

Legal ‘Arctopia’? How Arctic Governance Expresses a Better World

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Over the last 20+ years the Arctic has seen a significant increase in legal regimes that directly or indirectly affect its peoples, livelihoods, environment(s) and resources. Especially under the auspices of the soft-law Arctic Council, non-binding agreements reflect a trend which point towards the creation of a ‘legal Arctic’ that encompasses understandings of a world rooted in environmental awareness, cultural respect, collaboration and cooperation. At the same time, non-Arctic players have generated their own understanding of the Arctic in either their national Arctic strategies or policies or legal regimes that reflect onto the Arctic in which their own views on the Arctic are politically or legally embedded. Two of these, Japan and China, are presented in this paper. In literary studies, the somewhat utopian creation of the Arctic has been labelled ‘Arctopia’, which explores a fictitious vision of global societies that often holds an environmental message. The ‘Arctopian’ literature therefore makes use of characteristics of the innovated Arctic that is rooted in a diagnosis of the ills of the present with potential pathways for its positive transformation. This paper argues that also in binding and non-binding legal regimes dealing with or relevant for the Arctic a vision of a ‘better world’ is embedded — leading away from a utopia towards real-world policy-implications, going beyond problem-solving, but holding also an exclusively expressive function which narrates and shapes the Arctic as a region where the ills of the present are eradicated through long-term cooperation.

Introduction

We don’t look ‘East’ without looking into a direction filled with expectations, images or even stereotypes (e.g., Said, 1978). We don’t look ‘West’ without engaging in a mental battle between different economic systems. We don’t look ‘South’ without thinking about poverty or draught. And we don’t look ‘North’ without thinking of the cold, the dark and the mystical. “Wherever we look, we look into “cardinal directions [that] are the cultural artefacts that underpin our perception of the world, imbued with symbolic, ideological, and political connotations” (Barraclough, Cudmore & Donecker, 2016: xi).

Especially throughout the 19th century the European ‘North’ has been constructed as a cultural space within which certain seemingly scientifically-proven circumstances exist (Geisinger, 2005). The construction of the ‘North’ inevitably leads to the construction of the ‘Arctic’, a mental space filled with different connotations and expectations. With the return of the British Arctic Expedition of 1875-1876 which failed to locate the North Pole, the imagined Arctic was

confronted with the harsh geophysical realities of the Arctic Ocean. It seemed the perception of the Arctic was bound towards a non-imagined, empirical region. Instead, new narratives were created: The Arctic of nothingness, of distance, untouched nature and harsh conditions. Additionally, this connoted Arctic has served as the stage for stories of manhood, suspense and, inevitably, ideology – an understanding of the Arctic which has found countless repetitions in different forms (e.g., Hansson, 2015).

Towards the end of the 20th century, the Arctic had become a different kind of imaginary space: A region of peace, cooperation and consent. This is particularly visible in the emergence of Arctic-specific legal instruments and the foundation of Arctic cooperative structures, such as the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and the Arctic Council (AC) (Hasanat, 2012). This article examines some Arctic-specific hard and soft legal instruments and determines the degree to which the Arctic legal space serves as a stage for the construction of a ‘better world.’

The Emergence of an ‘Arctopia’

It is not surprising that the Arctic has been seen through different socio-cultural, political and economic lenses over the centuries. These lenses shaped the views on the Arctic and the imaginations, expectations, and fears that came with them. In light of the many lives the Arctic has claimed, the harsh and unwelcoming environment, the cold and darkness, and more recently, the dramatic impacts of climate change, the Arctic has become an Arctic of disasters – either past, present, or possibly future (Craciun, 2016). It is thus often perceived as the antithesis to stability and amicability. But there is also a different Arctic. An Arctic that rather corresponds to Sir Thomas More’s notion of ‘utopia,’ more a perfect world of peace and equality than that of an Arctic of disasters. As Hansson shows, the interpretation of ‘utopia’ has shifted from the original meaning of ‘no place’ to a meaning “conflated with utopia, ‘good place’” (Hansson, 2015: 70). Out of this conflation emerges the concept of ‘Arctopia,’ the Arctic as a good place that combines the geographical Arctic with an “imaginary, alternative world” (Ibid.).

An ‘Arctopia’ denotes a ‘good Arctic’ contrary to the ‘Arctic of disasters’ – an Arctic where despite the challenges at hand the prevailing state of being is characterized by the striving towards a better end. We can argue therefore that there is an intrinsic value of Arctic cooperation, a teleology of sorts, that frames the Arctic as indeed an ‘Arctopia’ with real-life impacts on its environments, its peoples and cultures.

But how did this legal-political Arctopia emerge? Inevitably, Arctic cooperation would not have emerged into its current state without (1) the disastrous degradation of the Arctic environment; (2) the collapse of the Soviet Union; and (3) the interest in natural resources. The combination of these three elements which has affected all Arctic states has led to increased cooperation in the North and laid the groundwork for a peaceful Arctic.

However, the path for the emergence of the Arctopia was not rooted in one specific event, nor is it necessarily confined to the Arctic: As stipulated in the Antarctic Treaty System, the Antarctic continent is a continent of peace and science. Cooperative initiatives in the Arctic had emerged for many centuries – for example the *Ding*, an annual gathering of chieftains in medieval Iceland, or the Pomor Trade in the Barents Region – pointing towards a democratic and equal mode of Arctic cooperation. A rejuvenation of cooperative thinking occurred during the 1970s. The European Arctic – Norway, Finland, Sweden and northwestern Russia – was a forerunner in this

regard. The North Calotte Committee was established in 1967 and made permanent in 1977. The Committee was a means of cooperation between the Nordic regions as well as Russian and Nordic towns above the Arctic Circle, to foster cultural and education initiatives, and the free movement of people (Pettersen, 2002: 16). The Arctopian vision of a unified European Arctic thus took shape at the height of the Cold War.

Arctic states served as venues for the conclusion of seminal cooperative instruments. In Stockholm and Helsinki, the first international environmental agreement (Stockholm Declaration), and a major policy of détente (Helsinki Declaration) were concluded in 1972 and 1975 respectively while the Reykjavík Summit of 1986 resulted in a key nuclear disarmament treaty in 1987 (INF Treaty). Looking at these agreements, a utopian understanding rises to the surface since they appear to abandon nationalism or even geostrategic aspirations, and emphasize the wellbeing of humankind as a whole, envisioning a world of peace and a healthy environment: The Stockholm Declaration is “for the benefit of all the people and for their posterity” (Stockholm Declaration, 1972: Recital 7); the Helsinki Declaration “make[s] its contribution to the strengthening of world peace and security and to the promotion of fundamental rights, economic and social progress and well-being for all peoples” (Helsinki Declaration, 1975: Preamble); and the INF Treaty is “conscious that nuclear war would have devastating consequences for all mankind” while the treaty was to “reduce the risk of outbreak of war and strengthen international peace and security” (INF Treaty, 1987: Preamble).

Mikhail Gorbachev’s Murmansk Speech of 1987 marks the beginning of the modern Arctopian vision of the North and its implementation. Gorbachev put in place the foundation for prevailing narratives. His six proposals for a North Pole to be a “Pole of peace” read to some extent like a roadmap to Arctic cooperation and the framing of many of the legal expressions to come: (1) Northern Europe as a nuclear-free zone; (2) The restriction of military activity and scaling down of naval and air force activities in the Baltic, Northern, Norwegian and Greenland Seas; (3) peaceful cooperation in exploitation of Arctic resources; (4) Advancement of science and scientific exchange; (5) Joint programs for Arctic environmental protection; and (6) peaceful development of the Northern Sea Route (NSR) (Gorbachev, 1987). Finland then took the initiative to put the roadmap into action: In the summer of 1991, Rovaniemi saw the adoption of the Arctic Environment Protection Strategy (AEPS) as a result of the first ministerial meeting of the Arctic states’ environment ministers.

The spirit of a peaceful, stable and equal Arctic is reflected in the text of the AEPS. In the Declaration which accompanies the AEPS, major concepts of the Arctopian vision are laid out. First and foremost, the notion of ‘togetherness’ is emphasized. A common identity is thereby created, both as Arctic nations and as peoples of the world, which creates a feeling of equality between the different actors. Secondly, the relationship of Indigenous and local populations “to the Arctic and their unique contribution to the protection of the Arctic Environment” (AEPS, 1991: 3) is recognized. Consequently, the Arctic governments “invite their organizations to future meetings as observers” (Ibid.). Moreover, the AEPS was drafted with the help of Indigenous peoples (IPs), incorporating their cultures, worldviews and traditional knowledge. By doing so, the AEPS breaks with the common understanding of IPs as “poor children of the North” (Lane, 1890, cited in Hansson, 2015: 73). Instead, the discourse highlights the wealth of knowledge and wisdom they hold. Inevitably, the understanding of the Arctic, and with it the challenges at hand, cannot

exclude the Indigenous and local residents, their practices and their knowledge – a development which opens the discourse on the recognition of IPs as ‘peoples’ with the right to self-determination under international law, which up to this point was considered the sole privilege of nation states. The function of the AEPS, whether implicit or explicit, is not only to tackle Arctic environmental problems, but also to express the need for joint efforts to overcome challenges. The AEPS may thus serve as a voice for a paradigmatic shift in international policy-making: A shift from state-centered governance to an integrated and multifaceted governance structure that moves beyond the nation state.

In 1993, the Arctic saw the emergence of yet another regional forum for cooperation: The Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR), consisting of the intergovernmental BEAC between Norway, Russia, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Denmark and the European Commission; and the Barents Regional Council (BRC), consisting of the northernmost counties of the Barents Region. The Kirkenes Declaration as the founding document of the BEAR is clear in its statement of purpose: “[E]xpanded co-operation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region will contribute substantially to stability and progress in the area and in Europe as a whole” (Kirkenes Declaration, 1993: Introduction). By focusing on the environment, economic cooperation, cultural exchange and IPs, the BEAR envisions a stable and sustainable Barents Region that takes into consideration the human and environmental interrelations beyond national borders.

Much has been written on the establishment of the AC in 1996 and its founding history, structure and functioning which shall not be reexamined here (see e.g. Keskitalo, 2004; Nord, 2016). The Ottawa Declaration, however, outlines the overall purposes of the AC, and frames its vision and overall objective: Committing to the well-being of Arctic peoples; sustainable development of the region, including socio-economic, cultural, and health; and protection of the Arctic environment. Moreover, the Arctic states desire to “ensure full consultation with and the full involvement of indigenous people [sic] and their communities and other inhabitants of the Arctic” (Ottawa Declaration, 1996, Preamble). A progressive governance structure is thus proposed that envisions governance beyond the nation state, taking full account of the well-being of northern peoples.

Legally-binding Regimes in the Arctic

On May 12, 2011, at the 7th Ministerial Meeting in Nuuk, Greenland, the Arctic saw the adoption of the first legally-binding agreement drafted and designed under the auspices of the AC: The Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic (SAR Agreement). The SAR Agreement responds to a need for more cooperation on the SAR level in light of increasing traffic in the Arctic, the “challenges posed by harsh Arctic conditions on search and rescue operations and the vital importance of providing rapid assistance to persons in distress in such conditions” (SAR Agreement, 2011: Preamble). The *raison d’être* of this agreement is therefore the prevention of a potential Arctic disaster – a scenario that necessitates close cooperation between the Arctic states.

At the time of conclusion of the SAR Agreement, scholarly and public discourse on the Arctic often highlighted the conflict/cooperation dichotomy, reflected in the vast body of literature that emerged on this issue after the infamous planting of the Russian flag on the seabed under the North Pole in 2007. Rather little regard was paid to the fact that pursuant to article 8 of the SAR Agreement, Coast Guard vessels (and planes) are entitled to enter the territorial sea and airspace

above for the conduct of search and rescue activities – a provision which runs quite contrary to the wide-spun narrative of confrontation in the North. While this may be the case, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) according to article 98 makes the promotion of the “establishment, operation and maintenance” of search and rescue services mandatory (‘shall’), also by means of regional arrangements where “circumstances so require” (UNCLOS, 1982: article 98.2). While in many instances the Arctic was discursively perceived as standing on the brink of war, the Arctic states countered this narrative by adopting a regional agreement which does not exclude the entering of the territorial sea by armed vessels or other vehicles of another state necessary for SAR operations (SAR Agreement, 2011: article 8),

The provisions of the SAR Agreement were put to the test when in December 2014 a South Korean fishing trawler was brought in distress by a wave, causing it to sink in Russian waters in the Bering Sea. As a result, the Russian Coast Guard informed the Alaskan Coast Guard which immediately dispatched two C-130 Hercules airplanes, followed by two cutters and two helicopters, also entering Russian waters (Coast Guard of Alaska, 2014). While ultimately unsuccessful in saving 53 of the 60 crew, this shows the efficacy, and necessity, of the provisions of the SAR Agreement. One might argue that the Arctopian vision of cooperation and peaceful interaction under the AC has thus found real-life application.

In 2013, the AC states adopted a second legally-binding agreement at the 8th Ministerial Meeting in Kiruna: The Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (PPR Agreement). Once again, it is the cooperative vision which is emphasized and the PPR Agreement mirrors important aspects of mutual assistance between the Arctic states. In article 9, the agreement thus enables cross-border passing of vessels to tackle potential oil spills. Mutual exercises as well as information exchange constitute the backbone of the PPR Agreement. This is best exemplified by article 12 (“Cooperation and Exchange of Information”) and article 13 (“Joint Exercises and Training”). Moreover, in order to further ensure the efficacy of the agreement, a reimbursement mechanisms has been put in place (article 10) which can be invoked after requests of assistance have been uttered pursuant to article 8.

Both the SAR and PPR Agreements are inherently Arctic-specific and put the Arctopian vision of mutual cooperation into practice. The agreements go even further and serve as a means to strengthen the LOS Convention in the Arctic. Notably, the United States is not a party to UNCLOS but party to both the SAR and PPR Agreement. The normative role UNCLOS provisions play, in this context specifically as regards SAR (UNCLOS, 1982: article 98), rises to the surface within Arctic contexts. Moreover, on a somewhat broader level, the PPR Agreement in its Preamble takes into account “the relevant provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,” once again pointing towards the normative role of UNCLOS. An Arctopian vision thus translates into larger contexts of strengthening the law of the sea also in spite of the United States not having ratified UNCLOS (see Rottem, 2015).

It was at the 2013 Ministerial Meeting that the ideals of integration, togetherness and transparency were further advanced. The Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) updated the Rules of Procedure (RoP) of the Council by producing an Observer Manual. They thereby enhanced the accessibility of observers to the subsidiary bodies of the AC, namely Working Groups, Task Forces and Expert Groups (Arctic Council, 2013). While observers were from the outset able, at the discretion of the

chair, to produce statements on a given issue, a 2015 Addendum to the Observer Manual was to ensure their “relevant and meaningful contributions to the work of the AC” (Arctic Council, 2015: 11). Observers, as non-Arctic outsiders, were to become active partners in the work of the Council, going beyond their inchoate role of merely “passive audience sitting at the periphery” (Knecht, 2016: 603).

The most recent agreement is the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation (SC Agreement) which was signed at the Fairbanks Ministerial meeting, May 11, 2017, in Alaska. Already the first preambular recital of the agreement recognizes “the importance of maintaining peace, stability, and constructive cooperation in the Arctic” (SC Agreement, 2010: Preamble). The agreement thus aims to foster enhanced and more efficient scientific cooperation in the Arctic. In order to do so, access to specific areas in the territories of the parties, which are more clearly defined in Annex 1, is to be granted to reach the agreement’s objective. The spirit of cooperation and mutual access is consequently an underlying feature of the agreement and corresponds to the Arctic as a zone of peace and science, similar to the framing of Antarctic cooperation (Madrid Protocol, 1991: article 2). The agreement goes further, however. This is best reflected in the global approach it takes by extending its scope beyond AC members. This occurred, firstly, by actively involving observers into the drafting process of the agreement as based on the above-mentioned Addendum to the Observer Manual (see also Arctic Council, 2016). Secondly, as part of the strategy to reach its objective, other actors are to be involved. For instance, the notion of ‘participant’ in Arctic scientific activities is outlined in article 1, which reads: “‘Participant’ means the Parties’ scientific and technological departments and agencies, research centers, universities and colleges, and *contractors, grantees and other partners acting with or on behalf of any Party or Parties*, involved in Scientific Activities under this Agreement” (own emphasis). This means that, for instance, non-Arctic states or organizations are eligible to fall under the scope of the agreement when they act on behalf of a party. They therefore do not need to be based in an AC Member State.

While the cooperative spirit is an underlying feature of international law and law-making, in the case of the Arctic it has undergone an evolution towards integrative law-making and legal instruments. This is best shown by the inclusion of observers in the drafting processes of the Arctic legal agreements presented here and provisions that aim to be inclusive beyond the reaches of the AC Member States. In the context of the Antarctic Treaty, for example, only three observers – the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research; the Scientific Committee for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources; and the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programmes – are entitled to participate in the meetings of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings (ATCM) and the meetings of Committee for Environmental Protection (Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty, 2016). Although other international institutions, such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in article XI or the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) in article IX include and consult observers, this rather occurs on a provisional basis while the amended observer rules in the AC manifest integrative governance on a normative basis.

Arctopia in Practice

The purpose of international regimes goes beyond the cause-and-effect relationship between the biophysical/socio-economic environment and the respective legal regime. Breitmeier argues that international regimes contribute to “*concern* about cause-effect relationship, improve the *contractual*

environment and thereby foster the establishment of negotiation processes or reduce transaction costs in issue areas, or enhance *capacity*-building in developing countries” (original emphasis; Breitmeier, 2008: 12). In the Arctic context, the ills of the present as reflected in the regimes presented include environmental degradation, non-inclusive policy-making (excluding Indigenous and local populations) and non-sustainable resource extraction. The vision that Arctic legal regimes thus expose is an Arctic world without these ills.

From the very outset of Arctic cooperation as it emerged during the 1990s, non-inclusiveness has been addressed. Both in the BEAR and the AC, IPs have played an influential role in the decision-making processes. Although merely nation states are the prime decision-makers, the Kirkenes Declaration refers to the safeguarding of the region’s IPs. The Ottawa Declaration goes further and requires “full consultation” of the Arctic’s IPs (Ottawa Declaration, 1996: 2 (b)). The Kirkenes II Declaration, which was adopted at the 20th anniversary of the Barents cooperation in 2013, the BEAC Prime Ministers further acknowledge the Barents IPs as key actors and stress that they are to play an “active role in the development of the region” (Kirkenes II Declaration, 2013: 6). Capacity-building for and support of IPs in both the BEAR and the AC has led to an increasingly influential role for them in Arctic governance (Gamble, 2016). Moreover, the inclusion of Arctic IPs into the AC as Permanent Participants has led these to consider the AC as a forum “where issues could be resolved that were problematic with the home state” (Coote, 2016: 51).

Apart from the three legally-binding instruments introduced above, the Arctic-specific legal environment is first and foremost of a soft-law, non-legally-binding character. It can be argued that empirical improvements are but one of the objectives of these instruments. In the context of the Barents cooperation, for instance, it is the cooperative dimension in a geopolitically sensitive area which is a prime objective of the BEAR. The measurable improvement of the socio-economic and biophysical environment is one element therein: Through concerted and hortatory cooperative efforts can a long-term improvement of the biophysical environment be achieved. BEAR’s declarations and agreements envision an outcome and serve as a roadmap to achieve this in a cooperative manner, but themselves do not necessarily result in any direct improvements (Sellheim, 2012a). This stands in contrast to multilateral regimes such as the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (Montreal Protocol, 1987) or the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Stockholm Convention, 2001) that not only envision an improvement of the biophysical conditions as part of a larger narrative, but themselves are active stakeholders in it (see Breitmeier et al., 2006).

The ills of the present are multifaceted and diverse. The repercussions of the ‘non-Arctic’ on Arctic governance structures are significant and the vision of cooperation for the good of all is the main source of the Arctopian realities in the North. Despite the Arctic being politically connected to the rest of the world, it has nevertheless developed its own dynamics (Wegge, 2011). As a consequence, and in the spirit of the Arctopian vision, the interest in cooperating in the Far North has even outweighed the east-west tensions resulting from the Ukraine crisis. Arctic cooperation has thus not been subjected to conflict spill-over (Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2017).

Indeed, while the Arctic states follow their own national interests, best exemplified by the national Arctic strategies, Arctic governance initiatives bring these interests under one umbrella. In the Barents Region, for example, despite Russia’s long non-ratification of the Stockholm Convention (until 2011) or the protocols under the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution

(LRTAP, 1979), the BEAR has found ways and means to tackle this absence and to incorporate environmental provisions into its work, including that of Russia (Sellheim, 2012b: 239–242). The other Barents states do not explicitly exert pressure on Russia to ratify these agreements, but instead use the channels of the Barents cooperation to implement them in the Barents Region (Ibid.). Hortatory cooperation, once again, stands at the forefront of the Arctopian realities in the region.

Asian Arctopias: Japan's and China's View on Arctic Governance

Japan

Japan's involvement in the polar regions dates back to 1933 when the Nippon Polar Research Institute was established (Anonymous, 1940). Japan's vision of Arctic involvement has first and foremost been rooted in fostering scientific research and scientific cooperation.

Japan's Arctic aspirations as regards research activities are dominated by research on climatic and environmental changes. To this end, Japan has promoted the exchange and availability of scientific findings as its own Arctopian vision. Japan's Arctic understanding thus follows the narratives of the international agreements that were introduced above by which the good for humankind constitutes an elementary part of its Arctic involvement. Of course, it cannot be denied that national interests are pursued at the same time. While Japan's maritime policies have been driven by the doctrine of 'open and stable seas' and the rule of law as a guiding principle for international stability and security, the pursuit of national economic growth is to be part of this narrative (Government of Japan, 2013).

With this in mind it does not come as a surprise that Japan applied for observership to the AC, which was granted in 2013, albeit the country's presence already at the inaugural meeting of the Council in 1996. In 2015, Japan released its official Arctic policy (Government of Japan, 2015). Here, Japan's contribution as a technologically and scientifically advanced state is highlighted and its role for the tackling of global problems emphasized. Key terms for Japan are thus science and technology and the country will "[m]ake full use of Japan's strength in science and technology from a global viewpoint" (Ibid., 2). While the opening of the NSR and the increased accessibility to Arctic natural resources are naturally addressed in the document, it is dominated by scientific cooperation and the solving of environmental issues in the North. In this sense, Japan's Arctopia merges with the country's overall promotion of peace and cooperation. The Arctic is therefore not necessarily a unique region for Japan. Japan's vision of a 'better world' in an Arctic context includes the making available of scientific findings for the global community. The most crucial element in shaping the Arctopian vision is thus: "Japan always intends to make Datasets in ADS [Arctic Data archive System] available for free for research use, and it represents Japan's *absolute commitment* to strengthening scientific cooperation on the Arctic" (Own emphasis; Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016, 2).

China

Thus far China has not released its Arctic policy. However, Chinese officials have presented the country's Arctic priorities on various occasions: Sustainability; recognition of Arctic states' unique identity and legitimate rights; and the trans-regional and global nature of Arctic issues (Liu, 2017; Zou et al, 2014; Zou, 2016). Moreover, China's involvement in the Arctic has long been driven by scientific interest (Lasserre & Huang, 2015). Given China's increasing role as a political, economic,

scientific and technological power, China's Arctic aspirations are under close scrutiny by the Arctic community. This has led to suspicions towards China's interests in the High North (Moe, 2017). The release of the Chinese Arctic policy can be expected to take place in the near future, which can be interpreted as an official attempt to counter exaggerations and suspicions (see also Lasserre & Huang, 2015).

Although China keeps a rather low profile in the Arctic, its presence is commonly interpreted as the country striving to become a strong Arctic player. As a non-Arctic state, however, China's Arctic presence is guided by international law rather than politics (Peng & Wegge, 2014). Moreover, bilateral cooperation with Arctic nations is an efficient strategy to enhance China's Arctic involvement. To this end, partnerships with Russia on the NSR as part of the Belt and Road Initiative; the 2013 Free Trade Agreement with Iceland; or advancements in the ambitious fibre-optic cable project along the NSR with Finland can be interpreted as substantiating China's Arctic ambitions. Moreover, China is cautious of its involvement in Arctic resource development and by and large seeks partners in compliance with the rules of the market (Moe, 2017; Lasserre & Huang, 2015).

China's Arctic ambitions shows the country's view on the North as a zone of peace and cooperation providing a sound reason to get involved in Arctic governance. On May 25, 2017, the Chinese Arctic and Antarctic Administration signed memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with polar research institutions from 6 countries including Norway, Russia and USA. The MoUs highlight international cooperation in scientific research, value mutual understanding for Arctic sustainability, and confirm joint efforts for environmental protection in the North (Zhao, 2017). The doctrine of a 'community of shared destiny' as frequently proclaimed by Chinese President Xi Jinping thus also finds reflection in the Arctic.

With the rise of China as a global power, China takes more responsibilities in fostering peace, sovereignty, cooperation and equality. The Arctic, it thus appears, is an implementation of these aspirations and has moved from 'no place' to 'good place' in the Chinese policy agenda. Arctopian principles have moved from an illusion to concrete objectives for international cooperation, peace and sustainability. Although China's official Arctic policy has not yet been released, it can be predicted that Arctopian elements will play a key role in line with the country's principles for global governance.

Conclusion

Although principles of good governance such as integration, effective cooperation or transparency can be found in other areas of global governance, the Arctic plays a special role in moving beyond purely nation-state based decision-making to an inclusive and open forum of cooperation. The Arctic as a region of peace as a reflection of an Arctopian vision has consequently been put into practice and has been advanced steadily. While patriotic interests inevitably play a role in Arctic governance, these are paired with the long-term aspirations of transboundary environmental protection and peaceful, inclusive cooperation and trust-building for the benefit of the region's inhabitants, stipulated already in the second preambular recital of the Ottawa Declaration (Ottawa Declaration, 1996: Preamble). The approaches from outside actors, such as Japan or China, in Arctic affairs in combination with the strengthening of international law, as exemplified by UNCLOS, serve as examples for the Arctopian vision having global repercussions.

Even though neither the BEAR nor the AC are full-fledged international organizations, a norm-implementation process has begun since the 1990s (cf. Betts & Orchard, 2014: 3). Throughout this paper we have referred to this norm as Arctopia – a vision of the Arctic shaped by peace and prosperity, and environmental integrity. Only in recent years has this Arctopia resulted also in an institutionalization process, yielding three legally-binding agreements which were drafted under the task forces of the AC. Whether or not further hard-law instruments will be concluded remains to be seen. Arctic governance, however, appears to be manifestly rooted in the cooperative, Arctopian spirit of a better world.

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