The Arctic Council as a Success Case for Transnational Cooperation in Times of Rapid Global Changes?

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In times of rapid global changes, agreements such as the Paris Climate Agreement illustrate the growing need for transnational cooperation to solve complex and interrelated challenges that affect humanity at large. In past decades, a number of forums and institutions formed to enhance cooperation and coordinate different approaches and policies transnationally. Not all of them have been assessed to be a success. The Arctic Council is a forum that is widely perceived as facilitating transnational cooperation – also in times of rapid global changes. This article explores systematically in how far the Arctic Council can be considered an example to learn from and identifies useful "ingredients" for strengthening transnational cooperation more generally. First, by drawing on global governance research this study shows that in the literature, very different perspectives consider similar factors as strengthening transnational cooperation. Second, it outlines how the AC has adhered to various factors identified in the literature but also recognises the need to improve its process management. The concluding section argues that particularly the Arctic Council's focus on knowledge generation and expertise has encouraged the maintenance of robust transnational cooperation.[1]

Introduction

When discussing how transnational cooperation[2] can successfully contribute to the governance of far-reaching, entangled, and complex challenges such as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement, particularly in development studies "a look up north" to the Arctic region is often missing. This is surprising, given the Arctic's experience with transboundary challenges and its unique exposure to rapid global changes. Moreover, since its origin in 1996 cooperation of non-state and state actors is at the core of "the leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction *among Arctic States, Arctic Indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants*" (Arctic Council, 2018, emphasis added), and the Arctic Council (AC) has often been described as a very successful forum in this respect (Young, 2019). Some even explain the AC's success by emphasising the numerous distinct actor groups that are engaged in the Arctic Council (Knecht, 2017) and refer particularly to the inclusion of non-state actor groups

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(most notably to Indigenous peoples' organisations with Permanent Participant-status, encouraging the prominence of the concerns of Arctic Indigenous peoples in the AC (Smieszek, 2019). Others highlight that the AC has managed to increase transnational cooperation and to maintain peace in a region that is still often represented as a region prone to international conflicts (the 2015-Iqaluit Declaration, Arctic Council, 2015) that used to be a "military theatre" and an "arena of the superpowers" during the Cold War (Lackenbauer, 2010). Also due to this continuity of cooperation, the AC is widely considered the primary forum for policymaking in the Arctic (Nord, 2016), the "promoter voice of the Arctic" (Heininen, 2004: 33), and "the most important multilateral framework in the region" (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015: 9).

This article investigates potential lessons to be learned from the AC for encouraging successful transnational cooperation in times of rapid global changes. It proceeds as follows: First, by drawing on research on global governance, this study shows that in the literature very different perspectives consider similar factors as strengthening transnational cooperation. Second, it focuses on lessons learned from the Arctic Council. This section outlines how the AC has adhered to various factors identified in the literature but also points out the need to improve its process management. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement are central for the policy field of development cooperation, which is why, third, the concluding section evaluates the relevance of this study's findings, particularly for international relations and development studies. This third section concludes that many of the premises discussed in the literature on transnational cooperation and on multi-stakeholder partnerships mirror the praise and concerns brought forward with regard to the AC. At the same time, it shows that transnational cooperation under the auspices of the AC allows these premises to be expanded –particularly its relevance ascribed to knowledge generation.

Overall, this study aims at contributing to the discussion of how transnational cooperation and the implementation of ambitious global visions, such as the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement, can be advanced. Despite the growing attention paid to non-state activist groups such as the Fridays for Future- and Extinction Rebellion-movements, those arguing that it is either "too late" to change anything or "too difficult" to find effective solutions often seem to dominate the discussion. Thus, more balanced, constructive contributions are needed to identify pathways for reaching the goals agreed upon, for example, through intensifying cooperation between state and non-state actors. One may argue that the complex nature of collective action problems hinders any transferability of possible solutions and best practice-examples to the global level in the first place. This study does not doubt limitations in this regard. However, complex collective action problems still have their origin in the actions "undertaken by individuals, families, firms, and actors at a much smaller scale" (Ostrom 2009: 3), and concrete examples such as those provided in this study might be helpful to encourage changes in that way.

Enhancing transnational and multilateral cooperation in times of rapid global changes

To address global challenges such as climate change, there is broad consensus that individual and collective changes are needed. However, not only in regard to social control mechanisms have scholars repeatedly found that "most influences which transcend national borders emanate not from the globe but the neighbourhood" (Mann, 2006: 28). Scholars similarly highlighted that

"individual behaviour is strongly affected by the context in which interactions take place rather than being simply a result of individual differences" (Ostrom, 2009: 431). Consequently, to implement global agreements, it is necessary to link them more strongly to individual contexts (Jakobeit et al.: 2010). In this regard, transnational interactions and networks in particular have the potential[3] to guide behaviour and to enhance cooperation because they are intermediate to both the global and the individual levels. In this way, "motivations behind the creation of transnational initiatives [have] often […] international dimensions, such as promoting a set of norms […]" (Roger, Hale, & Andonova, 2017: 11). But what factors enhance transnational cooperation in times of rapid global changes?

Like individual behaviour also transnational governance "varies enormously across countries, and is fundamentally shaped by the different domestic political contexts that actors are embedded in" (Roger, Hale, & Andonova, 2017: 2, see also Avant, Finnemore, & Sell, 2010). Recognising this as a limitation to my findings, in this section, I discuss different perspectives on how transnational multilateral cooperation can be generally encouraged. From the scholarly literature focusing on questions related to cooperation, I present research results from different strands that pertain to the transnational level and show the various perspective overlaps.

In times of rapid global changes that cause fundamental environmental, economic, and social shifts, policymaking faces various challenges as negotiations on agreements such as the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda have shown: Policies require to be ambitious to encourage effective decision-making at all levels; they should consider and integrate various (also conflicting) **actor** perspectives to be comprehensive; in terms of **process**, they should be negotiated in a timely manner; and they need to be adaptive if they are to adequately address urgent problems. Moreover, to implement policies and agreements, it is important to overcome **context**-related problems and factors that limit cooperation and to take advantage of the factors that enhance cooperation at the sub-national, national, and global levels. With that in mind, when investigating factors to enhance transnational cooperation in times of rapid global changes, I differentiate between actor-, process- and context-dimensions[4] and compare the respective findings from the literature accordingly.

From their investigation of transnational multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development, Pattberg and Widerberg argue that an optimal mix of partners with different resources, types of knowledge and capabilities enhances "successful cooperation" in multi-stakeholder partnerships, understanding success in this way as "the use of synergies and an effective division of labor" (Pattberg & Widerberg, 2016: 46). Considering the process-dimension, Pattberg and Widerberg highlight the need to align goals with international norms. Thus, when applied to the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda, they would emphasise the need to develop a "common problem-definition" and to aim for "clear and measurable goals" (Pattberg & Widerberg, 2016: 47). When acknowledging the distinct features of problems, Pattberg and Widerberg characterise them by high levels of complexity ("malign problems") or understood as "benign problems" in cases, in which "actors' interests and preferences converge, and solutions are easier to identify" (Pattberg & Widerberg, 2016: 49). Pattberg and Widerberg thus argue that, with regard to the context-dimension, it is important to reflect on different administrative challenges and institutional setups that are needed to address different kinds of problems.

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Peinhardt and Sandler, among others, base their analysis on game-theoretic foundations. Where the actor dimension is concerned, they argue that collective action is "usually easier to achieve among a small number of agents" that are like-minded and possess similar means (Peinhardt & Sandler, 2015: 10), which contradicts Pattberg and Widerberg's findings who stress the differences and optimal mix of actors. They support, however, Pattberg's and Widerberg's suggestion to define clear and measurable goals as from Peinhardt and Sandler's view, collective action is "bolstered if payoffs are immediate and certain" (Peinhardt & Sandler, 2015: 11). With regard to the context dimension, they also agree with Pattberg and Widerberg when stating that "institutional rules can […] bolster collective action by offering selective incentives" and that cooperation under the auspices of institutions contributes to the development of trust and to the formation of alliances, both enhancing further cooperation also as regards other thematic areas (Peinhardt & Sandler, 2015: 11).

From the analysis of transnational movements, Bandy et al. add to Pattberg and Widerberg's and to Peinhardt and Sandler's findings by outlining the international legitimacy that large international non-governmental organisations and international governmental organisations give to specific norms. Similarly, also others have argued that particularly "agenda setting and norm development is largely the domain of non-state actors" (Haas, 2016: xxix). Thus, in connection with the context dimension, the political and institutional space provided by these organisations can be seen as encouraging the development of shared strategies and coalition-building (Bandy & Smith, 2005: 233). In line with Pattberg and Widerberg and with Peinhardt and Sandler, Bandy et al. also stress the value of established cooperation as a factor contributing to the emergence of more cooperation that is more resilient "to tensions and breakdowns elsewhere" (Byers, 2019: 43) and offers greater influence for collaborating actors (Avant & Westerwinter, 2016: 17-18). Further, cooperation that builds on other cooperation seems less time-consuming, resource-intensive, and risky (Bandy & Smith, 2005: 233). Resources, specialised knowledge and "access to centers of economic and political decision making" are also factors that Bandy et al. identify with regard to the actor dimension as beneficial for the sustaining of transnational coalitions. In this way, they emphasise advantages arising from the inclusion of actors "from the North" that are said to "have larger organizational capacity, financial power, and abilities to join IGOs, national governments, or transnational corporations" (ibid.). Also, regular contact and even conflicts may foster cooperation when generating "new sensitivities" and contributing to "conscious-raising efforts" (ibid.), thereby enhancing "the development of solidarity, trust, and shared values among participants" (Brown & Fox, 1998: 455). These behavioural conditions are also stressed by Messner and Weinlich, who emphasise the "human factor in international relations" when investigating how and under which conditions global cooperation can succeed (Messner & Weinlich, 2015). In this regard and based on the so-called "Cooperation Hexagon", Messner et al. suggest that reciprocity is "the fundamental prerequisite for cooperation to be sustained [over] time". They further identify four mechanisms (trust; communication; the ability to determine people's reputation as trustworthy partners; and the perception that the interaction is fair) as necessary to "create conditions conducive to reciprocity", which may then be expanded by "enforcement" (via punishment or rewards) and a "we-identity" (Messner, Guarín & Haun, 2013: 16).

Table 1:	Factors and mechanisms to enhance and strengthen cooperation between different entities at the transnational level				
Actors	**Transnational multi-stakeholder partnerships**	**Transnational movements**	**Game-theory**	**Behavioural conditions**	**Constructivist approaches**
	Optimal partner mix (various resources, knowledges and capabilities) encouraging the use of synergies and effective division of labour		Like-mindedness and similar means to collaborate ("We-identity")	Reciprocity as the fundamental prerequisite for cooperation	Framing of problems, construction of shared narratives and ideas
	Effective leadership	Large international organisations give legitimacy to specific norms			
Process	Stringent goal-setting		Define clear and measurable goals to ensure that payoffs are immediate and certain		
	Sustained funding		Country-specific incentives		
	Professional process management	Specialised knowledge, access to economic and political decision-making through actors with organisational capacities and financial power (often "actors from 'the North'")	Presence of a leader country to lead by example	Enforcement (rewards or punishments)	
	Regular monitoring, reporting and	Regular contact to develop solidarity, trust and shared values		Trust, communication, trustworthiness, fairness	

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	evaluation to support organisational learning			
Context	Active meta-governance	Political and institutional space provided by international organisations (IOs) encourages development of shared strategies and coalition-building	Institutional rules to offer selective incentives	
	Favourable political and social context	Established cooperation enhances further cooperation (less time-consuming, resource-intensive or risky)	Cooperation under the auspices of institutions support development of trust and the formation of alliances while enhancing further cooperation	"We-identity"
	Fit to problem-structure			
Source: Author				

While constructivist approaches are valuable in considering discourses as important for successful transnational cooperation, they do not necessarily differentiate among the actor-, process-, and context-dimensions. From the perspectives of frame analysis (Goffman, 1974) and critical geopolitics (Tuathail, 1992), for example, geopolitical imaginaries and narratives, such as the framing of China's Belt and Road Initiative as a "new Silk Road" or of the Arctic as a "military theater", contributed to the formation of alliances among different actor groups (Pincus & Ali, 2015). From that perspective, not only coalitions among actors but also framing processes shape the process of agenda-setting, or as Altheide "frames it", "[f]rames focus on what will be discussed, how it will be discussed, and above all, how it will not be discussed" (Altheide, 1997: 651). This also relates to the more recent analysis of ideas as coalition magnets that policy entrepreneurs frame and use strategically "to garner the support of a diversity of individuals and groups" (Béland & Cox, 2015; Janus & Lixia, in press).[5] Constructivist approaches thus add to all three dimensions an additional layer highlighting the representation of the purpose that is encouraging cooperation in the first place, of which the aim to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement are just two examples.

Overall, there are various overlaps and fairly few contradictions between the different theoretical approaches, investigating factors and mechanisms encouraging cooperation between different entities at the transnational level (see Table 1). The research introduced above further supports the differentiation between the actor-, process-, and context-dimensions. This differentiation will also guide the analysis presented in the next section, which critically assesses in what regard the Arctic Council can be considered an empirical example to learn from when examining transnational cooperation in times of rapid global changes.

Lessons learned from the Arctic Council

As the relevance ascribed to the Arctic Council indicates, in Arctic studies the question of whether the Arctic Council has strengthened transnational cooperation in the Arctic is not new. Various studies have focused, for example, on the effectiveness[6] of the Arctic Council, and found amongst others that "the effectiveness of the AC has exceeded the expectations of many of those who were present during its inception" (Kankaanpää & Young, 2014: 1). As Smieszek assesses, however, these studies are mostly grounded on empirical observations and lack a systematic inquiry. The missing systematic inquiry therefore "hampers our ability to accumulate knowledge about the performance of the AC" (Smieszek, 2019: 3) and to transfer knowledge on the AC to other related studies in the field of global governance. Following the different approaches presented above, this current section examines transnational cooperation under the auspices of the Arctic Council within the context of the various factors and mechanisms that relate to the actor-, process- and context-dimensions introduced above.[7]

The Arctic Council celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2016. Since it was set up, the intergovernmental forum has evolved in many ways, particularly in relation to the actors collaborating under its auspices, its institutional structure, and thematic priorities. When assessing in how far the **mix of actors** collaborating under the auspices of the AC has enhanced transnational cooperation in the Arctic, a look at this **actor-dimension** shows that the Arctic Council has clearly "opened up". Initially, the AC representatives from the eight circumpolar countries with voting rights collaborated with three non-governmental Indigenous peoples' organisations with consultation rights, obtaining Permanent Participant-status.Within a few years, the number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with Permanent Participant-status grew to six; additionally,

the number of non-Arctic states, inter-governmental-, inter-parliamentary-, and other non-governmental organisations that participate as Observers in the Arctic Council tripled (during the last Ministerial Meeting in 2019, 39 states and organisations were approved as Observers to the AC.[8] Over the course of time, the number of actors contributing to the AC has thus significantly grown.

At least two reasons explain the Arctic Council's enlargement: First, the need to include the expertise, resources, and capacities of relevant actors, for example, for the preparation of the AC's "landmark" cooperative scientific publications (The Northern Forum, 2015); and second, the need to enlarge to strengthen the Arctic Council's legitimacy (Knecht, 2017; Wilson 2015). Particularly in view of the latter, Knecht shows how, at different times, the Arctic Council decided strategically to admit access to some actors and deny it to others. The enlargement of the AC can thus be seen as strengthening Pattberg and Widerberg's claim about the desire to use synergies and to divide labour as a factor enhancing transnational cooperation. At the same time though, the enlargement of the AC is also driven by the growing number of actors with geopolitical interests in the Arctic (Chater, 2016). Moreover, the strategic consideration of the Arctic states also supports Peinhardt and Sandler's argumentation, according to which an "optimal partner mix" also builds on the like-mindedness and means of actors, which is why some actors – such as the EU and Greenpeace – have still not attained Observer-status in the AC. Overall, the openness of the Arctic Council to non-state actors and the prominent status ascribed to Indigenous peoples have been reviewed as contributing to the success of circumpolar cooperation conducted under its auspices (Kankaanpää & Young, 2012: 4).

Any assessment on the **effectiveness of the AC's leadership** – another factor of relevance in regard to the actor-dimension – needs to investigate the different chairmanships of the Arctic states that obtain "the influential agenda-setting position" and rotate every two years (Smieszek & Kankaanpää, 2015). Those arguing that the AC has been a successful forum, often highlight that it "has made a difference since its establishment in 1996" (Kankaanpää & Young, 2012), particularly in the "realms of knowledge generation, issue framing and agenda setting" (ibid.). Moreover, despite the regular rotation of the AC's chairs, the AC's leadership has maintained the institutional character and purpose of the council as defined in its founding declaration. Even though the AC's thematic priorities have expanded over the past decades, they all relate to issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic. At least partly, this can be explained with the AC operating by consensus, which limits the scope of chairs for changes. However, as I show in an analysis of the chairmanship-programmes released between 1996 and 2016, various projects and institutional transformations have been carried out under the umbrella of these founding themes, which mirror their multiple and broad meanings (Wehrmann, 2016: 100). Moreover, as a chairmanship period is usually limited to only two years, it has often been demanded that the Arctic states should align their chairmanships better to carry on projects and to ensure that initiatives have a greater impact. For the first time, the Scandinavian Arctic states did so during their consecutive chairmanships from 2006 to 2013. Also, the chairs of the AC's subsidiary bodies (working groups, task forces, expert groups) rotate biennially. In theory, this rotation supports the consideration of multiple perspectives and an integration of knowledge as is often demanded in polycentric governance. However, interviewees highlighted that in practice the hierarchical position of chairs in working groups allowed them to greatly influence the content-related directions taken and also the atmosphere of (and inclusion in) cooperation (Wehrmann, 2017).

Lastly, in respect to the actor-dimension, research has emphasised **reciprocity** as a fundamental prerequisite for transnational cooperation. In the case of the Arctic, reciprocity relates particularly to the need to cooperate in order to deal with transboundary challenges. These are caused by the remoteness of the region (for instance, in the context of search- and rescue-operations), environmental challenges (particularly climate change effects such as the melting sea-ice, coastal erosion, the release of black carbon and toxic gases), and the aim to maintain influence and to avoid territorial conflicts. More recently, it is more often climate change and its dramatic effects in and beyond the Arctic that particularly non-Arctic states and environmental organisations emphasise to justify their interests in the region (for example, China frames itself in this way a "near-Arctic"-state). Despite their different interests for cooperating, all actors collaborating under the auspices of the AC share an interest in strengthening the legitimacy of the Arctic Council, fearing that otherwise their say would be much more limited. Consequently, the Arctic Council supports the premises brought forward in the literature cited above according to which the success of transnational cooperation very much depends on reciprocity.

When examining how the AC could modify **processes** in order to be more effective, in the literature it is often argued in favour of stringent **goal-setting**. The definition of clear and measurable goals is intended to ensure that payoffs are immediate and certain. Beyond the mandate of the Arctic Council, goals are usually set biennially in the chairmanship programmes and, in the past, these have not necessarily built on each other, nor did they outline measurable goals. In this respect, the work of the Arctic Council (and particularly that of the Arctic states) could be improved. More concrete and detailed chairmanship programmes, for example, could be a start in this way, which would also put more pressure on chairmanship countries **to lead by example** and facilitate the identification of **country-specific incentives** arising from cooperating in the AC. In a similar vein, the Arctic Council does not provide any **regular monitoring, reporting and evaluation** of its work which – as discussed in the literature – would support organisational learning. The AC also does not have any mechanism to oversee in how far its work is implemented and aligned with policies at the national level. Ideally, a follow-up mechanism should also oversee "how the council's recommendations and guidelines are interpreted" (Kankaanpää & Young, 2012: 4; Smieszek, 2019: 12). Due to the lack of a follow-up mechanism, it is also almost impossible for the AC to **enforce** cooperation via **rewards and punishments**.

The establishment of a permanent Secretariat in 2013 already addressed some of the weaknesses of the AC in its process management, for example by contributing to a greater transparency of the work conducted under the auspices of the AC. However, up till now, monitoring and evaluation have still not been regularised by the AC. In addition, because of this lack of information, it is difficult to assess the AC's effectiveness in regard to the different issue areas that it addresses. It is only possible to guess that its effectiveness differs across the various issue areas, given the broad mandate and number of issue areas that it deals with (Smieszek, 2019; Wehrmann, 2016). Moreover, most of the problems that the AC works on cannot be solved by the AC on its own but require "ongoing efforts and periodic adjustments in […] governing arrangements, rather than one-time solutions to ensure that the undertaken actions account for observed changes and deeper comprehension of issues at stake" (Smieszek, 2019: 11). Given this, it comes as no surprise that reforms of the AC have been discussed in the past. Critics argued, for example, that "long overdue steps to reform the Arctic Council are on hold" (Etzold & Steinicke, 2015: 1) and have questioned whether the AC is sufficiently prepared to address the challenges in the Arctic (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015; Stephen, 2017). Thus, as far as **professional process management** by the Arctic Council

is concerned, there is much room for improvement. The same applies to the funding of the AC, which is also largely based on the priorities identified in the chairmanship programmes. As a consequence, cooperation initiatives cannot calculate on the basis of **sustained funding**. Based on a survey with practitioners in the AC, Kankaanpää and Young highlighted that respondents identified "the lack of a reliable source of funding to cover general operating expenses" as "the greatest hindrance to the effectiveness of the council" (Kankaanpää & Young, 2012).

In general, however, the actors collaborating under the auspices of the Arctic Council have managed to develop significant outputs. Most prominently, their flagship reports (such as the Arctic Council Climate Impact Assessments) prepared by the AC's working groups have been perceived as influential and "the most effective products of the AC" (Kankaanpää & Young, 2012: 4). Also due to their scientific quality, these reports have given the AC the reputation of being a "cognitive forerunner […] for its role as a fact finder and consensus builder on Arctic environmental challenges" (Smieszek, 2019: 13). Others even argue that the AC is successful because of this focus on scientific outputs when arguing "the most important and still enduring element of the Council's work is the pragmatic, hands-on scientific cooperation in its working groups, not high politics" (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015: 14). In this way, the AC has contributed to the formation of **specialised knowledge** – and at the same time builds on the specialised knowledge provided, amongst others, by the Indigenous peoples' organisations participating in the Council. While the literature on multi-stakeholder-partnerships presented above emphasises access to economic and political decision-making through actors with organisational capacities and financial power, the consideration of "traditional knowledge" and of community-based monitoring of environmental changes in the Arctic by "locals" have especially been considered beneficial to the work of the Arctic Council (Johnson et al., 2015). Based on this specialised and shared knowledge, successful negotiations under the umbrella of the AC resulted in the adoption of three binding agreements.[9] Regardless of the thematic relevance of these agreements globally,[10] at the regional level for a soft-law forum, the negotiation of these agreements is remarkable and can be considered an example for the growing and shared sensitivity towards some issues that has developed through the transnational exchange among various different actors. The agreements also illustrate that cooperation in the AC builds on the often-demanded **trust, communication, trustworthiness, fairness, and solidarity** as shared values supported by the AC and in **regular contacts** under its auspices. In contrast to other regional settings that have evolved "as security or trade complexes" (Heininen et al., 2015: 18), the AC's main thematic pillars are also based on the perception that "mutual trust was to be built above all through cooperation in the areas of research, environment, business and culture" (Etzold & Steinicke, 2015: 1). Consequently, the Arctic states have related their aim to enhance "cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of Arctic Indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues" (Ottawa Declaration, 1996) almost entirely to these two pillars (Heininen et al., 2015: 18).

Turning now to the **context-dimension**, as was shown above, the **active meta-governance** and **institutional rules to offer selective incentives** promoted in the literature on transnational cooperation are areas that seem to be expandable in the Arctic Council. Whether transnational cooperation in the AC is based on a **fit to problem-structure** is difficult to assess (particularly in terms of effectiveness) given the lack of monitoring and evaluation and interconnectedness of problems addressed by the AC. However, when evaluating the work of the AC against the backdrop of the popular narrative that the Arctic is a region prone to international conflicts, the AC's inclusive structure has clearly supported a continuity of peaceful relations between all actors

cooperating in the AC. Thus, the AC has also proven that its **political and institutional space has encouraged the development of shared strategies and coalition-building**. Moreover, the AC has encouraged continuous cooperation also in times of crisis. A prominent recent example is the United States withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement and its subsequent new position in the AC. Even though the United States' refused to address climate change in a ministerial declaration at the Ministerial Meeting in 2019, the other Arctic states released a Ministers' statement emphasising their continuous joint efforts to deal with climate change in the Arctic. What is more, cooperation in the AC has contributed to **further cooperation** and **the formation of trust** in and also outside the Arctic Council, for example through the formation of new "Arctic institutions" that have been established to address topics explicitly excluded or given less priority in the Arctic Council (such as the Arctic Economic Council and the Arctic Coast Guard Forum). Vice versa, cooperation in the Arctic Council has also been inspired by cooperation in other settings: When comparing the declarations under the auspices of the AC since 1996 for example, references to global discourses illustrate that the negotiation of thematic priorities has not taken place detached from global contexts. Even though the Arctic region might be regarded "exceptional" in some regards, the framing and wording of declarations illustrate that – similar to other international institutions – the Arctic Council does not operate "in isolation" (Etzold & Steinicke, 2015: 1) nor in a political "vacuum" (Smieszek & Kankaanpää, 2015: 3). After the coming into force of the Kyoto Protocol, for instance, the Arctic states started to broaden the AC's Arctic-specific focus by "[r]ecognizing the significance of the Arctic environment for the global community" (Salekhard Declaration, 2006). Similarly, two years after the adoption of the Agenda 2030, the Arctic Council also "[r]eaffirm[ed] the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the need for their realization by 2030" (Fairbanks Declaration, 2017).

Transnational cooperation under the auspices of the Arctic Council seems to have benefitted particularly from a **favourable political and social context** and the formation of a "**we-identity**". In regard to the former, since the establishment of the AC, the countries collaborating under its auspices, have excellent governance capacities; they are not hampered by fundamental subversive challenges (such as experiencing violent inner-state conflicts, extreme poverty, and so on) limiting their capacities to engage in the AC. Instead, they all have a shared understanding that the problems in the Arctic which affect them constitute circumpolar problems that they ("We") need to address collectively.

Overall, the Arctic Council was formed as a forum in "response to practical needs" (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015: 8). This analysis has identified mechanisms and factors that the AC could improve in order to intensify transnational cooperation under its auspices and in the Arctic. However, it has also shown that the AC is already applying many of the mechanisms and factors identified in research that also explain the widespread perception of the AC as being a successful forum (see Table 2). Moreover, the case of the Arctic Council supports constructivist approaches investigating transnational cooperation as it shows that some mechanisms and factors identified in the literature can conflict with the purpose of cooperation in the first place. For example, the lack of long-term strategic planning and the broadness of its mandate and goals limit the effectiveness of the AC, but both allow the council to adapt to the changing context in which it operates. It encouraged "locally oriented projects rather than major circumpolar initiatives" and in the context of sustainable development, for example, it allowed that "the meaning of the term has evolved over time, considering broader political and economic contexts and their changes" (Smieszek, 2019: 10).

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Table 2:	Assessing mechanisms and factors perceived as enhancing transnational cooperation in the AC	
	Mechanisms and factors that have proven to be successful in the AC	**Mechanisms and factors to be improved in the AC**
Actors	• Opening up of the AC strengthened its legitimacy and global relevance • Diversity of actors enhanced the use of synergies • "We-identity" particularly among Arctic states has supported the development of shared approaches also in times of crises • Reciprocity principle: all actors cooperating in the AC have access to specialised knowledge needed to address complex, transboundary challenges	• Leadership: the programmes of the rotating chairmanships are often not aligned and apply a rather vague and unspecific wording
Process	• The inclusion of non-state actors and the focus on scientific output have enhanced the sharing of specialised knowledge • Regular contact in working groups, task forces and expert groups has contributed to the development of shared values, of trust and solidarity • The possibility to contribute to and to participate in policy dialogue can be perceived as a main incentive for actors cooperating in the AC	• Stringent and measurable goal-setting in chairmanship programs • Sustained funding • Professional process management (the AC-Secretariat fills this function only partly) • (Regular) monitoring and evaluation of the work conducted under the auspices of the AC • Need to agree on enforcement-practices
Context	• The promoted bottom-up approach and new agenda every two years facilitates a "fit-to-problem"-structure • The political and institutional space of the AC has encouraged the development of shared strategies and coalition-building	• In how far the AC provides an active meta-governance very much depends on the chairmanship-countries; more orchestration is needed to develop shared strategies systematically
Source: Author		

In order to be "fit for purpose" in times of rapid global changes, however, critics question whether the Arctic Council as a fairly static entity is sufficiently prepared and "well-suited to address needs for governance under the conditions prevailing in the 2020s" (Young, 2019).[11] Perspectives also differ as to whether the AC has succeeded in addressing pertinent issues in a sufficient/effective manner (Stephen, 2017). It is also not clear whether the AC will remain the "preeminent high-level forum of the Arctic region" when considering, as Young (2019) convincingly argues, the "development of governance arrangements that are not linked to the Arctic Council".[12] In either way, this study has shown that the AC will benefit particularly from improved process management and from more orchestration in aligning its work internally to ensure more effective policymaking. At the same time, the AC will also be more likely to preserve its relevance if it cooperates more

intensively also with other fora, such as the United Nations and the Arctic Circle to harmonise agendas and, ideally, contributes to more holistic approaches.

Conclusions

This study investigated lessons that can be learned from the Arctic Council and explored to what extent this case adds to and challenges the conception of models, concepts, and success factors for transnational cooperation identified in the literature. It has shown that many of the premises discussed in the literature on transnational cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships mirror the praise and concerns brought forward in connection with the AC; at the same time, transnational cooperation under the auspices of the AC allows these premises to be expanded particularly in regard to the relevance ascribed to knowledge generation.

Considering the **actor-dimension**, for example, it was shown that the inclusion of actors in the AC was not solely driven by the aim to include more expertise and resources and access further capacities contributing to a better division of labour and use of synergies. The inclusion of actors in the AC was also used as a strategy to strengthen the AC's institutional legitimacy. Similarly, assessing the effectiveness of leadership is more complicated than described in the literature if leaders (as in the case of the AC) rotate, contexts (agendas) change over time, and if the problems addressed by the institution/forum/partnership under analysis cannot be solved by the entity on its own due to their interconnected character.

In view of the **process-dimension**, the case of the AC illustrates that whether or not the approaches chosen relate to each other very much depends on the definition of goals (even if the same goals are stressed over time, their meaning and relevance may differ). In the case of the AC, the broad mandate and rather general wording in chairmanship programmes gives room for different interpretations, hampering the measurement, monitoring, and evaluation of the work conducted under the auspices of the AC as well as the enforcement of cooperation via rewards and punishments. In addition to more sustained funding, these are all areas of the process management to be improved by the AC. At the same time, the broad mandate allows the AC to address and adapt to the changing context in which it operates. Moreover, the case of the AC exemplifies that, despite its expandable process management, it has succeeded in forming and accessing specialised knowledge, establishing trust, communication, trustworthiness, fairness, and solidarity among those cooperating in the AC.

This success can also (at least partly) be explained by the **context-dimension**[13] as it has been noted that most often the AC's inclusive structure and consideration of multiple (particularly "local") perspectives encourage the development of shared strategies, coalition-building, and further cooperation even in times of crisis. However, the political and social context has also contributed to coalition-building, as the collaborating Arctic states have had the capacities to form and to maintain the AC to address their needs.

With regard to the three different dimensions (actors, process, and context) that also others (such as Pattberg and Widerberg) have perceived as being of particular relevance for assessing and improving transnational cooperation, the case of the Arctic Council suggests these dimensions to be expanded and that one consider **the additional dimension of knowledge** in further research. Particularly the AC's focus on developing specialised knowledge and the publication of high-quality scientific outputs has enhanced the legitimacy and reputation of the Arctic Council externally and at the same time strengthened its inclusive approach internally. Moreover, in contrast to other

settings, the exercise of authority in the AC seems to be shaped less by moral attitudes or by power but seems to depend on expertise, which encourages the maintenance of robust cooperation over "high politics" – also in times of crisis and in an era of dramatic global change.

Overall, this study has aimed at contributing to research on transnational cooperation and also to research in the field of development studies, for which the question of how to enhance transnational cooperation to achieve the global common good as identified in the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement is central. A look "up North" seems of great relevance for development studies that have traditionally focused more on "the Global South," given the growing new understanding of "development" promoted in development studies (Klingebiel, 2017), the relevance ascribed to social environmental research (Scholz, 2018) and the principle of universality agreed upon in the 2030 Agenda. Similar to other regions in an interconnected world, in the Arctic also "regional development is both constrained and enabled by global forces and dynamics – be they economic, political or environmental in nature" (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015: 18). A better understanding of how these global forces and dynamics may be shaped by transnational cooperation in one region may be of use for other regions despite their differences. Or put differently: "There is much to learn from successful efforts as well as from failures" (Ostrom et al,. 1999: 282). A transfer of the lessons learned from this analysis of transnational cooperation in a highly institutionalised forum such as the Arctic Council comes with obvious limitations for other non-institutionalised cases of transnational cooperation. However, particularly in times of rapid global changes, the case of the AC illustrates that first, efforts geared towards creating a shared understanding of challenges is an important basis for transnational cooperation, and second, that regional settings need to remain flexible particularly in regard to the actor- and process-dimensions in order to successfully adapt to changing contexts."

Notes

1. A longer version of this article was published under the title "Transnational Cooperation in Times of Rapid Global Changes: The Arctic Council as a Success Case?"

2. This is defined as interactions among actors from different actor groups (including at least one non-state actor) that occur on a regular basis, cross borders but are not global in scope (Albert, Bluhm, Helmig, Leutzsch, & Walter, 2009; Pries, 2010).

3. As Roger, Hale and Andonova (2017: 15) pointed out, however, "the influence of transnational factors […] is processed through domestic institutions".

4. Also Pattberg and Widerberg (2016) suggest differentiating between these three dimensions, which they identified as "conditions" of relevance for cooperation (Pattberg & Widerberg, 2016).

5. According to Béland and Cox, ideas can become coalition magnets if an idea is high in valence and has an ambiguous or polysemic character "that makes it attractive to groups that might otherwise have different interests" (Béland & Cox, 2015: 428).

6. As Smieszek emphasises, "there is no single, clear-cut definition of institutional effectiveness in the literature on international regimes", which is also why the analyses of the AC's effectiveness focus on different aspects. Smieszek herself defines institutional

effectiveness for the purpose of her study as "the extent to which a regime contributes to solving or mitigating the problems that led to its creation" (Smieszek, 2019: 4).

7. The mix of actors; leadership; reciprocity; goal-setting; funding; incentives; process management; knowledge; presence of a leader country; enforcement; monitoring; reporting and evaluation; regular contact; trust; communication; trustworthiness; fairness; meta-governance; institutional rules; political and institutional space; political and social context; cooperation under the auspices of institutions; "we-identity"; fit to problem-structure.

8. Similar to the actors engaged as Observers, the role ascribed to this status has also changed over time (see Knecht, 2016 for an assessment of the latest procedural reform of the AC's Observer Manual).

9. The Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic in 2011; the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution, Preparedness and Response in the Arctic in 2013; and the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation in 2016.

10. In important issues areas such as climate politics it is often argued that "broader international institutions, often global ones, are in a better position to extract legally binding commitments from the relevant sets of players" and also in areas that "may require stronger regulation and more intrusive enforcement […] Arctic –specific institutions are not best venues for such strengthening" (Schram Stokke: 2015).

11. Particularly due to its relevance for global climate change, the Arctic is no longer considered a peripheral region, which also serves as a justification for growing interests of non-Arctic states such as China and intergovernmental organisations like the European Union in the Arctic.

12. Such as the forum of science ministers, which relates to Arctic issues and "allow[s] for the participation of non-Arctic states as members" (Young, 2019).

13. Thereby pointing to the need to likewise explore interrelationships between the different dimensions identified by Pattberg and Widerberg and the overall relevance of the differing factors and mechanisms in further research.

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