts to bolster collaborative, network-driven policy-making build on an awareness of the interdependence of issues, spaces, and people. This broadening of the policy-making space brings into question the role of the policy analyst as the expert interpreter of objective data and information, and forces an acknowledgement that context is critical (Kelly and Maynard-Moody 1993). In these situations, policy-making is the product of discussion and negotiation (Wagle 2000) and Canada's "function-specific" networks should be recognized for their ability to facilitate new modes of problem solving and deliberation (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003). This involves considering ways to take full advantage of the flexibility that these networks offer to communicate quickly and efficiently, and to easily redefine the scope and boundaries of the issues being tackled; however, it also involves recognizing and finding ways to address the limitations inherent in this mode of organization, including a lack of overarching vision, the risk of overlap or gaps in the work being done, as well as limited monitoring and patchy implementation (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2009). "Function-specific" networks will still benefit from senior leadership attention—in particular, by establishing a coherent vision for Canada's involvement and participation in the Arctic Council, instituting better horizontal communication and discussion within the Canadian public administration, and leading efforts to create a comprehensive strategy that provides shape and boundaries to Canada's effort to support the Arctic Council.

If we acknowledge that there are two, interrelated modes of participation within the Canadian state and the important work that is being done *within* Canada to contribute to the Arctic Council's goals, then Canada, in its capacity as Chair, possesses a new suite of sub-state levers for change. In fact, Canada may find that, in its role as Chair, the most effective levers within its control are at the sub-state level, and it may demonstrate the most leadership by dedicating attention and effort to strengthening its internal systems and structures. By dedicating resources and energy to increasing the transparency, coherence, and capacity of its rich system of networks, it acknowledges and legitimizes these more dynamic and inclusive mechanisms for discussing issues and shaping policy that is important to the region. This, in turn, may serve as a model for how Arctic Council members

can meaningfully engage diverse interests and players in a rapidly changing geopolitical environment.

5. Advancing a Sub-State Level of Analysis

What this sub-state analysis serves to reinforce is that legitimate and credible co-operation can take different forms and have different intended purposes (Keohane, 1984; Snidal, 1985). Moreover, from an institutional design perspective, this analysis highlights that it is important to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each mode of work, select an approach that meets the needs of the Arctic, and ensure that the design of the Arctic Council and the powers that it is assigned are aligned with a vision for what the Arctic Council is and what it is intended to achieve in the region. Efforts to "strengthen" the Council will not benefit in the long run from a narrow scope of analysis, by being locked into old conceptions of how to organize its work, or a focus on administrative measures and tools. In fact, a narrow scope of analysis will likely contribute to the decline of its relevance in the region (Fenge, 2012b; Timo Koivurova, 2010). In addition, there is a need to recognize that in a dynamic and rapidly changing environment, such as the Arctic, institutions need constant attention and must be actively sustained politically (Thelen, 1999). Irrespective of the vision that is set for the Arctic Council, one of the greatest challenges to its success will likely be the failure of member states to assign sufficient priority to Arctic issues (Exner-Pirot, 2011; Young & Kankaanpää, 2012).

Ultimately, this analysis confirms that a sub-state focus exposes an underdeveloped area of study available to inform policy-makers and academic research. As a follow up to this initial investigation, there are a number of potential directions that could provide further insights for future research. Using Canada as a case study, work could be done to trace the evolution of these networks over the life of the Arctic Council giving us a sense of how political institutions are evolving as a result of both internal and external forces. Alternatively, research could be focused on mapping the current Arctic Council-related networks tied to the Canadian public administration to provide an in-depth illustration of the connections that exist (or do not exist). Finally, research could be undertaken to trace the network connections of other member states, as well as permanent participant and observer organizations.

Introducing a further layer of analysis, these network maps could be used to compare the characteristics of the Canadian government's network systems with other Westminster political systems, such as the United Kingdom, or they could be used as a means to juxtapose Canada's public

administration with different political systems represented by the Arctic Council member states. What these potential research programs demonstrate is that, at a sub-state level, opportunities remain to inform future efforts to strengthen the Arctic Council, and may even serve as case studies for an analysis of broader trends occurring in international relations.

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Notes

1. Members of the Arctic Council include Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States of America.
2. "The following organizations are Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council: Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC), Aleut International Association (AIA), Gwich'in Council International (GCI), Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), Saami Council (SC). This category is open equally to Arctic organizations of Indigenous peoples with a majority of Arctic Indigenous constituency representing: a) a single Indigenous people resident in more than one Arctic State; or b) more than one Arctic Indigenous people resident in a single Arctic State" (Arctic Council, 2011).
3. Federal governments involved included Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada; Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency; Environment Canada; Fisheries and Oceans Canada; Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada; Natural Resources Canada; and Transport Canada.
4. The exact text in the Kiruna Declaration reads: "The Arctic Council receives the application of the EU for observer status affirmatively, but defers a final decision on implementation until the Council ministers are agreed by consensus that the concerns of Council members, addressed by the President of the European Commission in his letter of 8 May are resolved, with the understanding that the EU may observe Council proceedings until such time as the Council acts on the letter's proposal" (Arctic Council, 15 May 2013). Although this text is not explicit about the issue or the parties involved, the May 8 letter referenced is a letter from the President of the European Commission addressed to the Prime Minister of Canada, which speaks to Canada's ongoing concern about the seal ban. And note that all other non-state applicants are not even considered at Kiruna (e.g., Greenpeace).
5. The two agreements signed by Arctic Council member states to date include The Arctic Search and Rescue Agreement (2011) and the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution, Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (2013).

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