# "ON THIN ICE?" UNDERSTANDING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

A Discursive-Institutionalist Approach.



Martine Mevatne

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University of Bergen, Department of comparative politics

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# Abstract

The thesis investigates the "institutional approach" to sustainable development in the Arctic Council. What has been called the institutional approach is conceived of along two dimensions 1. The institutional dimension; and, 2. The ideational dimension. This means that both institutional arrangement around the thematic area, and the substance of sustainable development as an idea has been analysed. This corresponds to the dimensions in discursive institutionalism. The dimensions of the policy arrangement approach have structured the empirical investigation: political modernisation, rules of the game, actors and discourse coalitions, power and influence, and discourse and policy programmes. The data material consists of documents from the Arctic Council online document archive, as well as secondary sources. The thesis finds that the Arctic Council has strongly contributed to region building and facilitating a cooperative environment for Arctic governance. The development of a clear strategy on sustainable development is more challenging. Much like the concept of sustainable development itself, its interpretation in the Arctic Council can be said to maximise consensus rather than clarity. This challenge is further amplified by the separation of sustainable development and environmental protection as two founding pillars of the Council. The Arctic Council has generated large amounts of scientific research and assessments, and identified important gaps in knowledge. It has not gone as far in outlining consequences for policy, long-term strategies and policy recommendations. Sustainable development as an idea in the Arctic Council takes a similar form as the mainstream Brundtland definition, with an added focus on culture, health and indigenous issues. In relation to climate change, the focus is almost exclusively on adaption, which can serve to shift the discussion away from connections between the dimensions of sustainable development. In a changing Arctic where actors are unsure of the future and their interests in it, the function of the Arctic Council is an open and empirical question. As a loosely organized high-level forum, the Arctic Council is what its actors make of it.

## Acknowledgements

## Abbreviations

**AEPS-** Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy

**AC-** Arctic Council

**ACIA**- Arctic Climate Impact Assessment

**AHDR-** Arctic Human Development Report

**AMAP-** Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme

**ASSW**- Arctic Science Summit Week

**CAFF**- Conservation of the Arctic Flora and Fauna

**CBD**- Convention on Biological Diversity

**DI**- Discursive Institutionalism

**EPPR**- Emergency Preparedness and Response

**HI**- Historical Institutionalism

**IASC-** International Arctic Science Committee

**ICC-** Inuit Circumpolar Conference

**IPCC-** International Panel on Climate Change

**IPS**: Indigenous Peoples Secretariat

**PAA**- Policy Arrangement Approach

**PAME**- Protection if the Arctic Marine Environment

**WG**- Working Group

**SAO**- Senior Arctic Official

**SDWG** – Sustainable Development Working Group

**SDAP**- Sustainable Development Action Plan
**TLK**- Traditional and Local Knowledge

**UNFCC-** United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

**UNCED**- United Nations Commission on Economic Development

**TFSDU-** Task Force on Sustainable Development and Utilization

**PAA**- Policy Arrangement Approach

**PP-** Permanent Participants

**PSI-** Project Support Instrument

**WCED**- World Commission on Economic Development

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

*If our universe moves in cycles,*
*In revolutions,*
*And we are conscious of its nature,*
*What do we pour into it?*

*If thoughts can propel us towards wellness or suffering,*
*Preempt our success or failure,*
*And open the doorway to miracles,*
*What thoughts do we cultivate?*

*If change is inevitable,*
*And we each contribute to the reality we share,*
*What kind of world do we nurture?*

‒ *Questions*, Evon Peter, 2013 ‒

Climate change and the protection of the environment have brought forth an array of institutional responses. This is also true for the Arctic, a region where temperatures are increasing at almost twice the rate of the global average (Hassol 2004, 8). The world is turning its eyes towards the Arctic, where fundamental processes of change are occurring. The "age of the Arctic" is here, and the Arctic Council can play an important role in it, as a focal point for Arctic governance. Arctic-wide cooperation for protection of the environment was initiated in 1991 with the establishment of AEPS- the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy. The initiative included the eight Arctic states, and indigenous peoples[1] in the region. The 1996 Ottawa declaration saw the expansion of AEPS into the Arctic Council (AC), a more formalized cooperation that introduced the new formative pillar of sustainable development. It is this concept that the thesis centres around, mainly its human development side (Arctic Council 1996). Despite being what some would call elusive and unclear, sustainable development is in

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[1] The term indigenous peoples will be used throughout the text. It is the term generally used in the global context, and in the Arctic Council context. In the UN, indigenous is used to refer broadly to peoples of long settlement and connection to specific lands, who have been adversely affected by incursions by industrial economies, displacement and settlement of their traditional territories by others (First Nations and Indigenous Studies, University of British Columbia 2009).

many ways the mantra of our time, especially when it comes to environmental issues. It is therefore important to understand what it really means and how various actors interpret it and approach it politically. With the Arctic high on the global environmental agenda, what better place to start? The research question guiding the thesis is:

*How does the Arctic Council institutionally approach sustainable development?*

What I have chosen to call the "institutional approach" is conceived of along two dimensions, the institutional dimension and the ideational dimension. The thesis represents a first step in exploring sustainable development in the Arctic Council within this framework, and as such, the "institutional approach" is conceived of rather loosely. On the first dimension, analysis will include the institutional arrangement around sustainable development, such as mandate, rules of procedure, and institutional structure. This will be incorporated with analysis of the more substantial content of what sustainable development "means" in the institution, through aspects of discourse or content of important documents or policy programmes. The methodological approach is the policy arrangement approach (PAA), which can be seen as a practical implementation of discursive institutionalism (DI). Discursive institutionalism combines institutional analysis with a focus on the substantial content of ideas. A policy arrangement can be defined as the way in which a certain policy domain is temporarily shaped in terms of four dimensions: discourses, actors, power and rules (Arts and Buizer 2009). The PAA dimensions will be used to guide the empirical investigation of the institutional arrangement around sustainable development. The findings from this section will then be considered in light of theory on the interplay between institutions and ideas. The approach facilitates an in-depth understanding of the institution, the idea and the relationship between them, as well as understanding of global drivers of change and regional responses.

The analysis will be based on available statements, declarations and reports from the Arctic Council on the theme of sustainable development, as well as secondary sources. The thesis is built up in the following way. Chapter 2 focuses on the Arctic region and research on the Arctic, with special attention to the development of the Arctic Council as the most significant forum for Arctic-wide cooperation. Following this is an examination of sustainable development as a concept, and its theoretical and political implications. On this basis, a simple framework will be constructed to help guide the discussion on the ideational dimension. Chapter 4 transitions to shedding some light on theory relating to institutions and ideas, and the relationship between them. The fifth chapter, the methods chapter, will then explain the reasoning behind the qualitative case study, the PAA framework, and the selection of data. The

thesis then proceeds to the empirical chapters, 6 through 10, where the policy arrangement approach as a methodological tool serves to uncover important dimensions of sustainable development in the Arctic Council. One chapter will be devoted to describing and analysing each of the PAA dimensions; political modernisation, rules of the game, actors and coalitions, power and influence, and discourse and policy programmes. The final chapter discusses the findings in light of theory, with a focus on the relationship between ideas and institutions, as well as ideational and institutional change.

## Chapter 2: The Arctic

As an introduction to the theme of sustainable development in the Arctic, it is necessary to discuss the Arctic region and the Arctic Council, First, an introduction of the AC is made, mainly focusing on how it came to be, and the most important characteristics of the institution. It is also necessary to delineate the geographical scope of the thesis and define the Arctic region. Further, this chapter will introduce some important processes of change going on in the Arctic, politically, socially and environmentally. Under the different sections, research on the Arctic Council and the Arctic more generally will be introduced.

In 1996, at a meeting in Ottawa, Canada, the eight Arctic states[2] declared the establishment of the Arctic Council as a "high level forum". The forum was to promote cooperation, coordination and interaction between the Arctic states, with the involvement of indigenous peoples and other Arctic inhabitants, centred on common Arctic challenges, especially focusing on sustainable development and protection of the environment (Arctic Council 1996). Since then, its role has been under debate. While some have attributed little importance to a forum that has no legal authority, others have seen an important political role for the institution. The Council has come to symbolize the growth of the Arctic as an international region, and represents a popularised definition both in the North and in global international cooperation (Keskitalo 2007, 190). Before its establishment, during the Cold War, institutional means for regional governance in the Arctic were few and far apart, due to strategic tension between NATO and the Warszawa pact. The idea of closer Arctic cooperation took shape during the 1980s, when the Arctic Ocean was the scene of military strategic tensions, but

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[2] Canada, USA, Iceland, Finland, Russia, Denmark/Greenland, Sweden and Norway. For a complete overview of current actors in the Arctic Council, see appendix B.

also for growing environmental concerns. The US, Canada and the Soviet Union formulated aims of promoting peaceful cooperation in the region (Pedersen 2012, 147). The so called "Gorbachev-initiative" in 1987, where the Soviet leader announced in an iconic speech that the Arctic should become a "zone of peace", marked the start of what was going to be a hectic period for bureaucrats and policy makers in the Arctic. Arctic cooperation was institutionalised in a range of organizations such as Nordic Forum, Conference of Arctic Parliamentarians, and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (Østerud and Hønneland 2014).

The process that would eventually lead to the establishment of the Arctic Council started in 1989. Ministers from the eight Arctic states met in Rovaniemi, Finland, to discuss cooperation on environmental issues. The Arctic Environmental Strategy (AEPS) was announced by the states in 1991, together with a formal declaration on protection of the Arctic environment. The process promised a political, but not judicial, commitment to establish a more comprehensive cooperative framework. Four working groups were established: The Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), the Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPPR), and Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME). States, indigenous groups and observers were to send experts to contribute to the workings of these groups (Bloom 1999, 712; Pedersen 2012, 147). The objectives of the AEPS included protecting Arctic ecosystems, protecting and bettering the environment, sustainable use of resources, routinely monitoring the state of the Arctic environment, and reducing pollution (*Declaration on the Protection of the Arctic Environment* 1991*)*.

Some states, most notably Canada, after some time came to argue that the AEPS did not cover all aspects of what the states of the region should discuss. Canada argued for the establishment of an Arctic Council that should address a broader scope of issues. 1995 saw the start of the process that transformed AEPS to the Arctic Council, creating a new institution that was to not only take charge over the AEPS programmes and working groups, but also address the wider thematic area of sustainable development. The US was sceptical of the development of a new international organization, and sought to limit the mandate strictly to environmental issues. It eventually supported the transition, on the premise that the cooperation was formulated as a "high level forum", without legal personality (Wegge 2011, 171; Pedersen 2012). Evan Bloom from the US. State Department noted that "(…) *the Council has no general role in coordinating Arctic policies, other than in spheres specifically agreed upon in advance*" (cited in Pedersen 2012, 149). During the Ottawa signing event in September 1996, the US

chose not to send its Secretary of State, prompting Russia and subsequently Norway and Denmark not choosing to send officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. To borrow Torbjørn Pedersen's words, the high level Arctic Council had a "*not so high level inception*" (Pedersen 2012, 149). Both the American Secretary of State and the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs have attended the meetings in the later years, one of several factors demonstrating an increased political role for the institution (Rottem 2015, 51).

Today, the Council conducts work on a broad range of areas, based on the original AEPS working group themes, and an additional Sustainable Development Working Group. It is organized on three levels: the Ministerial Meeting, the Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) and the Working Groups (WGs). The ministerial meeting lays the broad foundations for the way the institution is to develop; SAOs coordinate these lines with the working groups where the daily work is undertaken. The ministerial meeting is the highest organ in the institution, and meets biannually to issue ministerial declarations that decide the direction of the Council. At the next level, senior arctic officials meet at least two times a year to coordinate and oversee the work of the working groups. The working groups are the "power house" of the Council. All projects must be approved by all member states, and are funded on a voluntary basis (Rottem 2015; Koivurova and VanderZwaag 2007). In 2011, a secretariat in Tromsø was established with a mandate to perform administrative and related activities (Sellheim 2012). The three broad groups that participate at the three levels of activity are Member States, Permanent Participants and Observers. In later years, the Arctic Council has provided the forum for two binding agreements, an agreement on maritime search and rescue, and one on preparedness and response to oil spills (Arctic Council 2015e). Still, it stands firmly on its foundation as a forum, where the production of scientific reports are its most important output (Nilsson 2012).

Research on the Arctic Council has concentrated on a wide spectre of issues. Some focus on the wider picture of the possibilities for conflict or cooperation in the Arctic and situate the Council in this framework, see for example Young (2009; 2011a) or Stenlund (2002). Others have more explicitly focused on the role of the Council in Arctic politics, often with special attention to the appropriateness of the non-legally binding basis of the institution; see Stokke (2007c), Pedersen (2012) or Nord (2016). The relationship between the Council and outside actors is also an important research area, as interest from non-Artic actors is increasing, see Graczyk (2012; 2011) or Graczyk and Koivurova (2014). Additionally, studies have been conducted on how the Council contributes to Arctic region building, see for example Keskitalo (2007) or Hønneland and Stokke (2007). There is also a growing literature on indigenous issues.

Examples include Koivurova and Heinämäki (2006); Nuttall (2000); and Martello (2008) who all link indigenous issues to the wider picture of Arctic governance on issues such as representation or climate change.

Other authors have focused on processes going on within the institution. Examples include Nilsson on the relationship between science and policy in the Arctic Council (2009; 2012), Sinevaara- Niskanen (2015) on how power is exercised in and through reports produced under the auspices of the AC, and Hønneland and Stokke (2007) on the cognitive mechanism of impact of the AC. This thesis will follow in the same spirit, of trying to look more within the Arctic Council. We know a lot about institutional features of the Arctic Council and relations among Arctic actors "from the outside". We know less about the processes that go on inside the institution in terms of policy discourse, or the production and communication of knowledge. Further, there is not much research attempting to achieve a more rigorous understanding of the substance, content and impact of the AC work on different policy areas. The hope is that the thesis can contribute as a step towards a deeper understanding of the Council's work on sustainable development. It will not assess the impact or effectiveness of AC work directly, but rather focus on its treatment of sustainable development as a concept and a policy area.

Going in to the text, it is important to specify what "the Arctic" means, defining the geographical scope of the thesis. There is no formal or straightforward definition of the Arctic. The polar region can be described as land and sea that lies above the Arctic Circle, the southernmost point where the sun does not rise in winter or does not set in summer for at least 24 hours (Grant 2010, 6). Other indicators often used include the northern tree line, climatic indicators, or the extent of permafrost on land or sea ice (Hassol 2004, 4). Additionally, there are political delimitations, for example in the Arctic Council. *Figure 1* shows some physical demarcations that are all commonly used. The green line marks the tree line, the red line is the 10 degrees (Celsius) in June isotherm, and the stippled line is the Arctic Circle. In the Arctic Council working groups and scientific reports, a more flexible definition of the Arctic is employed, where "*sub-Arctic regions integral to the functioning of the Arctic system*" are included in the definition (Hassol 2004, 4). *Figure 2* illustrates a variation of definitions used within the Arctic Council. The red line represents the definition in one of the working groups, AMAP, the green line represents the demarcation in one of it the most important publications under the Arctic Council, the Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR), while the blue line is the Arctic Circle.
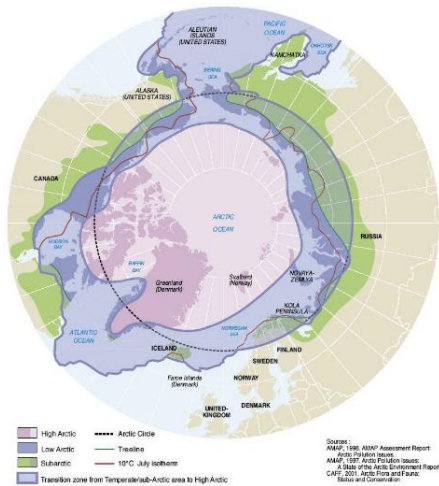
Figure 1: "Boundaries of the Arctic"

(Ahlenius et al. 2005)
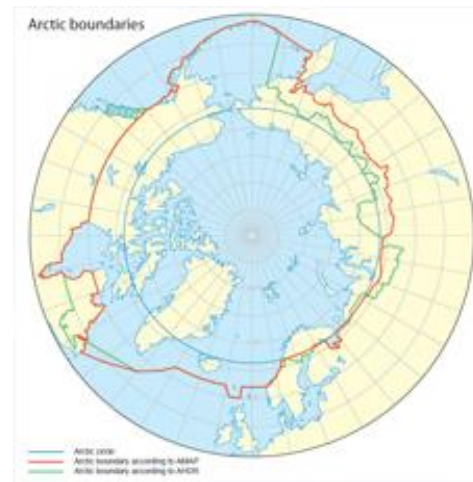


Figure 2: "Arctic Boundaries"

(Dallmann 2015)

Eight countries have territories within the Arctic Circle, corresponding to the eight member states of the Arctic Council. The Arctic is a unique region in being a region of peripheries. With the exception of Iceland, more or less peripheral parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark (Greenland), Russia, Canada, and the US are defined as belonging to the Arctic. Five states, often referred to as the A5, have significant claims to areas in the Arctic Ocean. These include Denmark/Greenland, Norway, Russia, Canada and the US (Gerhardt et al. 2010). Around four million people inhabit the Arctic today, depending on where the boundaries are drawn (Heleniak and Bogoyavlensky 2015; Arctic Council 2015a). Indigenous peoples make up around 10% of the population, and are under international law recognized as having special rights (Arctic Council 2015a).

The Arctic can be seen as a political region, as well as a geographical one. Regionality can be described as the interactive and discursive distinctiveness of a more or less geographically defined area. It is partly defined by functional interaction, politically, economically, socially and otherwise (Stokke 2007a, 20). At the same time that the Arctic is increasingly connected to the global world through its economic, military, ecological and political significance, it is still a distinct region due to factors such as size, location, and relative lack of infrastructure and political centres (Wegge 2011, 166). Regionality is further characterized by the perceptions of relevant actors. Put differently, the region must be recognized both outside and inside as a distinct region that differs from its surroundings in a

significant way. Regionality can be a political project or goal, pursued by political elites who seek to promote regional framings among other politicians, elites, industry and others (Stokke 2007a, 20). Institutions such as the Arctic Council have contributed to establishing Arctic issues as a distinct policy area (Stokke 2007b, 180). The thesis views the Arctic as both a political and geographical region, with the main emphasis on the former. The definition is not strict, but is based on the more flexible definitions, as used in the Arctic Council.

Over the centuries, the North, or the Arctic, has meant different things to different people. Historically, to Europeans, it was "*a frontier of heroic proportions, something to be overcome, conquered and brought under established rule*" (Heininen and Nicol 2007, 134). What we conceive of as the Arctic region has changed from earlier mental pictures of "*the frozen high Arctic*", to a region that also encompasses areas of far lower latitude, up to 15% of the earth's surface (Keskitalo 2007, 188). "The Arctic region" is thus not a static concept, but a result of different narratives, built on differing foundations. The current conception of "the North" as a region can be seen as an outcome of institutional and intergovernmental cooperation, in this case heavily based on international efforts to cooperate on environmental issues (Heininen and Nicol 2007).


**2.1 "The age of the Arctic"**

Over twenty years have passed since Oran Young wrote about "The Age of the Arctic". Here, he stated that: "*It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the world is entering the age of the Arctic, an era in which those concerned with international peace and security will urgently need to know much more about the region and in which policymakers in the Arctic rim states will become increasingly concerned with Arctic affairs*" (Young 1985, 160).

It seems that Young was right, and that the age of the Arctic is here. Complex processes of change are under way in the Arctic region, and the Arctic is increasingly on the global agenda. Changes such as globalisation and climate change will be elaborated on later, under the heading of political modernisation. What can be stated from the start, however, is that the Arctic region is facing far-reaching challenges that very much relate to sustainable development. As the preeminent forum for Arctic governance, these are profound challenges that the Council must address. The forces of climate change and globalisation are transforming the region, tightening the links between the Arctic and the rest of the world (Young 2011a; Young 2010). Both scientific and popular interest in the region has drastically increased, where focus is often on the impacts of climate change and opening of the region as sea ice melts. Newspapers and

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scholarly articles run headlines about the "race for" or a "scramble for" the Arctic. Popular media often portrays the Arctic as a zone of potential conflict, with *"unresolved boundary issues, rapidly changing sea ice cover and tempting natural resources forming a potentially explosive political cocktail"* (Rowe 2013, 232). Much research has been undertaken on the geopolitics, stability and international relations in the Arctic, see for example Young (2005), Østerud and Hønneland (2014), or Wegge (2011). Sovereignty and governance in relation to the Arctic Ocean is also a prevalent theme, especially in light of new economic possibilities. For research on this theme see Lalonde, McDorman, and Pharand (2015); Berkman and Young (2009); Berkman (2012), or Gerhardt et al. (2010).

In 2007, Russia planted a flag on the north-pole seabed, an action that although bearing no significance under international law, bore great symbolic value. The event represented the climax of a debate interpreting changes in the Arctic as challenging political order and stability (Wegge 2011; Dodds 2010). As sea ice melts due to climate change, new routes for shipping and possibilities for resource extraction are opening. The US geological survey has estimated that about 30% of the world's undiscovered gas and 13% of the undiscovered oil may be found in the area north of the Arctic Circle (Gautier et al. 2009). Coupled with globalisation, there is an expectation that climate change will open up for increased human activity in the region in the form of shipping, fishery, ship-based tourism, and resource extraction. For research on the impacts of climate change in the Arctic see Corell (2006), Hassol (2004), Whiteman, Hope, and Wadhams (2013), Craciun (2009) and Offerdal (2007). The opening up of the region has often served to add gist to the "*nightmarish neo-realist vision of international politics with the Arctic as an anarchic space, at the apparent mercy of the competing geopolitical imperatives of coastal states and other interested parties*" (Dodds 2010, 63). These fears largely do not reflect reality. On the contrary, the Arctic states have settled most disputes, whether over boundaries or resources, through cooperative measures, and the Arctic Council provides a body for properly addressing emerging issues (Young 2011b).

The impacts that these processes of change have in the Arctic are real, but how one talks about them matter. In a discourse analysis, Elana Wilson Rowe finds that while media represents the Arctic as a zone of potential conflict, state discourses, policy documents, political leaders and civil servants emphasise the peaceful nature of the region (Rowe 2013). Although a "scramble for the Arctic " is not an eminent threat, emerging possibilities or challenges need to be managed responsibly, or they might lead to unwanted side effects (Dodds 2013; Young 2010). The lack of infrastructure is a central challenge in the new economic possibilities.

Projects like oil and gas extraction and fisheries may prove particularly tricky, as resources may prove to be difficult to access, limited and costly to extract. In addition, the Arctic environment and communities are seen as especially vulnerable to damages that might result from these activities (Young 2010). Nonetheless, ambitions of obtaining a "place by the table" in managing these processes are increasing. Several non-Arctic actors or states are now expressing keen interest in access to the Arctic governance. Interest is to a large degree motivated by the belief that climate change will open new possibilities, or new threats (Avango, Nilsson, and Roberts 2013). China and the European Union are among powerful actors that are increasingly turning their attention towards the Arctic. The AC is seen as the formal pathway to gain involvement in Arctic governance, and seeking observer status in the Council is the main access point. The observer category has not been entirely unproblematic for the Council, with opinions differing on the degree to which, and which of the non-Arctic actors should be involved (Graczyk and Koivurova 2014). The Arctic states as well are expressing a keener interest in its northern areas. Admiral Robert Papp, US special representative for the Arctic, said in a speech at Arctic Frontiers in Tromsø, 2016, that there is a new sense of urgency in the White House about Arctic affairs (Staalesen 2016). All the eight Arctic states have in later years released comprehensive Arctic strategies, focusing on issues such as security and sovereignty, economic and business development, sustainable and regional development, environmental protection and climate change, human dimensions and peoples, research and knowledge, safety, search and rescue, and international cooperation (Heininen 2012).

In light of the processes of change going on in the region, it is important for us to know more about the Council as a focal point for Arctic governance, now and in the future. The state of change may raise questions of the capacity of the Arctic Council to function as an effective mechanism to address matters affecting the Arctic (Young 2010, 169). Many articles have been written on the institutional mechanisms of the Council, and their appropriateness in terms of managing emerging challenges and opportunities. However, the Council was not in the first place designed to govern directly, but to be a "forum" for discussing Arctic policies. The thesis will take this objective seriously, and investigate the content or "outcome" of discussions on sustainable development, in addition to the institutional structure. A good place to start this process is in investigating the concept of sustainable development itself, theoretically and politically.

# Chapter 3: Sustainable development

Sustainable development is one of the two formative pillars of the Arctic Council. Although most are familiar with the expression, it can be hard to grasp what specifically it entails when further examining it. This section will present a conceptual review of sustainable development, including different definitions, interpretations and approaches. The review will focus on the general concept of sustainable development. The analysis will however be somewhat more centred on the economic and social dimensions.

A report from the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987 marked the starting point for the spread of the sustainable development concept along the political spectre (Goodin 1992, 63). Even though the concept built on earlier theorizing, the "Our Common Future" report from 1987 was instrumental in popularizing and spreading the concept to political programmes in most countries, to political journalism and a wide range of scientific literature. It was also instrumental in forming a global vision on the future of the planet (Schubert and Láng 2005; Mebratu 1998). It therefore seems appropriate to begin the overview of its theoretical components here. "Our Common Future", often just referred to as the Brundtland-report, defined sustainable development as *"making development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs* " (WCED 1987, 16). Two main components of this definition were identified: 1. The concept of needs, in particular the needs of the poor, to which overriding priority should be given, and 2. The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environments ability to meet present and future needs (WCED 1987, 41). Intergenerational equity is important in this definition, and from that follows a concern for equity within generations. In this definition, the commission underlines the linkages between poverty alleviation, environmental protection and social equitability through sustainable economic growth (Mebratu 1998, 502). The report identifies central objectives for environmental and economic policy resulting from sustainable development, which include reviving growth, changing the quality of growth, meeting essential human needs, ensuring a sustainable level of population, conserving and enhancing the resource base, reorienting technology and managing risk, and merging economics and environment in decision making (WCED 1987). The report continues:

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"*Yet in the end, sustainable development is not a fixed state of harmony, but rather a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs. We do not pretend that the process is easy or straightforward. Painful choices have to be made. Thus, in the final analysis, sustainable development must rest on political will*" (WCED 1987, 71).

It is generally accepted that the term sustainable development calls for convergence between the three pillars of economic development, social equity and protection of the environment. It involves an attempt to combine a growing concern for the environment with socio-economic issues. Despite this general agreement the concept remains elusive, and therefore both interpretations and responses differ (Drexhage and Murphy 2010; Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien 2005). Sustainable development has the potential to address fundamental challenges for humanity now and in the future, but to do this it needs clarity of meaning (Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien 2005). A step towards clarity of meaning is studying different approaches and applications. The following review will give an overview of important theoretical and political developments, central contentions, and different approaches.

The Brundtland report was neither the starting point nor the end of the conceptual development process. Among historical and conceptual precursors were religious or cultural beliefs and traditions, including indigenous beliefs and traditions, placing importance in living in harmony with nature. Further, economics and the theories of limits such as those of Malthus or Ricardo contributed to the theoretical development (Mebratu 1998). More recently, the process included the 1972 Stockholm UN Conference on Human Environment and the launch of the World Conservation Strategy from 1980. After these events, terminology in the lines of sustainable development became increasingly used (Mebratu 1998; Drexhage and Murphy 2010; Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien 2005). The WCED picked up the concept a few years later, and treated it in the report that became so instrumental in spreading the concept of sustainable development as a concept over the world. The Brundtland report provided momentum for the 1992 Rio United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), often referred to as the Rio Summit or the Earth Summit. The summit adopted the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and Agenda 21, a global plan for action on sustainable development. The conference further adopted three seminal policy instruments on environmental governance: the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC), the convention on biological diversity (CBD) and the non-legally binding Statement on Forest

Principles (Drexhage and Murphy 2010). A very significant part of the Rio Summit was the processes leading up to it. In most countries, the preparatory work involved both major actors and participants at the grass root level. This took the concept to every corner of the world, and exposed it to a range of fundamental questions such as what it really means for each and every community and how to translate the generalities into practice (Mebratu 1998, 502). Over the years, sustainable development has been debated, reviewed, discussed and criticised. At and since the Rio Summit in 1992, sustainable development has found its most prominent "hook", in terms of media and political attention, in climate change (Drexhage and Murphy 2010, 9).

Some treatments have been highly sceptical of "Our Common Future", deeming it ambiguous, contradictory and incapable of specifying the changes and mechanisms necessary to realize sustainable development (Langhelle 1999). As Wolfgang Sachs puts it, the concept seems to be designed to maximise consensus rather than clarity (Sachs 2005, 28). Some argue that the strength of the concept lies in its vagueness, allowing agents with irreconcilable positions to search for common ground, and that one should therefore not try to define it too rigorously (Lélé 1991). Amartya Sen, for example, has written that Brundtland's concept shares with all ideas that has moved humanity forward, such as liberty, equality or fraternity, the presence of some ambiguity. He continues: "*Since people are the ultimate 'agents' of change, much must depend on their inspiration and commitment, and we do require a broad enough notion of sustainability that can be sufficiently enlivening*" (Sen 2013, 9). There needs to be a balance between a concept that is too general and thus impossible to implement, and one that is too specific and thus impossible to come to agreement on. The ambiguity of the standard definition has allowed a range of groups to assemble under the sustainable development banner, while at the same time creating space for the concept being subjected to competing agendas (Parris and Kates 2003; Drexhage and Murphy 2010).

Several basic concepts in the definition are in need of clarification, such as what needs are, what is to be sustained, and how it is to be sustained. When this remains unanswered, some would argue that different conceptions of sustainable development tend to reflect political or philosophical positions of whoever proposes the definition rather than an unambiguous scientific view (Robinson 2004, 374). Another concern is that the language of sustainable development can be used to promote unsustainable activities. The competing agendas that can be integrated in sustainable development language show the difficulties in clearly integrating economic, environmental and social concerns, and shows how interpretation of sustainable development is vulnerable to the prevailing Zeitgeist (Drexhage and Murphy 2010; Robinson

2004). Victor summarizes these arguments aptly when stating: "*Because the concept stresses the interconnection of everything it has been* vulnerable *to distortion by woolly thinking, and has become a magnet for special interest groups*" (Victor 2006, 91). Redclift argues that the simplicity of the Brundtland approach obscures several underlying complexities and contradictions, and that this confuses the sustainable development debate. Firstly, he points out, "*It is clear that needs themselves change, so it is unlikely (as the definition implies) that those of the future generation are the same as those of the present generation*" (Redclift 2005, 213). Further, this raises the question of how needs are defined in different cultures. The consensus has been that sustainable development is necessary for all, but may take different forms in different places. This creates challenges in terms of how different implementations match up to one coherent interpretation (Redclift 2005, 213). Another question is what is to be sustained. The term sustainable is derived from the Latin *sus tenere,* which means "to uphold" (Langhelle 1999, 132). Some see that it is natural or environmental capital that has to be sustained, combined with a commitment to ensuring people's needs are met. For others it can involve sustaining economic growth or human development while also keeping environmental concerns in mind (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 1996, 24). The angle from which one approaches the problem can clearly have an impact what the "essence" of sustainable development" is.

Related to the question of what is to be sustained is the question of what is to be developed, how it is developed, and what development entails. Development includes strong social objectives, and the achievement of development goals might demand social change instead of sustainability in the sense of keeping something going (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 1996). This leads into another area of contention, namely one of how to prioritize or balance between the goals of sustainable development. Perhaps the most striking point in case is the contradictions that can be found between the goals of economic growth or development, and protection of the environment. The balance between meeting the economic needs of the poor and being attentive to critical ecological thresholds has proved difficult. Often, various policy interpretations tend to focus on one of the areas of sustainability, rather than attempting to find a balance (Lélé 1991; Grist 2008). Sustainable development is at times compartmentalized as an environmental issue rather than being a green agenda to bring the consideration of the environment into economic development. This is reflected in the attempts to institutionalize sustainable development in the international system, attracting attention mainly from environmental debates (Drexhage and Murphy 2010, 2). Among major critiques of the concept as presented by the Brundtland commission were that it had a bias towards economic growth

and did not question the ideology of economic growth or capitalism or challenge consumer culture, and thus served neoliberal interests (Du Pisani 2006; Fischer and Hajer 2005; Langhelle 1999). A particular concern is the "development" side of the concept being equated to economic growth. Development as economic growth continues to be the dominant paradigm, with the belief that markets and technology will produce a world that is richer and more ecologically stable (Drexhage and Murphy 2010, 19). From a pure free market perspective, it could also be argued that sustainable development policies were unnecessary because human ingenuity and/or the market would be able to cope with the issues of growth and development (Du Pisani 2006, 93).

Langhelle has argued that the issue of compatibility between sustainable development and economic growth has led to the neglect of the broader framework of sustainable development, in which the commission attempted to integrate environmental policies and developmental strategies (Langhelle 1999, 130). In his view, sustainable development should not be viewed as a blue print for how all countries should follow the same path to development, but rather as a normative-strategic framework for continuing to work out in detail the relationship between physical sustainability, generational equity and global solidarity (Langhelle 1999, 147). Critics of the Brundtland report argued that steps towards its implementation would be disturbed by the contradictions between the call for economic growth in developing countries and increased ecological conservation, and by inattention to power relations between global and local actors. The implementation is indeed challenging. This can be linked both to a general lack of political will at different scales, as well as ineffective institutions (Lélé 1991; Sneddon, Howarth, and Norgaard 2006). Further, creating measurements or indicators of how well sustainable development is fulfilled, is challenging, although improvements have been made. This is connected to the aforementioned issues of ambiguity, unclear priorities and relations between the differing components in the definition. Victor harshly criticises UN on this matter, writing:" *particularly harmful has been a series of consensus-driven UN summits that have yielded broad and incoherent documents and policies*". He continues; "*action plans tend to be sprawling documents that offer something for everyone*" (Victor 2006, 92–93). Efforts to implement sustainable development can be seen as having taken place in a context of mainstream economic planning, and attempting not to disrupt overall growth. Overall, it is clear that unsustainable and negative trends continue, such as growing gaps between rich and poor and income inequality, increasing resource and material consumption coupled with population growth, and so on. Another factor that can be mentioned

is tensions between developed and developing countries, partly due to commitments not being fulfilled, leading to an atmosphere of distrust further disrupting implementation processes (Drexhage and Murphy 2010).

If it is unclear what the implications and implementations of sustainable development entail, it is no wonder that there are differing approaches as to how policy makers should go about achieving sustainable development. The conceptual review will therefore investigate some approaches to sustainable development in terms of policy, and changes and measures that need to be undertaken in the process of achieving sustainable development. Adams distinguishes between mainstream and radical approaches. Mainstream approaches typically involve market environmentalism, green consumption and technological modernisation. It has often focused on inter-generational equity and global environment issues such as climate change or biodiversity depletion, again focusing on technological and market solutions. Mainstream sustainable development does not challenge the dominant capitalist industrialising model, but demands debate about methods and priorities. Our Common Future is characterized by this mainstream thinking on sustainable development, which also dominated Rio conference (Grist 2008, 786; Adams 2009, 103). Radical contributors incorporate calls for shifts in power relations, wealth, social organization or industrial organization (Adams 2009; Grist 2008, 787). The distinction between radical and mainstream sustainable development has much in common with the conceptual framework by Hopwood, Mellor and O`Brien that separates between three broad views on the nature of the changes necessary in political and economic structures, and human- environment relationships to achieve sustainable development. These broad categories are status quo, reform, and transformation (Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien 2005, 42). In short, the status quo argument is that growth is the way to overcome problems of sustainability and poverty. Adjustments can be made without any fundamental change to society. The reform approach is critical of the policies of most business or government, but it does not consider a collapse in social or ecological systems likely, and thus fundamental change is not necessary. Focus is on technology, good science and information, modifications to the market and reform of government. Mainstream environmental groups are largely reformist. Lastly, the transformation approach posits that fundamental change in society and/or human-environment relations is needed to avoid a mounting crisis and a possible future collapse (Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien 2005). Other authors separate between strong and weak (and moderate) sustainability. Weak sustainability adopts a human centred discourse on the human-environment relationships. At the heart of weak sustainability is the same optimism and belief

in people and the market that can be found in mainstream sustainable development or status quo approaches. There is also an emphasis on a growth-oriented approach to economic development. Strong sustainability on the other side has much in common with radical and "transformation" approaches in emphasizing the need for radical altering of fundamental social and economic structures (Williams and Millington 2004, 100).

**3.1 Summary and the way forward:**

The previous sections presented differing conceptions of, and approaches to, sustainable development. This section will construct a framework to use when analysing sustainable development in the Arctic Council along the ideational dimension. The suggestion is that this should done along three dimensions: 1. *Conceptualisation, 2. Strategies and 3. Implementation*. First, conceptualisation attends to mainly one aspect: the theoretical conceptualisation and clarification of sustainable development. Thereafter comes the dimension that has been called strategies. This is meant to be at an intermediate level, between conceptualization and implementation. Here the central concern is to find out more about the relationship between the differing aspects of the definition, through investigating long-term strategies. It is not specifically aimed at policy programmes, but rather investigating whether formulations of priorities can be found. The third dimension is called implementation. This dimension might turn out to be somewhat misdirected in this case, as the Arctic Council is mainly focused on research and not so much on policy implementation. The aim is not to analyse the Council on premises that are not its own. However, it is interesting to investigate how resources are directed as a representation of priorities and implementation strategies. This framework is not meant to be followed indiscriminately, but rather to function as a loose guide to which questions to ask, based on this conceptual review of sustainable development. In this way, the analysis has grounding in the wider conceptual framework, but is at the same time open for new discoveries and insights. A loose guide to which questions to ask reads like this:

1. *Conceptualization*:

 Is it possible to find a clearly formulated definition of what sustainable development is? What are its components? How is it similar or different from the "standard" Brundtland definition? How clearly is the definition formulated and communicated? Are goals or indicators of sustainable development defined?

*2. Strategies:*

Does there exist an explicit (or implicit) strategy for which tasks should be prioritized? Is there a long-term strategy for sustainable development work? What dimensions/areas do actors emphasize under the heading of sustainable development?

*3. Implementation:*

What areas or actors are projects/policy aimed at? How policy oriented is the work? What political approach characterizes sustainable development in the institution, and its policy programmes and projects?

With this, the conceptual review concludes. The thesis now moves on to describe theoretical and analytical points of departure for investigating the institutional approach to sustainable development, before presenting the methodological framework for the process of doing so.

# Chapter 4: Institutions and ideas: theoretical points of departure

The institutional approach to sustainable development is conceptualized along two dimensions: 1. The institutional dimension and 2. The ideational dimension. Especially interesting in this framework are the connections between the two. The dimensions are operationalized through an analytical dualism, and in the next step through the PAA framework. This enables observation of how the institutional and ideational elements relate to each other, and produce what has been called the institutional approach (Arts and Buizer 2009). How the institutional and the ideational dimension are operationalized through the Policy Arrangement Approach will be outlined in the subsequent methodological chapter. This chapter will instead present theory on ideas, institutions and the interplay between them at a more general level.

## 4.1 The institutional dimension

This section will give a theoretical background of the institutional dimension, defining several key concepts used throughout the text. First, a conceptual clarification is needed in terms of whether the Arctic Council is best seen as an international organization, institution or regime. Further, three different mechanisms for how institutions can have an effect on actors will be

discussed. These are connected to regime effectiveness and institutional niche selection, both important theoretical motivations for studying the Arctic Council.

In the literature, the terms international institutions, international regimes and international organizations are often used interchangeably, although their precise definitions are different (Woo 2011, 315). Adding to this, the Arctic Council was formed as a "high level forum" and it is not self-evident which of the categories it belongs to. As the AC lacks several of the features that often characterize international organizations, such as being treaty-based, having only states as participants and having substantial budgets, it is arguably best classified as an institution or a regime (Woo 2011). The thesis will draw on insights both from institutionalist research and regime effectiveness literature. These terms will be used according to the specific theories, but generally institution is the term that is used. According to Keohane, institution may refer to either a general pattern or categorization of activity, or it can refer to a particular human-constructed arrangement, formally or informally organized. Broadly defined, institutions are "*persistent and connected sets of rules (formal or informal) that prescribe behavioural roles, constrain activity and shape expectations*" (Keohane 1988, 383). A general definition of international regimes is that they are "*consisting of agreed upon principles, norms, rules, and programs that govern the interactions of actors in specific issue areas*" (Levy, Young, and Zurn 1995, 274). The term regime has often been used in reference to rules and norms within a specific issue area, for example the United Nations (an international organization), contains several regimes such as the human rights regime, environmental protection regime, global health management regime and so on (Woo 2011). The Arctic Council might be viewed as an institution that can shape roles in Arctic governance, while at the same time it can be viewed as a regime governing interactions on issue areas such as environmental protection.

Scott highlights three characteristic dimensions in institutional research. These are the regulative, normative and cognitive dimensions. Usually an institution contains all of these aspects, analytically separate but practically intertwined (Scott 2014). When researches look at how institutions influence actors, identified mechanisms are often concurrent with these three aspects. In the regime effectiveness literature, regimes can influence actors through regulations, norm creation or cognitive means (Stokke 2007, 15). The human activities that international regimes seek to influence are usually subject to rules and programmes under several institutions or regimes. A range of different international bodies or regulations plays a role in Arctic governance. This complexity brings with it a challenge to participants in the different

institutions of how to most effectively operate (where effectiveness is understood as a regime contributing to solving of the problem the institution was established to address). New institutions have to find their "institutional niche" in order to contribute something new compared to already existing mechanisms. Niches can be built on specific thematic areas, or on how the institution operates more generally (Oberthür and Stokke 2011; Stokke 2007b). The Arctic Council has carved out an institutional niche that is strongly related to the cognitive mechanism of influence. The generation of knowledge that has not been available elsewhere has been an important task as a basis for action on several thematic areas. Only on rare occasions has the institution tried to influence normatively, which would mean attempting to strengthen existing international sets of rules or trying to implement new ones. On several occasions, it has increased the capacity of Arctic states and other actors by generating knowledge that can be utilized towards problem solving activities. Studies show that scientific reports are viewed as the institutions most valuable output, and through active reporting and collection of data the AC has contributed to good governance by drawing attention to challenges, the consequences of these challenges and strategies for problem solving (Stokke 2007b; Rhemann 2012; Nilsson 2009).

Theoretical interest in the cognitive institutional niche provides some of the motivation for studying the Arctic Council. This study can be a building block in an attempt to understand an institution that is in many ways unique in its functioning and therefore interesting in itself, as well as a broader aim of better understanding the cognitive, interactive and social processes that take place within such institutions. Through "soft law" international policy making, states can define and redefine meanings of sustainable development, its meanings and priorities in specific instances, and how to address its challenges (Segger 2009, 17). One conception of effectiveness of the Arctic Council through a cognitive mechanism of influence would be through facilitating exactly these kinds of processes. The next section will tie together ideas and institutions, through looking at the ideational turn in institutional research, and discursive institutionalism.


**4.2 The ideational dimension**

The ideational dimension concerns themes such as discourse, ideas and policy programmes. Theoretical concepts used in this part of the analysis will be presented in this part of the chapter. It starts, however, with an introduction to the ideational turn in social sciences and discursive institutionalism. The ideational turn in social sciences refers to the surge of renewed interest in

the role of ideas in institutionalist research, especially in the "new institutionalisms" (Blyth 1997; Arts and Buizer 2009; Lieberman 2002; Berman et al. 2001; Schmidt 2010; Finlayson 2004). While ideas and institutions were earlier kept analytically separate, they have in later years been brought together. Ideas were incorporated into existing institutionalisms, like rational, historical and sociological institutionalism (Blyth 1997). Hall and Taylor write that the historical institutionalists have been particularly attentive to the relationship between institutions and ideas, typically seeking to locate institutions in a causal chain that accommodates a role for different factors (Hall and Taylor 1996, 942). Rational choice institutionalists also begun incorporating factors such as culture or beliefs into their works to explain why actors move in a certain direction when many possible equilibrium outcomes are possible (Hall and Taylor 1996, 956). Ideas have also been the basis for new directions. Vivien Schmidt argues that the approaches of scholars coming out of the three institutionalisms that take ideas and discourse seriously are best classified as a part of a fourth "new institutionalism", namely discursive institutionalism (DI) (Schmidt 2010).

Schmidt describes DI as an approach that is "*concerned both with the substantive content of ideas, and with and the interactive processes of discourse in institutional context*" (Schmidt 2010, 1). Not all scholars who in Schmidt's view fall under this category use this term. Some place themselves within one of the other institutionalist directions, other use terms such as "constructivist institutionalism" or "the ideational turn", "discourse analysis" or "the argumentative turn" (Schmidt 2010). This presentation will build on literature on DI and the closely related "constructivist institutionalism" used by Colin Hay. Among the basic assumptions in these approaches is that actors are strategic in trying to realize certain complex, contingent and changing goals. They do this in a context that favours certain strategies over others, and they must rely on perceptions, that are inaccurate at best, to navigate their context. Actors are normatively oriented towards their environment. Desires, motivations and preferences are not only contextually given. Rather, they are ideational and represent a normative orientation towards the context (Hay 2007, 22). Analytically, DI draws a distinction between discourses and institutions, and the objects of discursive institutionalist explanation include both (Arts and Buizer 2009; Schmidt 2008).

On the substantive side, these scholars consider ideas at different levels of generality, and of different kinds, as well as they consider the representation of these ideas through discourse. On the interactive dimension, DI scholars analyse the discursive processes in which such ideas are constructed and deliberated. These discourses can include a wider range of policy

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actors, amongst others political leaders, members of civil society, social movements, organizations or citizens. The "institutionalism" part of DI points to the fact that this approach is not only about discursive processes, but also very much about the institutional context where ideas are communicated through discourse (Schmidt 2010, 3–4). Context is viewed largely in institutional terms (Hay 2007). Institutions are conceptualized differently in DI than in other institutionalist directions. They are not to the same degree the external and rule-following structures that mainly place restrictions on actors. Institutions are not only restraining the actions of actors, but also resulting from them. Actors can in this view change institutions endogenously, as opposed to exogenous explanations of change (like critical junctures, external events or crisis), often used in other institutionalist approaches (Schmidt 2010; Lauber and Schenner 2011). According to Hay, institutions are not to the same degree viewed as instrumental means for reducing uncertainty, and their functionality is an open, empirical and historical question (Hay 2007, 2).

Ideas are often defined as causal beliefs held by individuals or adopted by institutions that influence their attitude or actions (Beland and Cox 2011, 6). The role afforded to ideas in international relations or political analysis is contested. The most controversial issue in this matter is whether ideas should be accorded a causal role that is separate from material factors. Many would argue that it is hard to prove empirically that ideas have an impact on international politics that is truly separable from that of interests (Campbell 1998; Hay 2002). Realist, materialist or rationalist explanations often see ideas as rationalizations of interests. These material interests are hypothesised to be predictable and relatively stable over time. In situations of uncertainty, however, actors can be unsure of what their interests actually are. In these situations interests needs to be explained, rather than being used as explanations (Kern 2011, 1120). Ontologically, the controversy around ideas and interests concerns the relation between the material and the ideational. Positions range from simple views such as idealism and materialism, with rigid ontological distinction between the two, and dialectical approaches that see complex interdependence of the two. The simple views posits a rigid division between the separate and opposing realms of the ideational and the material. The dialectical view posits either an ontic or an analytical duality, but importantly the ideational and the material realm are seen to have no independent existence (Hay and Gofas 2012, 14). The epistemological controversy concerns the appropriateness of the appeal to ideas in causal and constitutive logics. Within a causal logic, ideas are treated as distinct "variables" whose power can be proved only by demonstrating a mechanistic and autonomous effect of ideational factors on specific political

outcomes. Within a constitutive logic, ideas provide the discursive conditions of possibility, of a social or political event, behaviour or effect (Hay and Gofas 2012, 16).

Ideas take different forms and come at different levels of generality. Vivien Schmidt makes a distinction between cognitive and normative ideas, and claims that policy programmes and philosophies tend to contain both kinds of ideas. Cognitive ideas elucidate "*what is and what to do*", whereas normative ideas indicate "*what is good or bad about what is*" (Schmidt 2008, 306). In a much-cited example, Robert Keohane and Judith Goldstein identify three types of ideas: world views, principled beliefs and causal beliefs. At the most fundamental level, ideas "*define the universe of possibilities for action*" (Goldstein and Keohane 1993, 8). An alternative classification of ideational variables is that between beliefs, norms, cultures and ideologies (Berman 2013). A criticism that has been levelled against these kinds of conceptualizations is that by disaggregating ideational variables into several categories, one loses important insight into how the various aspects of ideas relate to each other, and how the same set of ideas fulfil different political functions. An idea might also take the form of an ideology or a policy paradigm, guiding actors in uncertain circumstances (Béland 2010). Blyth writes on this theme " *In sum, ideas allow agents to reduce uncertainty, propose a particular solution to a moment of crisis, and empower agents to resolve that crisis by constructing new institutions in line with these new ideas*" (Blyth 2002, 11). In "*Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State*" Hall poses the question of how to understand the relationship between ideas and politics, in an effort to better understand social learning as a driver of political change. According to Hall:

"*…policy makers customarily work within a framework of ideas and standards that not only specify the goals of policy and the instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing. Like a Gestalt, this framework is embedded in the very terminology through which policy makers communicate about their work, and is so influential precisely because so much of it is taken for granted and unamenable to scrutiny as a whole. I am going to call this framework a policy paradigm*" (Hall 1993, 279).

A criticism directed at Hall is of his conception of ideas as especially important in times of change or uncertainty. In Hall's view, ideas are powerful because of their stability, and change happens when an old paradigm falls, in times of crisis (Hall 1993). In other words, change happens because of replacement of ideas, rather than the ideas themselves changing. Carstensen argues for a more dynamic understanding of ideas; where ideas are seen as composed of several related elements of meaning that typically do not reach a stable equilibrium

or a final stage (Carstensen 2011, 596). In this view, ideas are less static, and different components of ideas or the relations between these components might change over time.

What brings us from ideas to discourse in this theoretical overview is the consideration of processes where ideas are conveyed, adopted and adapted, the actors who convey them, and to whom, how, where, when and why they are conveyed (Schmidt 2008, 309). In other words, the question of agency brings us to the topic of discourse. Ideas are the substantive content of discourse (Schmidt 2008). Discourse is as such a wider concept than ideas. Different approaches involve differing conceptions of what discourse is. It can be perceived as both the outcome and the medium of human action. Schmidt's perception of discourse involves both the interactive processes of conveying ideas and the sets of ideas being communicated (Fairbrass 2011; Schmidt 2008). "*Discourse serves not only to represent ideas but to exchange them through interactive processes of a.) coordination among policy actors in policy and program coordination, and b.) communication between political actors and the public in presentation, deliberation and legitimation of those ideas, against a backdrop of overarching philosophie*s" (Schmidt 2008, 322).

Conceptions of discourse range from Habermas' communicative discourse to Foucault's discourse as practice (Arts and Buizer 2009; Alvesson and Karreman 2000; Potter and Wetherell 1987; Fischer and Hajer 2005). In this thesis, discourse is viewed simply as the representation and exchange of ideas through interactive processes, in line with Schmidt's perception. It is outside of the scope of the thesis to perform a discourse analysis as it should be done, but aspects of discourse will be included. In this way, discursive institutionalism provides the dimensions for investigation, namely ideas and institutions, while the discursive aspect is weaker. The next chapter will present the methodological framework for investigating the institutional approach of the AC to sustainable development, using the policy arrangement approach as a practical implementation of discursive institutionalism.

# Chapter 5: Method and research strategy

## 5.1 Qualitative research

The research question is *"How does the Arctic Council institutionally approach sustainable development*?"* The question demands a thorough description, and calls for an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (the institutional approach), and the interplay between institutional and ideational factors. To achieve such a deep understanding, a qualitative approach is best suited. Qualitative analysis can be understood as inferences based on few dataset observations and/or causal-process observations (George and Bennett 2005; Gerring 2012). The distinction between qualitative and quantitative methods centres around prioritizing different tasks, strategies and criteria (Gerring 2012, 368). These priorities are in this thesis alluded to in the research question, even if there are several ways to answer the same question. Each research strategy is best suited to a different set of conditions, and is likely to be favoured when these conditions prevail (Yin 1981). Fundamentally, the choice of a qualitative approach can be grounded in the type of research question, but also in the approach to explanation. The goal of qualitative research is often to explain the causes of outcomes, a "causes of effects" approach to explanation. A core goal of qualitative research is the explanation of outcomes in individual causes (Mahoney and Goertz 2006, 230).

Qualitative methods are thought to meet a number of reservations concerning the uncritical use of quantification. Particularly they address the problem of inappropriately fixing meanings where these are variable and renegotiable in relation to their contexts of use (Henwood 1996, 27). In other words, qualitative methods are strong in terms of contextual sensitivity. Silverman emphasizes the ability of qualitative methods to "*use naturally occurring data to find the sequences (how) in which participants meanings (what) are deployed, and thereby establish the character of some phenomenon*" (Silverman 2006, 44). Qualitative research typically adopts a narrower scope, as it often assumed that causal heterogeneity is the norm for larger populations. Due to this, causal generalization in qualitative research is more limited than in quantitative research, focusing more on sufficient causes in specific cases than more generalizable explanations with a broader scope (Mahoney and Goertz 2006, 238). However, concrete and context-dependent knowledge is equally valuable as theory that is independent of context (Flyvbjerg 2006). The qualitative method chosen is a qualitative case study.

**5.2 Qualitative case studies and case selection.**

The types of research questions that are best addressed through case studies are questions that are explanatory questions rather than incidence questions (Yin 1981a). In other words "how-questions" are well suited for a case study strategy. A case study can be defined as "an instance of a class of events", or in other words they are "a case of something" (George and Bennett 2005, 17; Moses and Knutsen 2012, 133). "Class of events" refers to a phenomenon of scientific interest (George and Bennett 2005). In this case, the phenomenon of scientific interest has been described as an institutional approach to a policy area. The distinguishing characteristics of the case study as a research strategy is "*that it attempts to examine: a.) contemporary phenomenon in its real life context, especially when b.) the boundaries between context and phenomenon are not clearly evident*" (Yin 1981a, 59).

There are several strengths of case study methods that make them well suited for the research question. Case studies are strong in terms of achieving high levels of conceptual validity, deriving new hypotheses, and exploring causal mechanisms (George and Bennett 2005). The case study method focuses on holistic description and explanation. Berg writes that the scientific benefit of the case study method lies in its ability to open the way for discoveries. It can easily serve as the breeding ground for insights and even hypotheses that might be pursued in subsequent studies (Berg 2009, 329). Among common critiques of the case study method are case selection bias, difficulty in identifying mow much gradations on a particular variable affect the outcome in a particular case, or how much they contribute to the outcome in a class or type of classes (George and Bennett 2005, 25). Some scholars approach case studies (and especially single case studies) with scepticism, partly because studies with only a single observation is at risk of indeterminacy in the face of more than one possible explanation, and they can lead to incorrect inferences if there is measurement error (George and Bennett 2005, 32). The basis for generalization in case studies rests on analytical or theoretical representativeness, rather than a statistical basis. The generalizability of case studies can thus be increased by the strategic selection of cases. This is connected to the clarification of analytical conditions that make trustworthy interpretation and analysis possible (Andersen 2013, 33). If the goal is to achieve the greatest possible amount of information on a given phenomenon, it is not always wisest to choose a representative case or a random sample.

One way to define this case is as an intrinsic case. Intrinsic case studies are undertaken when a researcher wants to better understand a particular case. It is not primarily undertaken because it represents other cases or a specific trait, but rather the uniqueness or ordinariness of

the case makes it interesting (Berg 2009). The analysis centres on interpretation and explanation, which means that the multiple empirical variables in a case are looked at as indicators of theoretical dimensions, concepts and variables. The ambition is to analyse how complex processes creates a certain outcome, namely the "institutional approach" (Andersen 2013, 33). The format of this thesis is quite explorative. It represents a first step towards understanding these processes. The main purpose is to explore and reflect on these processes through the analytical framework of ideas and institutions.

The contribution of case studies is contingent on case selection. Theory can be important for case studies in several ways, one of which is selecting the cases to be studied (Yin 1993, 4). Often, case studies will be inductive, meaning that hypothesis and theoretical relevance emerge during the research process (Andersen 2013, 17). In the case of this thesis, the choice of case is theoretically inspired by the literature on regimes and regime effectiveness, especially on cognitive mechanisms of impact. If the AC's goal is to have an impact through what they communicate, the content of this communication, and the processes where it is formed, is important. Further, a simple motivation is again the lack of thorough knowledge about an institution that has the potential to be a key player in a region that is increasingly on the global agenda. Other than this theoretical inspiration, the study is inductive in the sense that it employs a strong focus on empirical investigation, where theoretical relevance will become more apparent during the analysis.

## 5.3 The Policy Arrangement Approach

The methodological tool chosen to explore the institutional arrangement is via the policy arrangement approach (PAA), which can be seen as a practical application of discursive institutionalism. In this framework, the PAA will serve to identify important dimensions after which to structure the empirical information. The approach is relatively new, and has only been developed in later years, theoretically and operationally. The PAA tries to find a middle ground between discourse and institutional analysis. A policy arrangement can be defined as "*the way in which a certain policy domain is temporarily shaped in terms of discourses, actors, resources and rules*" (Arts and Buizer 2009, 343). The policy arrangement and the institutional approach can be seen as overlapping concepts. I have chosen to use "institutional approach", as opposed to policy arrangement. The use of "institutional approach" is meant to capture the fact that this investigation to a large the degree about a specific institution and institution-wide policy, rules and discourse on sustainable development, whereas the PAA framework does not necessarily

concentrate on specific formal political institutions in the same way. In describing sustainable development in the Arctic Council, the Council and sustainable development will be analytically treated as if it were its own policy arrangement. One needs to keep in mind, however, that the AC is part of a broader policy arrangement on environmental issues and sustainable development, and on Arctic governance more generally. In the PAA approach, policy arrangements are described and analysed with the help of four dimensions:

1. The *rules of the game* that are currently in operation, in terms of actual rules for political and other forms of interaction, and in terms of procedures for pursuit of policy and decision making. Rules define the way in which the game should be played, and within which boundaries.

2. The *actor*s and their *coalitions* involved in the policy domain. Overall, it is assumed that a policy arrangement contains several discourses, and that these differences cause actors to group together to promote or constrain certain discourses. This dimension can alternatively be labelled *discourse coalitions.*

3. How *influence and power* is divided between these actors, where influence refers to who determines policy outcomes and how, and power refers to mobilisation, division and deployment of resources. Alternatively, this dimension can be labelled as *resources.* An important question here is which *discourse coalitions* have the ability to mobilise to achieve a certain outcome.

4. The current *policy discourses and programmes*, where *discourse* refers to the views and narratives of the actors involved, in terms of norms, values, definitions of problems and approaches to solutions, and *programmes* refers to the specific content of policy documents and measures. In other words, a discourse is defined as interpretive schemes, ranging from formal policy to popular narratives.

(Arts, Leroy, and van Tatenhove 2006, 99; Arts and Buizer 2009, 344)

The four dimensions of a policy arrangement are interwoven. The analytical elements should be treated while continuously monitoring their relationships to each other. There is no specific order in which the analysis needs to be undertaken (Arts, Leroy, and van Tatenhove 2006, 99). Change in the policy arrangement can be initiated from each of the four dimensions, and set up a chain-reaction that affects the other elements. The changes in a policy arrangement can only be understood though the interaction between actors and structure. Changes in one of the four dimensions is not only the result of strategic interaction, but of structural social and political

processes: political modernisation (Arts, Leroy, and van Tatenhove 2006, 101). This final element is not part of all PAA approaches; see for example Arts and Buizer (2009). Analytically, political modernisation is separate from the policy arrangement. For the purposes of this thesis, extensive knowledge of international politics in the Arctic is integral in contextualizing the processes where the institutional approach takes shape. Therefore, an attempt to connect the policy sector dynamics to macro-level socio-political developments is included (Arts, Leroy, and van Tatenhove 2006). This part of the analysis will focus on fundamental socioeconomic changes in the Arctic, most notably globalisation and climate change, providing critical information for understanding external forces that fundamentally affect the discussion on sustainable development in the Arctic. The PAA is somewhat underdeveloped, and it does not do too much to prescribe specific methods for how to undertake analysis on the different dimensions, other than providing thematic areas. This makes the usage of the method more challenging, but at the same time provides flexibility to adapt the framework in the way that is most useful for the data available.

## 5.4 Sources of data

One of the main challenges in this framework is the selection of data, which can have a large impact on the outcome of the analysis. The case study builds on qualitative sources of data, and the main source of data is documents. Creswell describes the data collection as a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research questions. These include locating the site, gaining access, purposefully sampling, collecting data, recoding information, resolving field issues and storing data (Creswell 2013, 146). Qualitative document analysis follows a movement between concept development, data collection, data coding and data analysis. It aims is to be analytic and systematic, without being rigid. Categories and variables guide the study, but other variables and categories are allowed to, and expected to, emerge throughout the research. A dynamic use of this approach involves "tracking discourse" or following certain issues, themes and frames over a certain period. The goal is to follow interpretations as they arise in the examination of document data (Altheide et al. 2010). The main bulk of data in this case comes from the AC's own online document archive, in forms of available statements, documents, declarations, reports, agreements, or other significant documents. The selection of data will be centred on the broad lines and thus more "general" sources of information. This is also the data that is most easily accessible. Additionally, many of the sources used are secondary sources. Where secondary sources are

used, the information is used in the structure of a different framework, and the same data might thus be viewed in a different light.

The selection of data is important to create as balanced a picture as possible of how the Council "approaches" sustainable development. On one hand, formal procedural documents, such as the "rules of procedure" of the institution, will be an integral part of the analysis. These documents are relatively straightforward to identify and access. Assessment of discourse coalitions will be done mainly indirectly, through examining previous discussions within the Arctic Council on sustainable development. Secondary sources will be an important part of the analysis here, as they are more accessible than investigating this through the Council's own sources. The same is to a certain degree true for assessment of power resources and influence. Analysing the policy discourse and programmes on sustainable development is more challenging in terms of achieving an unbiased selection of data. As the AC working groups produce significant amounts of data on the subject, it is not possible to include everything. Although sustainable development is a broad concept that reaches through all of the Arctic Councils Working Groups there is also a separate working group dedicated to the subject, the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG). This group focuses more on the human aspects of change in the Arctic, and will be central in the analysis. It is important to point out that the conclusions of the analysis come with certain reservations because of this selection. The other working groups are grounded in the environmental dimension, but they do undertake work that is central to sustainable development as a whole.

The strategy chosen here is to first assess the general sustainable development concept and establish an analytical framework, and then attempting to structure the search for data after these dimensions. In this way, the theoretical concept of sustainable development, along with the PAA framework, guides the analysis. The substantial content of sustainable development, the ideational dimension, will be considered through the framework developed in chapter 3, which will be used a guidance for the selection of data. The selection of data is theory based, where the purpose is to find examples of a theoretical construct and thereafter elaborate and examine it (Creswell 2013, 158). This way the AC is situated within a global discourse on sustainable development as well as a theoretical foundation for investigating the institutional approach. The drawback is that this might conceal important differences between the Arctic discourse and the global discourse. It is therefore important not to be rigid in the selection of data and variables that might emerge. Broad dimensions will guide the discussion, but at the same time, it is important to keep an open eye for other aspects that might become evident

during the analysis. No specific hypothesis will be developed. The analysis will attempt to trace the development of sustainable development in the Arctic Council by assessing important documents on the theme over time, and "tracking the discourse" in this way. Selection of specific data sources will be an endogenous process, developing in pace with the analysis, and building on previous work in terms of what steers data selection. Within the scope of this thesis, it is not possible to perform a discourse analysis in the right sense of the word. In some ways, it is slightly incorrect that the thesis posits "a discursive-institutionalist approach". This is not intended to signal that it is a discursive analysis, but rather that discursive institutionalism provides a general theoretical framework for the analysis. "Tracking the discourse" will be done mainly through assessing the content of important policy documents. Further, some data are in the form of expert opinions. These experts are Piotr Graczyk from the University of Tromsø, and Alaska native leader Evon Peter. The conversations took place during the Arctic Science Summit Week 2016, and cannot be called interviews as much as they are "hallway conversations". Nevertheless, the conversations provided valuable insights and will contribute to and strengthen the analysis where appropriate. The experts have given their written consent to the quotes used in the text.

## 5.5 Structure of the analysis

The empirical analysis will proceed in several chapters, structured after the policy arrangement approach. First, chapter 6 presents political modernisation processes in the Arctic, identified as climate change and globalisation. These processes have a fundamental impact on what sustainable development is in the AC. The first PAA chapter, "rules of the game" assesses rules terms of mandate, membership and organization, especially in relation the pillar of sustainable development. Following this is chapter 8 on actors and coalitions. This chapter represents an attempt to identify meaning coalitions among actors in terms of what sustainable development is, and what the Arctic Council's role in it should entail. Chapter 9 discusses power and resources, which includes an assessment of which actors or coalitions have the resources to mobilize to achieve a certain outcome in the Arctic Council. The final PAA chapter, chapter 10, is on discourse and policy programmes. Again, focus here when it comes to discourse is on written statements in important documents. Chapter 3 established dimensions of analysis, namely conceptualization, strategies, and implementation. All the PAA chapters will include analysis of the findings in relation to the other dimensions and sustainable development in the

Arctic Council as a whole. Chapter 11 will discuss, summarize and analyse the findings and analysis of the PAA analysis in light of theory.

The analysis as a whole will be quite general in nature. It will look at sustainable development in the AC along the broader lines, although in some ways it would be more illustrative to go deeper into specific sources. This is both reflective of the aim of the thesis, and a consideration of time and space. I am not on the "inside of" the institutional processes and thus do not possess in-depth knowledge about the processes. This kind of information is in some cases available on the Arctic Council website, but is hard to access in a structured way. It is important to be aware of the level of generality when performing the analysis, and being aware of what can be stated and where more knowledge is needed. The analysis bears impact of both the theoretical challenges around the theme of ideas and institutions, and the complex nature of both sustainable development and the Arctic Council. The complexity inherent in the question, along with a lack on research on the specific theme also leads to the necessity of formulating the thesis in a more exploratory light. Some of these complexities will be outlined under the following chapter on political modernisation.

## Chapter 6: Political modernisation – a changing Arctic

The Arctic Council is built on a conception of a more or less clearly defined Arctic, facing several common challenges. This is reflected in the founding document of the Arctic Council, the Ottawa Declaration. Here, the Arctic Council is established as a "high level forum" to *"Provide a means for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction between the Arctic States, with the involvement of Arctic Indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants, on common Arctic issues, in particular of issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic"* (Arctic Council 1996, 1).

This excerpt says something not only about the conception of the Arctic as a distinct region, but what the common challenges are, and about who the key actors in the region are. Before exploring further the establishment of this unique governance forum, some broad changes and challenges facing the Arctic will be detailed. These can be placed in the analytical framework under the heading of political modernisation. The concept refers to structural processes of social change and their impact on the political domain, changing interrelations

between the state, market and civil society, and on conceptions of governance. Political modernisation is a far-reaching structural phenomenon, and in principle affects all policy domains (Arts, Leroy, and van Tatenhove 2006). It is unclear what dimensions the concept entails specifically in the PAA framework. Several phases of modernisation can be identified, but these differ between different authors' frameworks. In this thesis, discussion will be centred on globalisation and climate change as processes with broad impact on the present and the future Arctic socially, politically and economically. These processes fundamentally affect the workings of the AC as an institution, especially in relation to sustainable development. Choosing to focus extensively on these global drivers of change as opposed to regional drivers has to do with the objective of the study. There is a contrast inherent in research question between the globally used sustainable development, and the regional and institutional focus on the AC. The thesis asks how a global phenomenon or concept gets its unique meaning in the Arctic Council. In this way, it is also natural to include global drivers of change and how they have an impact in the Arctic region. Common for the challenges highlighted is that they are complex, multidimensional processes and associated with significant uncertainty. They also take on a rather distinct form in the Arctic, according to many. This makes policy making in the region a challenging process, and has led to increased judicial, political and scientific discourse for a more coherent approach to Arctic challenges (Loukacheva 2013, 13).

## 6.1 Climate change

The Ottawa declaration indicated that many fundamental changes in the Arctic are connected to a changing climate and environment. The purpose here is not to discuss climate change in itself, but rather its different dimensions and characteristics that are fundamental for sustainable development in the Arctic. The UN framework convention for climate change (UNFCC) defines climate change in its article one: *"Climate change means a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods" (UNFCC Framework Convention on Climate Change 1992).*

The UNFCC makes a distinction between climate change, which can be attributed to human activity, and climate variability, which is caused by natural climatic variation. In the synthesis report on climate change from 2014, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) writes that human influence on the climate system is clear and growing, with impact across all continents and oceans. Consequences of this warming include warming of the ocean

and the atmosphere, diminished amounts of ice and snow, and a rising sea level (IPCC 2014, 40). The report further establishes that the overall risks of impacts from climate change can be reduced by reducing the rate and magnitude of climate change. In general, there are two complimentary strategies for responding to climate change, mitigation and adaption. Mitigation is *"the process of reducing emissions or enhancing sinks of greenhouse gasses so to limit future climate change"* (IPCC 2014, 76). Adaption is "*the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects, in order to lessen or avoid harm, or exploit beneficial opportunities*". Adaption is a necessary strategy because the world is already committed to a certain amount of climate change (IPCC 2007, 76; Koivurova, Keskitalo, and Bankes 2009). Keohane and Victor identify two aspects of climate change that highlight why it is challenging to handle politically. The fist aspect is what they call problem diversity. Climate change is not one single challenge, but a wide range of interrelated but distinct challenges, with their own attributes, administrative challenges, and policy areas. The numerous challenges are again associated with a parallel diversity of power, interests, information and beliefs (Keohane and Victor 2011, 13). There are a wide range of actors, with differing interests and differing levels of exposure to climate change. The IPCC points out that the risks associated with climate change are unevenly distributed, and are greatest for disadvantaged people and communities in countries at all levels of development (IPCC 2014, 64). The other challenging aspect identified by Keohane and Victor is that regulative efforts to limit the emissions of greenhouse gasses demand global cooperation, where effects are far in the future and are costs immediate (Keohane and Victor 2011, 13).

Even if emissions of greenhouse gasses mainly happen outside of the Arctic region, its effects have drastic impacts on the region. At the same time as having direct regional impacts, these regional effects also have global consequences through different feedback processes. The Arctic is therefore often identified as a "bellwether" for global implications of climate change (Corell 2006; IPCC 2007). Climatic processes that are unique to the Arctic have substantial consequences for the rest of the world. For example, the melting of sea ice in the Arctic contributes to rising sea levels globally. Further, the Arctic is an important storage of natural resources such as oil, gas and fish to the rest of the world (Hassol 2004, 200; Corell 2006). There is substantial evidence that climate in the polar regions is changing fast, including the terrestrial cryosphere, the biosphere, marine areas and fresh water areas (Hassol 2004; Douglas 2012). Global temperatures are increasing at rates unprecedented in modern history, and in the Arctic the temperature is increasing at a higher rate than the global average (Hassol 2004, 4;

Arctic Council 2015b; Ford, McDowell, and Pearce 2015). Some changes are happening faster than expected, including the reduction of summer sea ice. Sea ice, snow cover and permafrost are all decreasing. Erosion of coastal areas and more exposure to extreme weather are affecting human settlements (Hassol 2004, 8).

Climate change can have both positive and negative impacts, often depending on interests. Increasing temperatures can be damaging for both animals and humans who find their basis of existence in affected areas. At the same time, they can open possibilities for shipping, and increased access to natural resources, paving the way for economic growth. A concrete example is the reduction of sea ice. The loss of sea ice can have dramatic consequences for polar bears, ice-dependent seals, and humans who have these types of animals as an important food source. However, it is also probable that this will make natural resources more accessible, opening for increased shipping and extraction of oil. This can again affect marine habitats and indigenous peoples' health negatively (Hassol 2004, 8; Hinzman et al. 2005). Arctic communities are vulnerable to climate change, especially indigenous communities in coastal areas. Reasons for this are manifold, including geographic location, cultural connectedness to the land, and dependency on the environment for important aspects of daily life such as food or economy (IPCC 2007). Generally, indigenous peoples tend to live closer to, and be more dependent on, nature and are therefore more exposed to climate change and its consequences (Evengård, Larsen, and Paasche 2015). Arctic communities display significant adaptive capacity, despite the fact that the global discourse terms Arctic communities mainly in terms of vulnerability. The adaption challenge is formidable, but that does not mean that drivers of vulnerability and barriers to adaption cannot be overcome (Ford, McDowell, and Pearce 2015, 1046).

For indigenous peoples climate change can have a human rights dimension. The Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), for example, has actively framed climate change this way. In a statement to the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, they write: *"The impacts of climate change, caused by acts and omissions by the United States, violate the Inuit's fundamental human rights (….). These include their rights to the benefits of culture, to property, to the preservation of health, life, physical integrity, security, and a means of subsistence, and to residence, movement, and inviolability of the home"* (ICC 2005, 5). The protection of traditional lifestyle and cultural heritage plays an important role in preserving health and wellness in indigenous communities (Rautio 2015). A warmer Arctic also brings with it risks for human health such as decreased food and water security, new diseases, and a higher risk of

pollution. Melting permafrost, reduced ice cover and extreme weather such as floods and storms all affect food and water security in the Arctic. Climate change can also limit the possibilities for hunting and fishing, and make traditional "country food" less accessible and subsistence hunting and fishing harder, contributing to already existing health issues due to changing dietary habits and decreasing physical activity (Douglas 2012; White et al. 2007).

Further, climate change can have important consequences for Arctic economy. Less permafrost may affect infrastructure, maintenance and transport opportunities in fundamental ways. Climate change will also affect how Arctic oceans are managed, and have consequences for sea based production, fisheries and other marine industries. Changes in the temporal distribution of snow ice and rain can affect industries ranging from reindeer herding, tourism, shipping and hydro power (Koivurova, Keskitalo, and Bankes 2009; Evengård, Larsen, and Paasche 2015; Hinzman et al. 2005). Again, some of these changes might be positive, such as an increase in income from tourism, abundance of certain animal species, lower winter indoors heating costs and so on (Hinzman et al. 2005). As seen consequences of climate change in the Arctic are diverse, multidimensional and not solely positive or negative across the region. It is also important to note that in many cases, we do not know what the consequences are. The only thing that is more or less clear is that they are there. As the next section will show, the impact of climate change occurs in interplay with socioeconomic changes happening concurrently, such as globalisation.

## 6.2 Globalisation

*"The Arctic is changing rapidly in ways that interact and fundamentally affect the region's ecosystems and societies. Climate change is important, but it is not the only driver of rapid changes in the Arctic. In many contexts, social, political and economic drivers may be of greater importance than global warming. Social processes driving Arctic change include increasing demand for resources and need for transportation, migration, geopolitical changes, and globalisation"* (Arctic Council 2013b, 2).

This paragraph from an Arctic Council report on Arctic Resilience shows that climate change is far from the only process of change that is going on in the Arctic. Climate change has become a leading narrative for the region, but cultural, social, economic and political changes also have a big impact on lives in the Arctic (Evengård, Larsen, and Paasche 2015). Many of these changes can be traced back to globalisation. It is important to point out that political modernisation and globalisation are not the same thing. In the analytical framework, political

modernisation has been conceptualised as broad structural changes. Globalisation is seen as an important change to include. There is a basic agreement that globalisation is a phenomenon that compresses time and space and increases global interaction, but beyond this, opinions on what its components are and on its impact on communities differ (Keskitalo and Southcott 2015). Even though there are disagreements on the concept, there is little doubt that globalisation has affected the world order, with different impacts on different actors (Hough 2013). The central idea is that many contemporary challenges cannot be properly studied at the level of the nation state, but have to be seen as part of global processes. Economic, social and cultural developments can be explained by looking outside single communities or states (Sklair 2010; Nuttall and Keskitalo 2015). Nye and Keohane define globalisation based on what they call globalism. Globalism is a condition of the world that involves networks interdependence over multiple continents. This interdependence refers to situations characterised by reciprocal effects between countries or actors in different countries. Globalisation refers to a situation where globalism increases (Keohane and Nye 2000, 105). Both globalism and interdependence are multidimensional processes, and there are several distinct aspects of globalism, such as economic and political globalisation, social and cultural globalisation and environmental globalisation (Sklair 2010; Keohane and Nye 2000; Ritzer 2010). The concept of globalisation will not be discussed extensively here, and the space will rather be utilized to outline possible consequences of globalisation in the Arctic.

The possibilities, challenges and political paradoxes "produced" by globalisation has gradually materialised in the world, but are still contested. In the Arctic, these effects have come later, and some would say with more force (Hough 2013). One of the AC's most influential works, the Arctic Human Development Report II (Larsen and Fondahl 2015), has the subheading "*Regional Processes and Global Linkages*". This underlines how the changes going on in the Arctic are seen as closely connected to global processes. There are several profound impacts of globalisation in the north. Industrialisation, urbanisation and mass tourism are making their entrance into a region only sporadically touched by these phenomena, and brings with it a range of environmental and social changes, that will fundamentally alter the natural and social landscape of the high north (Hough 2013, 49). Important consequences of economic and political globalisation include increased tourism, demand for transport options, an increased presence of international or global environmental organizations, more scientific research undertaken on and in the region, and last but not least more focus on the north in world politics (Nuttall and Keskitalo 2015; Heininen 2005). Economic globalisation in the Arctic

internationalises economic decisions that have a large impact on local and sub-regional economy. Historically the north has often been viewed as internal economical peripheries, a view that has had a negative impact on diversification of the northern economy. Many see globalisation as a continuation of these processes, where important decisions are still taken outside of the region (Keskitalo and Southcott 2015, 405). As a consequence of globalisation processes, Arctic communities are linked not only to national political or economic tendencies, but also to the global economy. The gradually increasing economic integration with areas further south brings with it increased trade and financial transactions, which in time has meant an increased flow of tourists, information, capital, workers, actors and pollution (Heininen 2005, 97). This can entail new work places and new inhabitants, while at the same time demographic changes can be a strain on the existing infrastructure (Rautio 2015). Economic globalisation can have both positive and negative impacts in the Arctic. The potential for positively adapting to economic globalisation is connected to existing infrastructure and legislation (Keskitalo and Southcott 2015, 406).

Economic globalisation can also affect how the Arctic can adapt a changing climate. Trade barriers, resource management regimes, political and judicial interests, and globalisation all affect adaptation to climate change. Modern trends can affect adaptive capacity both positively and negatively. For example, increased access to new markets and technology can have a positive impact on local economy (IPCC 2007a). However, many environmental issues are strongly connected to economic development and growth, which have dominated how states prioritise both nationally and in the global market. Industrialisation and urbanisation, classical ingredients in economic development, are straining to a state's resources, and changes the use of land and the balance between the human and the natural environment (Hough 2013, 49). Closely connected to economic globalisation is political globalisation, processes that have led to Arctic actors increasingly being central actors internationally, and developing the Arctic as an international region (as for example through the Arctic Council). Increased political attention to the Arctic has mainly been connected to protection of the environment and climate change. This attention has among other things led to a political pressure on resource extraction projects in the Arctic for demonstrating a minimal impact on the environment (Keskitalo and Southcott 2015, 413). International actors, especially the European Union, also have a direct impact on Arctic politics through member state derivatives, or externally financing projects in the region through its member states. This is an example of global or international processes transferring power to the supranational or local level (Nuttall 1998b). Lassi Heinenen summarises the

impacts of political globalisation in the Arctic rather positively, arguing that political globalisation lifts the north higher on the global agenda. Positive effects include an increased geostrategic importance of the Arctic, more scientific interest in the region, added weight on political cooperative innovation, and the possibility of the Arctic becoming a model for good governance (Heininen 2005).

The effects of social and cultural globalisation in the Arctic is seen as a very complex subject, seeing that effects vary between different communities, groups and individuals. Many observers have pointed to a negative impact of globalisation on indigenous communities, especially in northern Canada, Alaska and Greenland. Cultures in the Arctic are diverse, and so are how they are affected by change. The development of hybrid or complex identities, where individuals see themselves as "a mix" or modern and traditional elements have been emphasised in research on the subject (Keskitalo and Southcott 2015, 419). Although alienation and conflict may happen, it is important to avoid seeing humans as passive recipients of social change and modernity, as victims of impersonal global processes (Nuttall and Keskitalo 2015, 180). Globalisation has affected human security in the north through a range of social and environmental changes. Increased exposure to diseases, a general transition to western (and often more unhealthy) dietary habits, mechanisation of transport, less hunting, increasing depression and suicide rates are all factors that have been connected to social and cultural globalisation in one way or another (Hough 2013).

In this chapter, broad societal changes in the Arctic were assessed. Although many changes can be identified, the focus was on climate change and globalisation. These processes are closely connected to sustainable development, and they shape the form of Arctic governance. They are both complex processes, where the impact varies over time and space, and are experienced differently between different groups. Further, they are closely connected to each other through several links. For example, the "double exposure" framework posits that the impact of climate change is shaped not only by current socioeconomic trends, but also by structural economic changes that reorganize economic activity on a global scale (O'Brien and Leichenko 2000). Common to the changes that are happening in the Arctic is that they are "systemic, non-linear, rapid, and irreversible on any human timescale" (Young 2013, 125). Another important characteristic is that these changes are tightening the links between what happens in the circumpolar north, and what happens on a global scale (Young 2013). Both globalisation and climate change have a fundamental impact on the rules of the game, which is the subject of the next chapter.

# Chapter 7: Rules of the game

Rules of the game define the boundaries of the policy area, and how interaction, pursuit of policies and decision-making should happen. The rules of the game refers to more than formal law and rule making, and is also about rules regarding access, interaction and policy styles (Arts and Buizer 2009, 345). The formal rules in the Arctic Council are to a large degree spelled out in the "Rules of Procedure". The mandate from the Ottawa declaration was broad, covering common Arctic challenges, especially protection of the environment and sustainable development. When it comes to the mandate, the founding document sets only the one limit on what cannot be treated by the AC: matters of military security. The mandate can be interpreted quite broadly even if it centres on environmental issues (Arctic Council 1996; Pedersen 2012; Hønneland and Stokke 2007). The Arctic Council was to oversee and coordinate programmes and activities as established under the AEPS, promote information education and interest in the Arctic region, and develop a programme for sustainable development (Arctic Council 1996).

The formal rules of what can be treated are quite broad, and the working areas have over the years gradually expanded. There is, however, a sense that the Arctic Council mainly deals with "low hanging fruit", meaning issues that are easily identified and dealt with by the member states. Several contentious issues still lay under the surface of debate, such as fisheries or marine mammal products (Charron 2015, 86; Bloom 1999; Stokke 2007c; Graczyk 2012; Nilsson 2009). There is no guarantee that the AC can or will handle more contentious issues that would require compromising or substantially increased use of state resources. Andrea Charron claims, for example, that the AC can gather information and reach consensus on status quo issues but it cannot govern (Charron 2015, 86). There exists a set of informal rules when it comes to what can be tackled in the institution and in what ways it can be tackled. The specifics of these informal rules might change over time, even if the consensus principle in some ways signals that the institution was not intended to deal with contentious issues. Informal rules on the mandate of the institution may influence nuances of cases that are being treated as well, such as for example the nuances of what sustainable development means in the Artic Council. Certain conceptions of sustainable development are more "problematic" or challenging than others, and might therefore have a lesser chance of being substantially treated or discussed within the framework of the Arctic Council. On the other hand, the experience in cooperating on "low hanging fruit" issues might improve the climate for cooperation, leading to gradually

increasing expansion of the mandate also informally. This can be exemplified by the binding agreements negotiated under the auspices of the Council.

Membership in the Council was reserved for the eight Arctic states (the US, Canada, Denmark /Greenland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Russia), and all decisions were to be taken by consensus between all member states, after full consultation of permanent participants. Because the Council was not established by a treaty, but rather as a forum, it cannot enter into legally binding decisions (Pedersen 2012). The Council was never formed to be an operational international organization. According to North, "*a number of specific measures were taken from the outset to inhibit any growth in its own institutional identity or autonomy*" (Nord 2016, 35). There were no permanent budget or employees. During the 20 years since its establishment, the institution has acquired more of the features one would associate with a traditional international organization, such as a standing secretariat (Sellheim 2012; Nord 2016). Still, the most fundamental "rule of the game" is still that all decisions are taken by full consensus from all of the member states and there is little institutional autonomy. The Arctic Council is a product of the Arctic states and only they may assign it the role that they consider appropriate (Graczyk 2012, 271).

The "permanent participant" category was established to secure full consultation and active participation for indigenous groups (Arctic Council 1996). The "upgrade" in formal status for indigenous organizations was perhaps the most marked change in the transition process from AEPS to the Arctic Council (Kao, Pearre, and Firestone 2012). Importantly this category was separated from that of observers, and designed to provide full consultation and active participation for Arctic Indigenous Representatives (Koivurova and Heinämäki 2006; Arctic Council 1996). Three indigenous organizations, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), the Saami Council, and the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples in the North (RAIPON) were given the role of permanent participants. Other indigenous organizations could achieve the status if they fulfilled the criteria of the Arctic Council. The AEPS had also established a secretariat for indigenous peoples, which would eventually become the Arctic Council IPS, the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat (Koivurova and VanderZwaag 2007, 127). Today the six indigenous organizations are permanent participants in the Arctic Council [3](Arctic Council 2016a).

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[3] Aleut International Association (AIA), Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC), Gwich'in Council International (GCI) Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) , Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), and Saami Council (SC) (Arctic Council 2016a). For a full overview of actors in the Arctic Council, see appendix B.

Alaska native leader Evon Peter[4] said during the Arctic Science Summit Week that although indigenous peoples are not given equal authority, the Arctic Council was and is more progressive on this issue than other international institutional arrangements. He emphasized that: "*if we are not at the table we are not exercising our autonomy*". Given the fundamental consensus principle in the Arctic Council, Peter said that the indigenous peoples have a "de facto" vote, a ground breaking development in the international policy area. It can be argued that the "full consultation" of indigenous peoples carries added meaning and importance in the Arctic Council as opposed to other places, due to the consensus principle. This right can be seen as something close to a de facto veto power should all permanent participants reject a certain proposal (Koivurova and Heinämäki 2006, 104). A second rule of the game when it comes to membership therefore concerns the unique status of indigenous peoples or permanent participants. It is however important to note that this did not happen in a vacuum. The claims of indigenous organizations have been advanced in the post-war era, internationally and domestically. Work through the UN has legitimized indigenous claims (Turpel 1992). Further, it is important to say although the authority given is broader than in other settings, it does not necessarily represent an arrangement that is fair in the views of all actors. The inclusion also provides certain reservations and boundaries, as member states and the ministerial meeting is still the only group with voting power. This will be further commented on under the section on power relations.

Further, a category for observers was established. This was open to non-Arctic states, global or regional intergovernmental organizations or non-governmental organizations that the Council believed could contribute to their work (Kao, Pearre, and Firestone 2012; Arctic Council 1996). Observers were to be invited to the meetings of the Arctic Council and its subsidiary bodies (Bloom 1999). Today, twelve non-Arctic countries, nine inter-governmental or interparliamentary organizations and eleven non-governmental organizations are a part of the Arctic Council[5] (Arctic Council 2016c). Due to the increasing interest in observer status, the question of the role of observers and access to this role have been central in the debate on institutional reform in the Arctic Council. Solving this in a way that is satisfactory to all actors have proved to be a challenge (Graczyk and Koivurova 2014). Some Arctic states have been reluctant to incorporate new actors, fearing that new and powerful actors can weaken the

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[4] Personal conversation and presentation. Tuesday, March 10th 2016. Fairbanks, Alaska. Presentation "Perspective from a Circumpolar Village". Reported with written consent via email.

[5] See appendix B for a full overview of actors in the Arctic Council.

consensus on the guiding principles of the organization, and fearing that that observers can start to interfere too much with the work of the Council if they outnumber member states and permanent participants. This concern is shared by some permanent participants who fear outside actors' lack of understanding and respect for traditional culture and traditions, for example a European Union that has banned seal products (Graczyk and Koivurova 2014, 329). From the point of view of non-Arctic actors, the observer role can be seen as too symbolic compared to their abilities and interests. Criticism has been directed towards the AC for being an exclusive club for defending the interests of the Arctic states (Graczyk and Koivurova 2014, 230). Criteria for observer status were revised in Nuuk in 2011. The guiding principle is still that the member states decide via consensus all admissions of observers. For the future legitimacy of the Council, it is critical that it manages to balance the interests of the member states and the observers while at the same time managing outside actors effectively (Dodds 2013). In many ways, the rules of the game when it comes to observers are still a bit unclear. It is apparent that observers are weaker actors in the Arctic Council than member states and permanent participants. They are "in the game" at the discretion of the member states and only as long as they "*support the objectives of the Artic Council*" (Arctic Council 2016c). The thesis will focus on member states and permanent participants as the most important actors in the Arctic Council, mostly due to space considerations. Having discussed groups that are represented, now for a short comment on those who are not. Northerners as a group apart from indigenous peoples are represented in the Council only through their government. An objection to the Arctic Council membership rules is that far-removed national governments cannot be representative of all Arctic inhabitants (Keskitalo 2007).

At the first ministerial meeting in Iqaluit, Canada, the Council adopted their first "Rules of Procedure", where the details of how the Council and its different groups were to function were fleshed out. These rules established the practice with ministerial meetings biannually, and described how these were to be organized. They also clarified the practice of rotating the chairmanship of the Arctic Council biannually between the states, and clarified what the responsibilities of the chair were. Meetings between senior arctic officials (SAOs), Arctic representatives appointed by each state, were to be held between the ministerial meetings to focus and organize the activities of the Council. SAOs were also responsible for coordinating their state's work and manage their interests in the Arctic Council (Koivurova and VanderZwaag 2007; Arctic Council 2013). The daily work of the AC happens in the six working groups. The working groups are composed of representatives at expert level from

sectoral ministries, government agencies, and researchers (Arctic Council 2015c). The working groups engage in scientific studies concerning the Arctic. The working groups are; ACAP (Arctic Contaminants Action Programme), AMAP (Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme), CAFF (Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna), EPPR (Emergency Prevention Preparedness and Response), PAME (Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment) and SDWG (Sustainable development Working Group) (Arctic Council 2015c). *Figure 3* shows a simplified overview of the organizational structure of the Arctic Council. As the figure illustrates information-flow between the organizational levels goes both ways, with the senior arctic officials playing an important role as a focal point for Council activities (Pedersen 2012). Not included in the figure are expert groups and task forces, which are a part of the structure but do not play a vital role in concern to the theme of this thesis. The ministerial meeting is crucial in mandating the senior arctic officials. All activities in the Arctic Council and subsidiary bodies must be mandated at the biannual ministerial meeting. Mandated activities can be worked on and implemented by SAOs. In the absence of such a mandate, new proposals can be worked on by SAOs for submission to the ministers, but the SAOs cannot implement a plan on their own (Haavisto 2001). In the case of the SDWG, an exception is made, mandating the SAOs to consider, mandate and supervise projects (Arctic Council 2006).
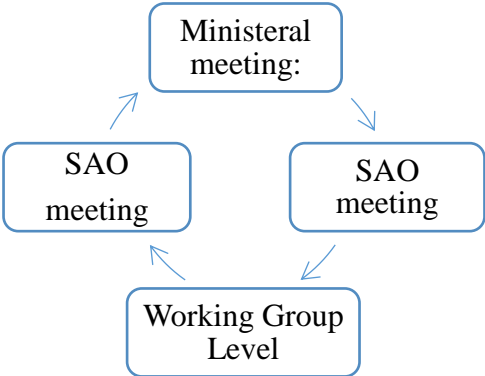


*Figure 3: Arctic Council Organizational Structure*

Piotr Graczyk said during the ASSW 2016 that he perceived the Arctic Council as a "three level consensus", in a mainly "bottom up" institution[6]. The ministerial meeting and the ministerial declarations produced there show how the ministers would like the Council to evolve (Rottem 2015, 51). These declarations are often quite general, and leave room for interpretations and

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[6] Conversation, during the Model Arctic Council. March 10th 2016, Fairbanks, Alaska. Reported with written consent via email.

implementations. In the Rules of Procedure SAOs are tasked with both receiving and discussing reports from working groups, and reviewing and making proposals to the Arctic Council based on proposals from Arctic states or permanent participants with respect to proposed cooperative activities (Arctic Council 2013). In these processes, there is room for SAOs to interpret the guidance that is given from the ministerial meeting. Proposals for projects may come from member states or permanent participants, but working groups can also themselves put forward project proposals that are sent to SAOs for revision or forwarding to the ministerial meeting (Nilsson 2012). According to Graczyk and Koivurova, virtually all projects and actions are initiated at the working level, primarily within the working groups. When consensus is reached this is conveyed upwards to the SAO level who further discuss and appraise the project in light of national interest. Consensus reached at SAO level is thereafter transferred to the ministerial level. At all stages, the permanent participants are consulted on all issues discussed (Graczyk and Koivurova 2015, 309). The technical and research work is done in the working groups. This involves producing scientific knowledge, identifying and analysing Arctic challenges. The working groups work under two year plans that are discussed by the SAOs and approved by the ministers (Rottem 2015; Conley and Melino 2016). Arguably, there is much autonomy in executing these investigations in terms of what thematic areas to focus on, how to interpret guidelines from above levels and so on. The working groups have been given considerable technical freedom, and instructions from SAOs are often very general (making the processes perhaps more bottom-up than intended). On the other hand concerns have been raised in working groups that there is too much political oversight, and that finding the appropriate balance in the science policy interface has been challenging (Conley and Melino 2016; Riksrevisjonen 2015).

This section will look closer at how the Arctic Council the "rules of the game" in regards to one of the Council's two founding "pillars". Discussion on the substantial content of the concept will come later, while this concerns the institutional arrangement around the specific theme. As previously mentioned, the pillar of sustainable development was introduced in the environmental framework of the AEPS in the process that established the Arctic Council in 1996. Sustainable development thus emerged as one of the central themes on the agenda. In particular, the question of whether the working group on sustainable development (SDWG) should have special status was discussed (Tennberg 2012, 124). The decision has to do with making clear the relationship between environmental protection and sustainable development. Several commentators have noted that the two concepts in reality can be both overlapping and

competing and that the decision to separate these during the formation process was a mistake (Young 2000, 17; Graczyk 2012; Haavisto 2001). The first AC ministerial meeting in Iqaluit in 1998 established the working group on sustainable development (the SDWG). In the Iqaluit declaration the Ministers agreed to:

"*Establish the Sustainable development Program, and welcome Sustainable Development Proposals from Arctic States and Permanent Participant in the areas of (…...) we direct the SAOs to guide the work on proposals in these areas and encourage that funding be sought so that projects can be initiated as soon as possible before the next ministerial meeting"* (Arctic Council 1998a, 2).

Further, paragraph 9 established the SDWG and its mandate.

*"Establish a Sustainable Development Working Group comprised of SAOs and Permanent Participants, or their designated representatives (....) request that it facilitate completion of work on sustainable development proposals identified above, propose possible priority areas in the further development of the sustainable development program and review specific proposals and prepare them for approval by the ministers*" (Arctic Council 1998a, 2).

The sustainable development program was to consist of a series of specific programmes to be coordinated by the SAOs. To serve as a focal point for these discussions the SDWG was established. With these decisions, sustainable development was thematically separated from environmental protection, although cooperation between working groups was encouraged. Leaders in working groups such as CAFF and AMAP pointed out that much of what they did was related to sustainable development. However, the workings of these groups do not address fundamental issues in terms of the promotion of human welfare in the north. Still, some have argued that there is a need for revision of the internal division of labour (Young 2000, 17). Further, critics have claimed that the separation between the two pillars promoted the prioritisation of protection of the environment, as opposed to the arguably more comprehensive and politically challenging sustainable development. Scrivener (quoted in Tennberg 2000, 110) argued that giving working group status to the task force on sustainable development was in some ways a win for environmentalism, making the survival of the pure environmental agenda for the Arctic possible. These issues are likely to be connected to the issue of clearly defining what sustainable development entails, and what it priorities are. This problem is not necessarily unique to the Arctic Council. However, due to the AC institutional structure it can become especially challenging. Many aspects of sustainability are for instance discussed in working groups separate from the SDWG, but this does not necessarily mean that they are less important

aspects of sustainable development. Some have viewed the SDWG as a "catch all" group for crosscutting issues that do not always fit under the group's current configuration (Conley and Melino 2016, 13). Generally the mandates of the working groups are somewhat overlapping. An example is the PAME working group which is spatially concerned with marine issues, and easily overlaps with working groups that are not geographically limited (Nilsson 2012, 211).

Given the autonomy of the working groups discussed above, it can be argued that the SDWG to a large degree influences how sustainable development in the Arctic Council is perceived. The working group is today perhaps one of the most vibrant working groups because it is here the SAOs are most directly involved in its workings. In this way, the group can also be viewed as more politicised than the other working groups. Communication between the working groups have been an ongoing institutional challenge, perhaps distorting the process of obtaining a holistic approach to sustainability (Riksrevisjonen 2015). Another challenge in terms in forming a coherent approach to sustainable development is the development of an approach that is acceptable for all actors. The next chapter will outline possible discourse coalitions in the Arctic Council on sustainable development.

# Chapter 8: Actors and coalitions

It is assumed in the PAA framework that a policy arrangement contains one or more discourses, which differ and may compete. This causes actors to group together in coalitions to enhance certain discourses and constrain others. Therefore, this dimension may also be termed discourse coalitions (Arts and Buizer 2009). "Rules of the game", outlined three main groups of actors, member states, permanent participant and observers. These actors participate at three levels: the ministerial meeting, the SAO meetings and at the working groups. This discussion will focus on member states and permanent participants. The central ambition here is to examine possible coalitions on the theme of sustainable development. This can be done by looking into several related discussions, such as contentions over the mandate of the Council both under the establishment of the Council and during its lifetime. This discussion will not include an in depth analysis of the different actors perceptions of sustainable development, but try to outline which actors are perhaps more likely to group together when it comes to these issues, through looking at disagreements and discussions of the past.

Starting off, the story continues of the establishment of the Arctic Council, and the inclusion of sustainable development as a founding "pillar". The AEPS initiative had previously established a Task force on Sustainable Development and Utilization (TFSDU). The task force was established partly because of pressure from the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), who had criticised the AEPS for being too narrowly focused on conservation issues and argued that it should expand its concerns by looking into sustainable development (Koivurova and Hasanat 2009; Huebert 1998, 50). During the AC negotiations, a topic of discussion was how to incorporate sustainable development institutionally, and whether to give working group status to the TFSDU. Partly, these disagreements were rooted in different perceptions of sustainable development and its content, importance or implications, as well as disagreements over the role of the Council. Canada and the ICC played key roles in the TFSDU, and both were essential in pushing for the inclusion of sustainable development and especially the human dimension of it in the establishment of the Arctic Council (Huebert 1998; Bloom 1999). Keskitalo illustrates how the main conflicts in the Arctic region-building process centred on how to define sustainable development, and thereby a focus for the Council and the Arctic region, beyond the environmental concerns. The main confrontation, according to Keskitalo, was between the Canadian-driven (with Canada and the ICC as the main actors) sustainable development interpretation with a focus on indigenous peoples, and the American conservation-focused view of environmental protection. The increase in indigenous participation was by no means a certain outcome of the negotiations leading up to the establishment of the Council. The Canadian delegation worked extensively with leaders from the ICC to lobby for meaningful indigenous participation (Wilson and Øverland 2007; Keskitalo 2004; Koivurova 2010). The US, with concurrence from Russia, had since the outset worked to confine the agenda to strictly environmental protection, as opposed to broader questions of sustainable development. Russia seemed to accept the idea of indigenous participation, while the US was more reluctant (Young 2009, 76; Wilson and Øverland 2007). The other member states placed somewhere between these conflicting views, depending somewhat on policy area, and sometimes attempted to seek compromises between the two (Keskitalo 2004). The question of primacy for either environmental protection or sustainable development went largely unresolved, something that can be seen in how the Council came to be shaped and how it treats sustainable development today. Some argue that the forerunner, TFSDU, had in its agenda more high level and controversial issues than the SDWG has largely dealt with (Keskitalo 2004; Koivurova 2010). Without going deeper into these discussions, it could be hypothesized that these meaning coalitions still prevail to some extent. Pedersen identifies the debate preceding the creation of

the Council as the first of three determining debates of the Arctic Council at the ministerial level (Pedersen 2012).

The Arctic 5, Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Russia, Norway and the US are the five littoral states to the Arctic Ocean. The A5 are increasingly appearing as an alternative to the Arctic Council, especially when holding an Arctic Ocean Conference, in Ilulissat in 2008 (Pedersen 2012). In the Ilulissat declaration, the five states declared that: "*The Arctic Ocean stands at the threshold of significant changes (...) By virtue of their sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in large areas of the Arctic Ocean the five coastal states are in a unique position to address these possibilities and challenges*" (*The Ilulissat Declaration* 2008, 1). Young writes that because the Arctic was to a substantial degree decoupled from global politics and economics during the time of inception, a number of non-state actors experienced considerable freedom to pursue their own agendas during this time. In light of the current wave of interest in the Arctic, and the increasing interconnections between the Arctic and the global world, this informal consensus has been shaken (Young 2010, 170). In the Ilulissat declaration, the five Arctic coastal states asserted themselves as occupying a unique position to address issues relating to the Arctic Ocean. The A5 met again in Canada in 2010. Young further writes that "*needless to say, neither the other members of the Arctic Council (Finland, Iceland, and Sweden) nor the Permanent Participants are happy about this development*" (Young 2010, 170). Especially Iceland has strongly opposed the idea, as it is not recognized as one of the Arctic littoral states despite being the only Arctic state situated entirely within the Arctic region. Iceland also claims that the coalition weakens the Arctic council and challenges the cooperative environment in the region (Offerdal 2014, 86). These developments sparked a debate about "the A5 vs. the A8", and an eventual marginalization of the Arctic Council. Pedersen identifies this as the second determining debate of the Council (Pedersen 2012). The debate related more to the role of the Council, and what forums were appropriate for discussing different matters than to sustainable development directly. As such it is more related to political and governance structures, than to sustainable development per se. Still, it is not impossible that these five states might come to represent a meaning coalition on sustainable development, and more specifically the appropriate forums for sustainable management of the Arctic Ocean. It is also noteworthy that many of those who were eager to limit the Arctic Council mandate in the debates leading up to 1996, such as the US, now were keen to explore the alternative of the A5. Canada, however, pointed to the risks of excluding the other three states, and indigenous peoples (Pedersen 2012, 150). The "positioning" from the A5 that the Ilulissat declaration represented

perhaps most of all a sign of increased interest in the Arctic, and that the Arctic is no longer as "decoupled" from global politics. Traces of meaning coalitions from 1996 could still be seen around 2008, with Canada advocating for a broad Council and the US being more open towards alternative forums.

Pedersen, however, identifies a shift in 2009. His third identified debate followed a political shift in Washington where the US foreign policy favoured strengthening the Council over the A5, while Canada at this point had become the strongest advocate for the A5. Pedersen writes that Russia had adopted a middle-ground position arguing that the A5 should seize a leading role within the Council and keep it exclusive. Denmark seemed increasingly uncomfortable with the exclusion in the A5 vs the A8 and indigenous peoples, while Norway for some time had argued for a more politically potent Council (Pedersen 2012, 153). Pedersen writes:

*"The shifts in foreign policies from the second to the third debate illustrate why it is problematic to generalize on international regime dynamics and state behaviour. While the Arctic Council in 2008 faced potential marginalization amid the emergence of a new Arctic forum, foreign policy U-turns in the following years ended up strengthening the Arctic Council. These policy shifts and the uncertainty that followed underline that the Arctic Council has no predetermined destiny, although it adds empirical evidence to those who assert that established international regimes die hard"* (Pedersen 2012, 153).

Meaning coalitions on the role of the Council are not stable, and in this case dependent on shifts in foreign policy. Although Pedersen assesses debates over the role of the Council, this is likely to be true for views on sustainable development as well. The analysis has illustrated several possible coalitions among member states that will be considered during the rest of the analysis. However, member states are not the only actors that should be treated here.

One of the most striking features of the Arctic Council cooperation is the emergence of a range of non-state actors as important players, and increased visibility in the institution for civil society in general. The most important point in case is the role of indigenous peoples as permanent participants (Young 2009; Young 2010). As noted, the PP status was a development that was ground breaking and set an important precedent in the Arctic international cooperation, but also beyond it. Young writes that the development of Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs), would not have taken place without the introduction of the formal status and the encouragement this innovation gave (Young 2005; Young 2010). Indigenous peoples are often viewed as especially vulnerable to climate change because of close connection culturally and

traditionally to the land. It can therefore be interesting to investigate how the permanent participants have perceived sustainable development in the Arctic Council, or if they can be said to constitute a form of meaning coalition of their own. Grouping together might be a strategic choice for the PPs. When they do not have a formal vote, their influence is likely to be stronger if they group together. In 1993, under the AEPS, an Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat (IPS) was established to assist indigenous groups in their participation in the AEPS, an arrangement that continued into the Arctic Council. The role of the secretariat was to facilitate dialogue between the organizations and the government bodies of the Council member states (Bloom 1999; Tennberg 2000). When looking into permanent participants as a meaning coalition, it is important to keep in mind that they are not a homogenous group of organizations with interests that always coincide. On the contrary, national borders still carry significant weight in dividing indigenous populations. The role attached to indigenous populations varies across the member states. The role for Alaskan indigenous peoples or for Saami in EU member states Sweden and Finland is for example differently oriented than for the Canadian indigenous peoples (Heininen and Nicol 2007, 159).

Heininen and Nicol argue that since most indigenous peoples are minorities within their own countries, regionalism has offered indigenous populations to play a greater role as transnational actors (Heininen and Nicol 2007, 160). As non-state actors, the indigenous organizations have stressed the need to implement appropriate resource management strategies and strategies for environmental protection. They often advance a claim that indigenous knowledge offers an alternative to scientific or technological approaches to management of the environment. Indigenous knowledge is often defined as knowledge unique to a culture or tradition, and the indigenous organizations have argued that effective and sustainable management of the Arctic environment can only happen if policy makers take note of the knowledge and management strategies of locals (Nuttall 2000, 626). For the indigenous organizations, sustainable and equitable development includes subsistence hunting, renewable resource harvesting, exclusive and collective rights to lands and resources for subsistence, and involvement in all decision-making processes concerning the management, research and allocation of resources (Tennberg 2000, 94). Arctic indigenous peoples are becoming recognized as holders of specialized knowledge, which is crucial for identifying and understanding local manifestations of environmental change. In many ways, they are becoming both representations and representatives of global climate change (Martello 2008, 353).

The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) is arguably one of the most important reports on Arctic climate change. During the ACIA process, permanent participants strongly advocated the involvement of indigenous peoples, both in the oversight and running of the assessment process, as well as in the development of it technical content. Assessment leaders were highly supportive of indigenous involvement (Martello 2008, 360). In this process, PPs also joined together to issue PP advice on communication of the results of the ACIA, where they emphasized the involvement of indigenous peoples in communicating the results to governments, industry and the public but also the importance of taking steps to communicate the results of ACIA to Arctic indigenous peoples (Arctic Council 2004c). A central issue for permanent participants in the Arctic Council has been the use of traditional and local knowledge (TLK). Since the founding of the Arctic Council, the question of how to best incorporate TLK held by the indigenous peoples of the Arctic has been a topic of discussion and effort. This has for example resulted in a list of recommendations for the integration of TLK into the work of the Arctic Council. In this document, it was recommended that the Council should among other things: *"a.) at the outset of a project, incorporate traditional and local knowledge (TLK) considerations into WG proposal templates and/or work plans so that every project proposal or outline describes how it will use TLK in the project, if applicable. If TLK is not applicable, a section of the project proposal or outline must explain why...."* (SDWG 2015, 1).

In this paragraph it is quite explicitly stated that indigenous peoples are holders of knowledge and insights that is different from the perspectives of other actors (they do not necessarily have the same knowledge, but knowledge of a different kind), and that this type of knowledge should be integrated in Arctic Council projects. When it comes to specifics of what sustainable development should mean in this coalition it is harder to group the PPs together as one. As already emphasized, permanent participants are not a homogenous group with homogenous goals and priorities. One aspect that many seem to emphasize is the integration of TLK, as well as representation at all levels. This chapter has addressed possible meaning coalitions in the Council, but emphasized their uncertain and temporary nature. The next chapter will discuss power and influence in light of these findings. The assessment of power and influence is seen in the light of discourse coalitions.

## Chapter 9: Power and influence

In this chapter, analysing power and influence is based on assessing which discourse coalitions have the ability to mobilise to achieve a certain outcome. Power is simply conceptualized as the ability to mobilize resources in social systems to achieve preferred outcomes, and might take various forms. It is assumed that discourse coalitions strive for hegemony in policy arrangements in order to achieve their preferred outcomes (Arts and Buizer 2009, 343). In this context, outcomes would mainly be the undertaking of scientific project, setting the agenda or determining the content of projects. Only on very rare occasions would outcomes include binding agreements or policy changes for states. What the outcome is has implications for what means are important to get there, especially in an institutional structure such as the Arctic Council. The assessment of power and resources should ideally be tightly connected to discourse coalitions and analysing the power relations between different coalitions. However, the previous chapter showed that there is significant uncertainty connected to discourse coalitions in this case, and that discourse coalitions are not necessarily stable. The analysis will therefore be more general, focusing on the roles different actors have taken on in the Council, as well as power in soft-law institutions and in the Arctic Council. The chapter will first assess general literature on power relations in the Arctic, before turning to mechanisms of power and influence that are more specific to the Arctic Council.

As already discussed, the end of the Cold War dramatically altered geopolitical relationships in the circumpolar north. A part of this change included the establishment of a regionalised governance structure (the AC) stressing common issues faced by human populations in the area, regardless of ethnic or national origin. The new northern discourses stress regional cooperation, human security and sustainable development (Heininen and Nicol 2007, 133). As demonstrated, attention towards the Arctic is increasing, something that can affect power structures in a fundamental way. At the turn of the millennium, the North figured prominently in only the Norwegian and Russian foreign policies. By the end of the 2000s this had changed, as it was more evident that the Arctic was facing dramatic changes (Offerdal 2014, 74). As interest in the Arctic is increasing, power structures and discourse coalitions may be changing too. For example, Pedersen described the Washington policy shift from 2009 where foreign policy U-turns in Canada and the US in relation to the Arctic Council and the A5 illustrated how the role of the Council is open to change depending on actors' interests and ideas (Pedersen 2012). As foreign policy positions and discourse changes, so might also power

within the Arctic Council. Generally, the debates over the role of the Council that Pedersen identified, as well as the previous chapter on discourse coalitions, showed that power relations between actors in the Arctic Council can to a large degree be affected by the changing perceptions of actors involved or wishing to be involved. In many cases, power in the Arctic Council is hard to talk about in a language of stability, due to an uncertain and changing context, combined with an institution that to a very large degree only assumes the role that actors assign to it. The Council thus has the potential to be an important arena for super powers such as the US or Russia, while at the same time, it can be viewed as unimportant by these actors, and smaller states and different perspectives may be allowed to dominate. Further, increasing interest in the Arctic might change power relations between broader groups of actors, such as states, civil society, permanent participants and non-Arctic actors.

When it comes to who ultimately has control of the Arctic, this was clearly addressed by the A5 in the Ilulissat declaration of 2008. The state and the sovereign territory that supports it was in control, and this control was grounded in and established by law. The declaration was however, subject to a backlash due to its restrictive and state-centred nature, suggesting that successful Arctic governance would need to take a less exclusionary approach (Steinberg, Tasch and Gerhardt 2015, 163). The informal consensus where non-state actors had considerable freedom to pursue their agendas had been shaken (Young 2010). The demonstration of state control may also serve to problematize the role of indigenous peoples and their ultimate influence or power in the Council. Although their institutional position is ground breaking in relation to institutional space for indigenous peoples elsewhere, it is more fragile than that of states. Their power and influence could be challenged by the limitations of it set by states, by increasing attention from outside actors, or by lack of resources. Further, the emerging possibility of a coalition between the A5 might marginalize some of the Arctic states themselves, the smaller and non-littoral states Sweden, Iceland and Finland, might see their position in the Arctic as weakened by the emergence of alternative forums for Arctic governance. Generally, one might say that as the Arctic is viewed as increasingly important, it might be harder for smaller actors with less resources to hold on to the power and influence they enjoyed when the Arctic was not on the global agenda to the same degree. New powers are also seeking access to the AC, among others China, the EU, Italy, Japan and South Korea. Arctic states have been somewhat reluctant to engage with outside actors (Graczyk and Koivurova 2014). From the non-Arctic actors' perspective, the observer role is seen as too symbolic when compared to these actors' aspirations or interests in the region, and China and

France have for example considered using other forums for discussing their Arctic interests (Graczyk and Koivurova 2014; Lanteigne 2016). The power of these actors or the impacts of these players entering the arena will not be thoroughly discussed here. Suffice to say; the Arctic Council needs to find a balance in the inclusion of Arctic and non-Arctic perspectives, and the establishment of this balance might change power structures in the Arctic.

All the time that power is something that takes a unique form in the Arctic Council, it cannot be overlooked that the institution includes actors with significant power globally, and that an assessment of power in the Arctic Council cannot be done without including an overview of Arctic geopolitics and international relations. The ability to mobilise within the soft power AC can also be affected by hard power capabilities such as military power or economic power, which will influence the degree to which a state is seen as powerful also in other arenas. Power capabilities in the Arctic are often discussed in relation to the issue of stability, especially in light of the changes the Arctic region is undergoing. Conceptions of what constitutes power and what makes for stability will differ under different paradigms or sets of ideas. Oran Young writes that the implications of the transformative change the Arctic is undergoing, where drastic change is coupled with high uncertainty, will be conceived of differently depending on which conceptual framework or paradigm is employed to understand these changes (Young 2013).

In the Arctic Council, the US and Russia merit the label of "great powers". Although the initiatives for Arctic cooperation have invariably come from smaller states, they would not succeed without the support of these powers (Stokke and Hønneland 2007). Several authors focus on the issue of sovereignty, or of order and stability in the Arctic. The capabilities usually deemed as most important in this context include military or economic capacity, often referred to as hard power. Although it is common to view the region in terms of hard power, it is important to place these hard power considerations in context. Security conditions in the Arctic are far from "typical" conditions, especially due to geographic and demographic conditions (Wegge 2011; Lanteigne 2016). Instead of evaluating the general power capabilities, it is in this context more useful to look at the roles different actors have assumed in the Arctic. This better illustrates which actors have been willing to employ power resources and focus towards the Arctic, and thus increases our understanding of Arctic power structures as opposed to more general power relations between the actors.

Stokke and Hønneland argue that especially Russia plays a central role in Arctic politics. It was the Gorbachev-initiative that made increased East-West cooperation in the Arctic possible in the first place, and subsequent region building based on institutions has been driven

by a desire to incorporate Russia in cooperation with its western neighbours (Stokke and Hønneland 2007, 7). Charron et.al write, using structural theory as a lens, that the assumed Arctic hegemon is usually the US. It is so by reference to the distribution of capabilities between the states, tradition, military might and political prowess; and the way that the US dominates the world market, most political institutions, and the calculus of many states in deciding their foreign policies (Charron et.al 2012, 39). However, these authors also point to Russia as the regional hegemon. They write that in contrast to the US, Russia declared its interest in the Arctic "categorically and unequivocally". Today, they claim, Russia is the Arctic hegemon not only in terms of military power, but also in terms of economic and political potential (Charron et.al 2012, 43). In later years, Russia has sought to strengthen both land forces and naval presence in the Arctic, and has largely been the subject of debates focused on the militarisation of the Arctic (Lanteigne 2016). Although Russian leadership assertively promotes Russian sovereignty, and has appeared willing to use military solutions to political problems, Russian interest in the Arctic takes a different form. In many cases, Russia has been more of a team player in the Arctic than the US (Roberts 2015, 112).

When it comes to the US, it has historically displayed little interest in the Arctic, and has been termed by some as "the reluctant Arctic power". However, the US has also taken steps, in recent years, to redefine its Arctic interests, and strengthen military and homeland security capabilities in the region. Despite this increasing interest, the Arctic is hardly on top of Washington's foreign policy agenda. Alaska constitutes a relatively small share of American territory, especially compared to Canada and Russia, and the North has not been used for identity building purposes, as it has been in the two other states (Åtland 2014). In its Arctic strategies, the US focuses on economic and social development in Alaska and on security in the larger international setting (Offerdal 2014, 78). In Canada, the North has traditionally been present in the national identity as the "true North strong and free". Its Arctic rhetoric has always been geared largely towards the domestic audience. The issue that attracts most attention in its foreign policy is the defence of the country's sovereignty in the region, but it also emphasizes multilateral and bilateral cooperation (Offerdal 2014, 76). It is also important to note that although some of the world's largest powers are also Arctic states, smaller states can be powerful in a more closely defined sense and in the Arctic context. Of the Scandinavian countries, Denmark/Greenland is one of the main actors in the Arctic. Norway in 2005 declared the high north as its most important strategic priority in the years ahead and continues to give it high priority. Sweden on the other hand has been among the least prominent Arctic states

(Offerdal 2014). Finland was the initiator of the AEPS, and has in its strategies focused on climate change and environmental protection rather than state security and sovereignty. Iceland has also declared the Arctic as one of its main foreign policy priorities, and is keen to gain recognition as an Arctic coastal state. It has significant economic interests in the region, and wants to define a clearer role for itself in Arctic affairs (Offerdal 2014).

In relation to hard power capabilities, the US is often viewed as hegemonic. Several authors, however, identify Russia as central in the Arctic cooperation. This has to do with military and economic power in the region, but also to do with a somewhat more reluctant and withdrawn attitude from the US. As seen, the US and other powerful Arctic actors are "waking up", and redefining their Arctic interests. This might change power relations between the states, or between states and other groups of actors. The US was historically somewhat sceptical of a broad Council focusing on broad issues of sustainable development, but this attitude started to change after a policy shift in 2009. The other major power, Russia, was also initially sceptical. Together these two can be said to have formed a discourse coalition around 1996, wishing to focus more narrowly on environmental protection rather than sustainable development. The general impression, as will be detailed in the next chapter, is that the Council has moved in the direction of a broader agenda on sustainable development. The progression of the sustainable development programme is not mainly explained by which actors had the military and economic power to affect it, but by soft power resources in relation to discourse and ideas. Power and influence in sustainable development in the Arctic Council is better understood by reference to mechanisms of soft power.

At the end of the Cold War, a new notion of security began to develop in the Arctic, namely "human security" (Steinberg, Tasch, and Gerhardt 2015, 162). Due to the characteristics of security in the Arctic, dimensions of security are more likely to manifest in the form of soft power or balancing, often through regimes and organizations (Lanteigne 2016). Soft power lies in the ability to attract and persuade, *"to make them want what you want"*. Mechanisms of soft power include resources such as information, philanthropy, diplomacy, rhetoric and discourse control, persuasion, norm diffusion and agenda setting (Rothman 2011; Nye 2004). One form of soft power that is very relevant in this context is discursive power, the power to set agenda and to promote certain frames. Heininen and Nicol discuss this in a paper on political structures and actors that give shape to emerging geopolitical versions of the international north. In relation to the Arctic Council, they write that Canada's northern discourse is quite distinct from the European discourse, and that it has become hegemonic in defining the agenda for the Arctic

Council. The AC is further important in realizing several of Canada's foreign policy priorities. Although it overlaps with other discourses on many areas, the Canadian policy includes its own design and procedures with a slightly different emphasis (Heininen and Nicol 2007, 156). The authors further write that the US approaches the AC cooperation differently than Canada and Europe. The US views the Arctic largely as a resource frontier and out of strategic concerns (Heininen and Nicol 2007, 156). Heininen and Nicol's finds suggest that Canada has had significant influence on the discourse of the Arctic Council, and that they realize their foreign policy goals through soft power in the Arctic Council. Carina Kesikitalo has also expressed similar views in an interview, arguing that when the Arctic cooperation was established, the Canadian notion of the Arctic was the most established, and became the driving notion in political development. She further argues that this discourse lays heavy emphasis on a pure environment and subsistence based indigenous societies, and that essentialist features dominates the Arctic discourse. This discourse does not apply to all countries, and today one might ask whether it applies anywhere in the Arctic at all. Keskitalo says that "*With increasing globalisation, applying a perspective guided by ideas of the "Arctic" bears the risk of ignoring large changes in terms of industrialization and post-industrialization, and trying to "lock in" areas in time*"(Röver 2014). Huebert also points to the centrality of Canada in drafting and maintaining both the AEPS and the Arctic Council. He writes that although all the eight countries needed to approve the AEPS, it was strongly influenced by Canadian thinking. According to Huebert, Canada came to the AEPS as one of the most prepared, and has as a result of these preparations continued to play a dominating role in working groups and task forces (Huebert 1998). In this way, the soft power that Canada has in the Council can be tied not only to framing of the Arctic, but also to resources such as information, diplomacy, discourse control and norm diffusion.

Although being important in Canadian discourse coalition in the transition to the Artic Council, Steinberg et.al write that the indigenous organizations lack the capacity to draw international negotiations to their perspectives. The demarcation of roles played by the permanent participants serves to maintain state-centric political relations within the Arctic Council. The traditional narrative serves on one hand to confer power, but on another hand to establishing a limitation in terms of agendas and alliances that can be pursued (Steinberg, Tasch, and Gerhardt 2015, 171). As previously discussed, exogenous and endogenous processes of change in the Arctic could also weaken the position of indigenous peoples. Although the permanent participants inhabit a relatively strong institutional position in the Council, this is

not necessarily a position that equals boundless possibilities for influence and power. Further, the inclusion of indigenous peoples has been dependent on more powerful actors' advocacy for it, as Canada did in the transition to the Arctic Council. The position of influence also comes with limitations and challenges. Not only do these concern political relations to states, but also more practical issues of power resources that are central within the Arctic Council.

On soft power, many authors have illustrated how Canada has been central in forming an agenda for the Council, and how the Council has been central for Canadian foreign policy. This position cannot be taken for granted. Canada came to the AC negotiations as one of the most prepared. The difference now is that other actors are also "preparing" more. Other actors are more clearly formulating agendas that may or may not compete with those of Canada, and with a possibly more politicised Arctic, it is not self-evident that this position of power will be upheld. Further, as policy shifts have illustrated, it is not evident that Canada will uphold the same view of the Arctic Council and its importance for Canadian foreign policy.

While the previous section has attempted to outline more general assessments of power in the Arctic, this section will take a closer look at power resources that are central in the Arctic Council more specifically. In a conversation during the Arctic Science Summit Week 2016, Piotr Graczyk discussed how power might take a different form in the Arctic Council than in other international organizations. This has to do with the "rules of the game" in the institution as well as the way the Council works. The consensus-base of the institution, and the way that funding and projects is organized, has implications for what power resources that are important. The Arctic Council focuses mainly on "producing" scientific research, as opposed to other types of outcomes such as international law, binding resolutions and so on. It has achieved considerable success in generating policy-relevant knowledge about the Arctic and bringing Arctic issues to the attention of global forums. Its primary products have been scientific reports (Berkman and Young 2009; Nilsson 2009). This, too, has implications for what makes an actor (or a meaning coalition) powerful in the Arctic Council. For Graczyk, two resources stand out as being especially important in the context of the AC, financial and scientific resources[7]. What is meant by this will be elaborated on below.

Funding has since the inception of the Arctic Council been *ad hoc*. No permanent contributions have been required from the member states or from other participants, and the institution has no budget of its own. Uncertain and limited funding has been problematic for

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[7] Personal conversation, during the Model Arctic Council/Arctic Science Summit Week. March 10th 2016, Fairbanks, Alaska. Reported with written consent via email.

the Council since its inception (Koivurova 2010, 148; Koivurova and Hasanat 2009, 70; Stenlund 2002). Koivurova and Hasanat write that states typically opt for a soft-law approach such as the Arctic Council when their political and financial commitment is fairly low. A treaty-based cooperation on the other hand often commits states to a stable long-term cooperation, which can be implemented by mandatory funding schemes. Such a basis would also allow states to enter into more controversial policy fields (Koivurova and Hasanat 2009, 71). Under the Arctic Council practice, states propose projects or identify working groups or they wish to support, and governments that are interested take the lead in implementing or paying for them (Bloom 1999; Nord 2016). Since 2003, work has been undertaken to strengthen funding for highly prioritized projects in the AC. The Project Support Instrument (PSI) became operational in the fall of 2014, but is meant only to cover a very limited part of Council activities. It has not provided the successful form of joint funding programme that some of its supporters hoped for (Riksrevisjonen 2015; Nord 2016). The other "exception" to the rule is the newly founded secretariat in Tromsø, where states are committed to contributing shares of the secretariats very limited budget (Nord 2016; Sellheim 2012).

Under this form of funding mechanism projects are undertaken if all states approve of the project and there is sufficient will among these actors to contribute financially. Only projects that get sufficient financial and political support will be implemented. Further, the Council needs scientific and human resources for its projects. An important contribution to the AC is in-kind support consisting of man-hours contributed by experts. Having the ability to mobilize such scientific networks becomes an important resource in the AC, and can be viewed as a power resource. Investigating who contributes to the Council might strengthen our understanding of who has influenced the direction of this work. This part of the chapter will look at sources of financial and in-kind funding in the Sustainable Development Working Group. In 2016, the Arctic Council Secretariat made a first attempt to provide an overview of sources of funding for the Arctic Council. Broadly speaking, working groups receive support for their work either via direct funding, which is the provision of financial support, or via in-kind support that often comes in the form of man-hours contributed by experts (Arctic Council Secretariat 2016). The main source of funding for all working groups is the member states and permanent participants. Other sources of direct funding are not as central, but includes both observers and other entities (Arctic Council Secretariat 2016). As mentioned, the SDWG is not the only working group that deals with issues of sustainable development. Nonetheless, it is the one working group has been specifically tasked with the theme. The main source of SDWG

funding is the Arctic states, and direct funding from other entities is rare. Canada is the main contributor to the SDWG secretariat, with some support from Finland (Arctic Council Secretariat 2016). The SDWG commented that if a state proposes a project it usually offers money or in-kind support for the initiative. Co-sponsors (states or PPs) also "kick in" resources (Arctic Council Secretariat 2016). The SDWG noted that: *"Our funding, generally, is very ad hoc. We do not have a fixed budget and rarely do granting organizations or non-profits fund our work. For this reason, strategic planning in the SDWG is challenging because we cannot anticipate the availability of funds several years in advance"* (Arctic Council Secretariat 2016, 16). As seen here, strategic planning is difficult in the SDWG due to a lack of stable funding. This uncertainty in terms of future funding can promote difficulty in establishing a coherent approach to the AC's work on sustainable development.

When it comes to resources, a general assessment of the states' financial or scientific capacities will not be undertaken. It is assumed that all member states (and the meaning coalitions among them) have the capacity to mobilize such resources, the degree to which it is done in is likely to depend more on willingness and commitment to the projects. In many ways, then, this is more of an investigation of the willingness of these actors to contribute resources than their ability to do so. This willingness can be connected to exercising soft power, for example in the form of setting the agenda. The exception that confirms the rule is that one group stands out in having more limited possibilities to contribute in this way than others have. The permanent participants have met challenges in their participation, due to a lack of financial means. This concern was addressed already in the first Iqaluit declaration, where in paragraph 29, the declaration requested Arctic states to "*consider the financial questions involved in securing the participation of the Permanent Participants in the work of the Arctic Council and in the operations of the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat*"(Arctic Council 1998a). Later declarations have also emphasized the support of the PPs. When the Kiruna declaration in 2013 encouraged "*identifying approaches to support the active participation of Permanent Participants, and to present a report on their work at the next Ministerial meeting in 2015*" this represented a mandate that would result in positive steps towards strengthening PP capacity and support (Gamble 2015; Arctic Council 2013b, 6). There are many and complex reasons why this is a complicated issue. The PP organizations are varied in size, structure and funding, and have different relationships to member states (Gamble 2015). We will not go further in to these issues here, except to conclude that the PPs can represent a meaning coalition that have less of these resources, something that may make it more difficult to mobilise within the AC. Although

the AC has taken steps to secure the incorporation of TLK in their workings, this kind of participation also requires means to cover resources connected to such activities, such as for example cost of travel.

The feedback from SDWG to the overview included a statement that the state initiating a project and the co-sponsors in leading the project most often contribute resources. Information on which actors are leads in the various projects is more easily available than overviews of funding for different projects. This information might give some pointers in terms of what actors seek to influence the agenda of the SDWG (and the broader agenda on sustainable development). However, it can be noted that this connection is not necessarily obvious. As seen in the section on meaning coalitions there are those who wish to focus more narrowly on environmental protection, and those who seek to expand and focus on sustainable development. It is possible that meaning coalitions will be more active in working groups that generally correspond to their agenda. For example, actors hoping for a broad and strong sustainable development agenda for the institution might be more active in the SDWG than actors who wish to focus on environmental protection, which is more connected to other working groups.

Overviews of SDWG work can be found in two-year work plans. These plans outline the priorities and projects for the working groups under the different chairmanships. Since its inception, the SDWG has carried out approximately 65 activities or projects (Arctic Council 2016b). On their website, the SDWG has made the work plans for 2011-2013, 2013-2015 and 2015-2017 available. An overview of projects in this period and their leads, sorted by thematic area, can be found in appendix A. Canada and the US stand out as the most active in taking the lead, most likely due to the fact that the investigation is on projects during their chairmanships. Sweden, Finland and Russia stand out as the least active. One thing that needs to be addressed is that projects vary in size and how demanding they are, so that this overview is likely to be too simplistic. Additionally, as also addressed in work plans themselves, there has been a recent shift from single narrowly focused projects, to activities involving a number of working groups. This is clearly seen in the work plans, where in the latest plan, there is much less focus on single projects, but rather it is pointing to broader thematic areas that will be addressed in various ways (SDWG 2011; SDWG 2013; SDWG n.d). Therefore, this account is flawed in another way, as the numbers for how many projects a country has lead will decrease as this type of projects decrease more generally. Generally, then, it is challenging to outline who contributes in the Arctic Council as an avenue to assessing power relations. The outtake from the overview

of projects is thus very limited, due to lack of data, as well as challenges in terms of comparing projects on different measures, and generally taking the necessary reservations when looking into this area. More could be done here, given sufficient time and space.

This chapter has looked at power in the Arctic Council, and focused on soft power. As seen, exercising this power materializes in several ways, a central one being in discourse and policy programmes as "outcomes". Therefore, power relations will be an important aspect to bear in mind when moving on to analyse discourse and policy programmes on sustainable development. The most important outtake, however, is that it is challenging to analyse power relations within the Arctic Council. Both power and coalitions are in flux, and the change that is underway in the Arctic makes this a difficult subject. Still, it is possible to explore how this connects to discourse and policy programmes.

## Chapter 10: Discourse and policy programmes

This chapter concerns policy discourse and programmes. It is also the chapter that most directly concerns the ideational dimension, and outlines the development of sustainable development in the Council over time. It will therefore be more comprehensive than the other empirical chapters. The PAA defines policy discourses as interpretative schemes, ranging from formal policy concepts and texts, to popular narratives and story lines (Arts and Buizer 2009, 343). In this chapter, focus will be on the former, and on aspects of the institution-wide discourse, most often expressed through documents. The assessment will be done while keeping in mind the other dimensions of the policy arrangement; rules of the game, actors and coalitions and power. Looking back to the methods chapter and the chapter on sustainable development, the analysis will be structured along three dimensions: conceptualization, strategies and implementation. Under these three different dimensions, data mainly comes from documents from the Arctic Council document archive. Some secondary sources will also be included to strengthen the analysis. First, however, the thesis will give an overview of how sustainable development has been approached over time in the Arctic Council, focusing on major policy documents and the development of the Arctic Council Sustainable Development Programme over the years. In addition, ministerial declarations is an integral part of the overview.

**10.1 The Arctic Council sustainable development programme**

In 1996, sustainable development was adopted as a formative pillar of the Council. The Ottawa declaration called on parties to negotiate terms of reference for a sustainable development program (Arctic Council 1996). Bloom writes: "*it was not possible for Arctic states to agree to a comprehensive sustainable development program, or even a list of priorities*" (Bloom 1999, 6). Instead, the sustainable development program was to consist of a series of projects to be managed by the SAOs. Bloom further writes that at this stage the work on sustainable development consisted of a series of unrelated projects proposed by different parties (Bloom 1999, 6–7). The first ministerial meeting in Iqaluit in 1998 established the Arctic Council Sustainable Development Program and the Sustainable Development Working Group. At the same time, the ministers agreed to the "Terms of Reference for a Sustainable Development Program" (Arctic Council 1998a). In the last document, the goal of the program was formulated.

"*The goal of the sustainable development program of the Arctic Council is to propose and adopt steps to be taken by the Arctic States to advance sustainable development in the Arctic, including opportunities to protect and enhance the environment, and the economies, cultures and health of indigenous communities and of other inhabitants of the Arctic, as well as to improve the environmental, economic and social conditions of Arctic communities as a whole*" (Arctic Council 1998b, 1).

The goal is identified as the *proposal* and *adoption* of steps to be taken by the Arctic states to advance sustainable development in the Arctic. This formulation seems somewhat more policy oriented than what one might expect, and does not explicitly include scientific research, which has been the main priority of the Council. The last line includes the three classical components of sustainable development, *environmental, economic* and *social* conditions. Additionally, the protection and enhancement of culture and health are highlighted. These are factors that could theoretically be covered under a mainstream definition of sustainable development as social conditions. The fact that these two in particular are accentuated says something about sustainable development in the Arctic Council. These two factors are in the text related to "*indigenous communities and other inhabitants of the Arctic*". Putting indigenous communities first in the sentence speaks to the centrality of indigenous issues in the Arctic Council, and can be related to the institutional space for indigenous peoples organizations (permanent participants), but also social and political space than can be linked to discursive and interactive processes. "*Other inhabitants of the Arctic*" includes the citizens of the Arctic states as a whole, presumably especially in the northern areas. Some argue northerners as a group separate from

indigenous peoples are underrepresented in the Council, only represented through far removed governments. As seen here, "northerners" are not highlighted as a group that is separate from inhabitants of Arctic states at a whole. Nilsson has argued that is a lack there sub-regional perspectives on the ACIA, and that this could be a sign that sub-regional decision makers lack real influence in the Council (Nilsson, 2009, 90).

The next ministerial meeting in Barrow in 2000 endorsed and adopted the Sustainable Development Framework Document (Arctic Council 2000b). Here, it is noted:

"*In light of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development at Rio de Janeiro, the Sustainable Development Program is an important part of an international effort that builds on the work of governments, non-governmental organizations and international organizations. The Council s Sustainable Development Program has the objective of addressing the special circumstances of the Arctic in that context*" (Arctic Council 2000c, 1).

The institution is here explicitly situated in the global discourse and international political efforts in the sustainable development. The paragraph also points to the objective that has been central in the whole thesis "*the objective of addressing the special circumstances of the Arctic in that context*". The ambition of the thesis is to look at how it does that. The same document offers a definition of sustainable development:

"*Sustainable Development must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Economic, social and cultural development are, along with environmental protection, interdependent and mutually reinforcing aspects of Sustainable Development and are all part of the Council s focus in this regard*" (Arctic Council 2000c, 1).

And: *"The Sustainable Development Program should leave future generations in the North with expanded opportunities, and promote economic activity that creates wealth and human capital, while simultaneously safeguarding natural capital of the Arctic"*(Arctic Council 2000c, 1).

Together, these paragraphs essentially sum up the Brundtland definition (meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs). The three basic dimensions are included, but cultural development is also emphasized in this definition. Further, the Council identified a number of subject areas to which they attach special importance. These include *health and well-being of people living in the Arctic, sustainable economic activity and increasing community prosperity, education and cultural heritage,*

*children and youth, management of natural, including living resources, and infrastructure development* (Arctic Council 2000c, 2). The Barrow declaration took up the theme of what perspectives should influence sustainable development in the Arctic Council. It was stated that the Arctic states should coordinate closely in international fora on matters of environmental and sustainable development in the Arctic, but it was also requested that the SDWG should pay particular attention to proposals from the permanent participants directed at improving health in indigenous communities (Arctic Council 2000b). These two perspectives are generally characteristic of the Arctic Council conception of sustainable development.

The Inari declaration from 2002 adopted the Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR) as a priority project that should result in a comprehensive knowledge base for the AC Sustainable Development Program. Further, the declaration promised to develop an action plan on sustainable development to realize the sustainable development framework document, the priorities of the Inari declaration, latest scientific knowledge, and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (Arctic Council 2002). In 2004, the AHDR was published. The report identified major gaps in knowledge, and was to assist the SDWG in its workings (Hasanat 2010). In the preface, it was stated that the idea for the assessment arose in large parts from difficulties experienced in devising a coherent agenda for the Arctic Council Sustainable Development Programme. The report was to provide a starting point for measuring changes over time and comparing Arctic conditions with conditions elsewhere. It included chapters *on "Human development in the Arctic", "Arctic Demography", "Societies and Cultures: Change and Persistence", "Economic Systems", "Political Systems", "Legal Systems", "Resource Governance", "Community Viability", "Human Health and well-being", "Education", "Gender Issues", and "Circumpolar International Relations and Geopolitics*" (Einarsson et.al 2004). The AHDR represented the first social-science driven report prepared for the Arctic Council (Schweitzer, Larsen, and Fondahl 2010).

At the ministerial meeting in Reykjavik in 2004, the ministers adopted the Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP) as a tool for the practical realization of the Arctic Council Sustainable Development Program and assessing the progress made by the Arctic Council in advancing sustainable development in the region (Arctic Council 2004e). In the SDAP, the following priority areas were suggested for the first stage of implementation.

1. The *economic dimension* of sustainable development, focused on sustainable economic activity and increasing prosperity of Arctic communities, sustainable use of natural and living resources, development of transport infrastructure

(including aviation, marine and surface transport), information technologies and modern telecommunications.

2. The *social dimension* of sustainable development included health of the people living and working in the Arctic, education and cultural heritage, prosperity and capacity building for children and the youth, gender equality, enhancing well-being, and eradication of poverty among Arctic people.

3. In the *environmental dimension* of sustainable development, emphasis was on monitoring and assessment of the state of the environment in the Arctic, prevention and elimination of environmental pollution, marine environment protection, biodiversity conservation, climate change impact assessment, and prevention and elimination of ecological emergencies in the Arctic.

(Arctic Council 2004b).

The SDAP also indicated, in section 3, that sustainable development should be the main activity of the Arctic Council, permeating all activities. The document pointed out that most programmes and projects related to the ecological dimension of sustainable development and that work on the social and economic dimension were not as comprehensive as on the ecological dimension (Arctic Council 2004b, 4).

In 2006 in Salekhard, celebrating the 10-year anniversary of the Arctic Council, the ministers addressed a structural difference in the SDWG as opposed to other working groups, when authorizing SAOs to consider, approve and supervise SDWG projects and activities, consistent with the work and overall priorities of the Arctic Council (Arctic Council 2006). Under the heading of sustainable development, the declaration focused on enhancing well-being through eradicating poverty, improving living conditions, promoting economic opportunities, capacity building, education and research, and improving human health in the Arctic. Further, the cooperation on energy, renewable energy and environmentally friendly technology were identified as important components of AC cooperation. In 2006, the process also started to develop social indicators for sustainable development in the Arctic; what would later become the ASI, the Arctic Social Indicators (Arctic Council 2006).

The Tromsø declaration from 2009, under the heading of human development acknowledged the increased focus on health, including the establishment of an Arctic Human Health Expert Group under the Sustainable Development Program. Further, it recognized the urgent need to support Arctic cultures and reduce the loss of Arctic indigenous languages. Finally, the declaration emphasized education, outreach, scientific research, capacity building

and traditional knowledge as important tools to address challenges to Arctic communities and recommend that, where relevant, AC projects include these elements (Arctic Council 2009). Again, there is a strong emphasis on cultural and indigenous aspects, as well as on issues related to health. On the economic dimension, capacity building is central, and the role of the AC in this context is that it provides knowledge as an important foundation for increasing capacity (Arctic Council 2009). Another factor that might be noted is that the ministers "Recognize that environmentally sound oil and gas activities *may contribute* to sustainable development of the Arctic region" (Arctic Council 2009, 6, *emphasis own*).  The next year, in 2010, the first overview of Arctic Social Indicators was published, as a follow up to the Arctic Human Development Report. The first report was designed to focus on a small set of indicators, and not on providing implementation for these indicators. Preparation was, however, already under way for a follow- up report, focused on implementation. The ASI-I focused on the following thematic areas for indicators: 1. *Health and Population* 2. *Material well-being,* 3. *Education,* 4. *Cultural well-being and Cultural vitality,* 5. *Contact with Nature,* and 6. *Fate-Control* (Schweitzer, Larsen, and Fondahl 2010).

In Nuuk 2011 the declaration stated that the minsters "*recognize that substantial cuts in emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses are the backbone of meaningful global climate change mitigation effects*"(Arctic Council 2011, 3). This is the first element in the section on climate change in this declaration, thus opening with a relatively strong statement. Apart from "*underscoring the importance of strengthening the Arctic Council to address this change*", little is stated about how to approach climate change mitigation and the role of the Council in this. In relation to the assessment of Snow, Water, Ice and Permafrost in the Arctic (SWIPA) that was welcomed at the meeting, the focus is on increasing Arctic resilience, the ability to cope with change, or in other words adaption (Arctic Council 2011). References are again made to strengthening the AC leadership to minimize human and environmental impacts of climate change, but again this is focused on minimizing impacts rather than addressing the cause. In order to strengthen the Council, the most significant step that was taken in Nuuk was the establishment of a permanent secretariat in Tromsø (Arctic Council 2011, 3).

The 2013 Kiruna declaration opened the theme of economic and social conditions from a different angle. Here, the declaration calls for increased cooperation and interaction with business communities to advance sustainable development in the Arctic, mentioning the fields of sustainable business and corporate social responsibility. It is not clearly specified what

constitutes sustainable business under Arctic conditions (Arctic Council 2013b). However, under the heading "Acting on Climate Change", the declaration echoed notions from Nuuk on the need to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. Again, it placed the Council in the global discourse: "*Recognize that Arctic States, along with other major emitters, substantially contribute to global greenhouse gas emissions, and confirm the commitment of all Arctic States to work together and with other countries under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (....)*", (Arctic Council 2013b, 3).

The recognition that Arctic states substantially contribute to global greenhouse gas emissions is noteworthy, and could be interpreted as a sign of moving focus towards mitigation. However, the focus is more on the "work together with other countries" part, than the "work together" part that comes before it. This is logical in the light of the consensus base of the institution, when binding agreements (or attempts at this) are generally the approach that is used when attempting to mitigate climate change. The AC is not a politically appropriate forum for forming such agreements, as it cannot enter into binding agreements. What can be asked is whether this approach to mitigation also can shift the discussion in the institution. As stated, the world and the Arctic is already committed to a certain degree of adaption, and this area is important. In a holistic approach to sustainable development, however, emissions of greenhouse gasses needs to be discussed as a result of many activities related to economic development. This has been to some degree addressed in other working groups, such as PAME guidelines on oil and gas, which among other things assessed potential effects of oil and gas activities on environment and society (Arctic Council 2009a). However, this does not reflect a priority area of the Council. The Kiruna meeting also adopted the "Vision for the Arctic". In this document, the states commit to furthering the development of the Arctic as a zone of peace and stability, identifying this as the heart of the effort. The concluding remark states: "*The founding values, objectives and commitments of the Arctic Council will continue to be the North Star that guides our cooperation*"(Arctic Council Secretariat 2013). Importantly, the document posits that the Arctic Council should pursue opportunities to move *from policy shaping to policy making* (Arctic Council Secretariat 2013).

In 2014, the ASI-II: Implementation report was released. It applied the principles established in 2010 to a range of case studies, from local communities in Russia or Inuit communities in Alaska, in the North-west territories of Canada, the West-Nordic Region, and in the Inuit world. The project encountered significant challenges relating to the varying availability of data, and concluded that in light of rapid socio- economic changes, the indicators

would need fine-tuning in the years to come. Nevertheless, the report was able to draw important conclusions about human well-being (Nymand Larsen 2010). Shortly after, in 2015, the second Arctic Human Development Report was released. The AHDR-II is an academic report written for several audiences. Governments, communities and stakeholders at different levels are important, but it is also very much written with the Arctic Council and the SDWG in mind, as it informs their work in furthering sustainable development in the Arctic (Larsen and Fondahl 2015, 13). Topics include *"Arctic population and Migration", "Cultures and Identities", ""Economic Systems", "Governance in the Arctic: Political systems and Geopolitics", "Legal Systems", "Resource Governance", " Human Health and Well-being", "Education and Human Capital", "Globalization",* and *"Community Viability and Adaption"*. The report concluded, among other things, that the combination of rapid and stressing changes that was highlighted in the first report continued, but with an increased magnitude and speed (Larsen and Fondahl 2015, 503).

In 2015, the Arctic Council also held its latest ministerial meeting. The Iqaluit declaration readmitted the founding commitments from the Ottawa declaration.

"Reaffirming *our commitment to sustainable development in the Arctic region, including economic and social development, improved health conditions and cultural well-being, and our commitment to the protection of the Arctic environment, including the health of Arctic ecosystems, conservation of biodiversity in the Arctic and sustainable use of natural resources, as stated in the Ottawa Declaration of 1996*" (Arctic Council 2015d).

The components of sustainable development again include the "classical" economic, social and environmental dimensions, along with added emphasis on health and culture. The Iqaluit meeting also welcomed the establishment of the Arctic Economic Council, with which it is to cooperate to increase responsible economic development in the Arctic. Several points in the declaration focused indigenous issues such as the importance of traditional and local knowledge, indigenous languages, traditional ways of life, traditional and local foods, and reindeer herding (Arctic Council 2015d). Under building a stronger Arctic Council the ministers: "*Welcome the initiatives undertaken to enhance the accountability and transparency of the work of the Arctic Council in tracking the progress of the Council's activities, archiving and opening access to Council documents, and decide to continue this work*" (Arctic Council 2015d, 12). The next section will, among other things, address these concerns when analysing sustainable development in the Council in relation to the three dimensions identified in chapter 3.

**10.1 Analysing sustainable development discourses and programmes**

The following sections will clarify and discuss the three dimensions of sustainable development in the Arctic Council, starting with the theme "conceptualization". The Arctic Social Indicators are the central data point under this heading, along with early "formative" documents for the sustainable development work in the AC. Going back to chapter 3 and the questions posed there, important questions to ask under "conceptualization" include; what is the definition, how clearly is the definition formulated, and if goals and indicators of sustainable development are defined. This will also be considered in light of the findings in the previous parts of the PAA analysis.

Let us first go back to the definition identified in the previous section. Like the Brundtland definition, it is formulated as meeting the needs of the present without compromising future generations' ability to meet their needs. It stressed the interconnectedness of the economic, social and cultural development and protection of the environment. When it comes to clarity of the definition, it is very similar to the mainstream Brundtland definition, and surely therefore can be criticised for some of the same ambiguities or strengths. It is broad enough to encompass a range of different Arctic actors and their views. Goals and priorities of the sustainable development programme have been addressed several times through important documents such as the Sustainable Development Framework Programme and the Sustainable Development Action Plan. The previous section showed that in addition to the three key areas, declarations have included culture and health as areas that are given explicit mention beyond being included under social dimensions of sustainability. Culture and health, as seen in the political modernisation chapter, are both factors that are linked to challenges from both globalisation and climate change in the Arctic. Especially cultural concerns, but also health concerns, are often tied especially closely to the needs of indigenous peoples. In this way, the concept of "needs" gets an added dimension in relation to the more "general" definition, and the AC emphasis on indigenous issues contributes to addressing the special circumstances of the Arctic. The weight on indigenous issues can also be tied to the rules of the game, and the ground breaking position for permanent participants in the institution. The discourse coalition driven by Canada and the ICC appears to have been successful in promoting a strong and lasting focus on indigenous issues in the conceptualization of sustainable development.

The Artic Social Indicators and the Arctic Human Development report identified six thematic areas of indicators to track the human development in the Arctic. These *include 1. Health and Population, 2.Material well-being, 3. Education, 4.Cultural well-being and*

*Cultural vitality, 5. Contact with Nature, and 6.Fate-Control.* Three of these can be considered unique for the north: fate control, cultural well-being, and close relationship to the natural world (Arctic Council 2014). Focus on indicators for the Arctic, especially those unique for the North, are instrumental in creating an Arctic conceptualisation of sustainable development. The uniquely "northern" indicators can all be linked tightly to indigenous issues and challenges under political modernisation. Indigenous issues are important in creating an Arctic sustainable development as opposed to the more general global definition. When compared to the UN Sustainable Development goals from 2015 (United Nations 2015), fate- control, cultural well-being or close relationship to the natural world are not among the 17 goals. The thematic areas of ASI indicators are in some ways more general than the UN version, as they have to be when the UN presents 17 goals and the ASI 6 goals. For example under what has been termed "material well-being" in the ASI framework, several thematic areas of the UN framework can be incorporated, such as decent and work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities and responsible consumption and production. Health and education are important indicators in both frameworks. The UN framework is more detailed in terms of the environmental dimension, and lists issue areas such as life on land, life below water, and climate action (United Nations 2015). This reflects differences in aim of the two frameworks. While the ASI focuses on human development, the UN framework is aimed at sustainable development as a whole. The Council has done a large amount of work on these areas through working groups separate from the SDWG. As shown in the political modernisation section, the state of the environment has a strong impact on most of the indicators in the ASI, including health and well-being, material well-being, cultural well-being, contact with nature and fate control. A question that can be posed is whether the environment and socio-economic dimensions are as tightly connected as they perhaps could be.

The ACIA (Hassol 2004), which assessed impacts of climate change in the Arctic also included assessments of its impact on issues related to human development such as a chapter on human health and a chapter on infrastructure, as well as chapters on "hunting, herding, fishing and gathering: indigenous peoples and renewable resource use in the Arctic", and "freshwater ecosystems and fisheries". The second volume of the AHDR (Larsen and Fondahl 2015) on its side did not have a chapter devoted directly to the impacts of the environment or climate change on human development, but did have a chapter on "community viability and adaption", and one on "resource governance" which are especially connected to environmental concerns. The environment is a fundamental factor in many of its chapters. The AHDR and the

ACIA are complimentary reports that together cover many thematic areas under the heading of sustainable development. It can be questioned whether the dimensions of sustainability are sufficiently seen as a whole, rather than two separate but complimentary areas. This can also be to some degree seen in the Arctic Social Indicators, where the environment is not directly mentioned as a thematic area but figures more as a component within the indicators of human development. Purely environmental factors would not be natural to include under social indicators in itself, but more could be done more generally to integrate these two sides of sustainable development. For example, a more general framework of indicators of sustainable development could be developed. Many would argue the Council does not to a sufficient degree conceptualize sustainable development as a whole, where environmental protection is fully included in issues of economic and social development, and vice versa. The most striking example of this would be the separation of these areas as two pillars, worked on in separate working groups. This problem could be amplified by the challenges of communication that have been an issue for the AC. Several declarations have showed that actors in the Council are aware that the work on social and economic issues have lagged behind the focus on environmental issues. There are less signs that the separation of these areas is seen as a problem.

The second dimension in the analysis of sustainable development concerns strategies for sustainable development. It does not directly concern projects, but rather if it is possible to find some explicit or implicit statements on how sustainable development is to be achieved, which aspects are considered the most important, and long-term strategies. In this way, it is a continuation of the questions asked under conceptualization. Data will again come from the ACs own sources, but will be supported by secondary sources where appropriate. Here, the thesis will take a more practical approach and look at strategies for the Council. Central in this part of the analysis will be the chairmanship programmes of the Council. More general priority areas have been outlined under the general assessment of sustainable development in the Arctic Council. The AC chair sets the tone on which direction the institution is to move for the following two years. The practice of chairmanship programmes was not fully established in the first chairmanship periods, so other sources will be used here. A general remark is that some of the chairmanship programmes are (to the best of my ability) impossible to locate on the Arctic Council website. Both how chairmanship programmes are formed and where they are located on the website vary. This is inconsistent over time, so that for example the Finnish chairmanship programme for 2000-2002 is available, while the Norwegian chairmanship programme for 2006-2008 cannot be found on the website. These difficulties in locating information can be

seen in the light of problems of communication, and the level of institutionalization as a whole. This will be a theme that the analysis will return to.

The first chairmanship declarations quite naturally focused on establishing the role and nature of the Council as an institution. Canada served as the first chair of the Arctic Council, from 1996 to 1998. This period was characterized by forming important documents like the rules of procedure for the forum. During the American chairmanship from 1998-2000, a paper was released that proposed that a capacity building focus should be directed at virtually all projects of the Council. Such a focus would assist permanent participants and Arctic communities by stressing the on-going need to "translate" knowledge and information into practical skills, models or pathways that foster sustainable development. Capacity building was further divided into three sub categories, of 1. Human capacity (education, skills and adaption), 2. Social capacity (institutions, organizations and infrastructure of communities), and 3. Stewardship of natural resources. Approaches to this focus included increasing awareness and using currently available information, as well as improving networks for sharing information (Arctic Council 2000a).

The Finish chairmanship from 2000-2002 in its chairmanship declaration focused on making the AC a mouthpiece for the Arctic, raising the Arctic Council's profile, identifying the problem of the Arctic environment while clarifying actions on sustainable development, promoting Arctic research, economic and social development and strengthening the participation of Arctic people in the cooperation of the region. According to the Finnish chairmanship brochure, the work on sustainable development was still in a phase of clarification (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Finland 2001). The programme of the Icelandic chair from 2002-2004 emphasized social, economic and cultural dimensions of sustainable development, with the reason that it had a shorter history within the Council. Under this general motivation, the chairmanship brochure promoted research and assessment of human and sustainable development in the Arctic, where the beginning of the realization of the SDAP was a major priority (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Iceland 2002). Russia in its programme for 2004-2006 also pointed out that work on economic and social dimensions still lagged behind. The Russian chairmanship intended to promote projects on health, social infrastructure and sustainable use of natural resources, protection of the environment, prevention and management of emergencies, sustainable development of Arctic indigenous peoples, and wider use of renewable sources of energy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2004). As seen, chairmanship programmes from this first phase emphasized that the idea of sustainable

development, and especially social and economic dimensions, was still under development. Characterising themes were the need for research, knowledge and assessment on these dimensions, along with beginning realization of actions or action plans on the theme of sustainable development. In 2004, as seen, the Arctic Human Development Report as the first major knowledge base for this work was released. The Sustainable Development Action plan was released the same year, serving to identify subject areas of special importance to the Arctic Council (Einarsson et.al 2004; Arctic Council 2004b).

Norway in its chairmanship programme for 2006-2008 focused on the need for broad debate on economic activity, including energy, fishery, mining and other sectors of importance to the Arctic and the people living there. These activities should be carried out with "due regard" to the interests of indigenous peoples. The programme also emphasized integrated resource management, minimizing negative impact on ecosystems and living resources of the Arctic, and ecosystem-based management. Under climate change, focus was on strengthening research and monitoring, adaptive capacity, and considering measures to reduce emissions and enhance removals of greenhouse gasses in the region. A secretariat in Tromsø was established for the Scandinavian chairmanships, a predecessor to the permanent secretariat (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway n.d.). The Danish programme for 2009-2011 identified securing a forward-looking approach and a strong platform in the dynamics of a changing Arctic as the primary objective of the chairmanship. International outreach, research and cooperation with key actors in different policy fields would be crucial in securing the success of the Council. Other areas of focus included biodiversity, integrated resource management, and operational cooperation on preparedness and prevention, for example in terms of search and rescue (Danish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council 2009). Sweden's chairmanship programme from 2011-2013 focused on environment and climate, including preparedness and prevention on oil spills, working to raise the profile of Arctic issues internationally with a view to achieving ambitious emissions reductions, resilience, biodiversity, and environmental protection. In regards to "the people", Sweden's programme focused on strengthening the SDWG, giving attention to the gender equality perspective, positive economic development and sustainable development, indigenous language issues, food safety and water quality, and strong support for research included launching the AHDR-II. It also highlighted the need for cooperation on Arctic sea and land surveillance (Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden 2011).

A gradual clarification of priorities on sustainable development can be seen from 2006, where programmes starts to concentrate more on specific issues than the need for more

knowledge on the social and economic dimension. Several sources reference a common umbrella strategy for the Scandinavian chairmanships from 2006 to 2013 (see for example Nord 2016, 45). This document cannot be found on the Arctic Council website. However, it could be a sign of increasing interconnectedness between different chairmanships. Douglas Nord sees the Scandinavian chairmanships as a significant development, restructuring and reinvigorating the SDWG, undertaking organized work to provide a voice and a face for the Arctic Council, and most importantly undertaking work on internally reforming the institution and addressing barriers to the effective operation of the Council (Nord 2016, 44–46).

When Sweden handed over the chairmanship to Canada, the first round of chairmanships concluded. According to Nord, a number of observers noted that as the institution passes through the second rotation of leadership, the true potential and abilities of the institution will be tested (Nord 2016). Entering Canadas chairmanship from 2013-2015, the chairmanship brochure focused strongly on development for the people of the North, with a focus on responsible Arctic resource development, safe Arctic shipping and sustainable circumpolar communities. Under the heading of sustainable communities, issues that were mentioned included traditional ways of life and traditional knowledge, addressing short-lived climate pollutants, adaption to climate change and promoting mental wellness (Arctic Council, Canada, and Foreign Affairs 2013). At the heart of its efforts was the establishment of the Arctic Economic Council, and the promise of building new business, trade and resource development opportunities in the North (Nord 2016, 47). The following and current US chairmanship has taken a step away from this direction, and returns to a role more oriented towards environmental stewardship. The chairmanship has the theme "One Arctic: Shared Challenges, Opportunities and Responsibilities". Highlights include Arctic Ocean, Arctic Communities, Arctic Climate and Arctic Awareness (U.S. Chairmanship of the Arctic Council 2015). Between the latest two chairmanship programmes, the US seems to have been more focused on environmental issues than Canada. The US "return" to environmental issues can be seen as an expression of a continuing wish to keep the Arctic Council workings within its original mandate of environmental issues, although focusing on sustainable development and climate change more extensively. Canadas focus on economic development can be seen as an expression of a broader understanding of the institution.

The themes of the chairmanships are varied, and many of them suggest that the states have been aware that the work on sustainable development and economic and social dimensions still lags behind. Protection of the environment has still been a key issue throughout the

cooperation, as four of the working groups of the Council (as a continuation of the AEPS) are more oriented towards this pillar. The chairmanship programmes still suggest a wish among several states to move towards a broader agenda. On the economic dimension, focus has been on increasing prosperity, responsible management of resources, increasing adaptive capacity and development of infrastructure. On the social dimension, culture, health and education are central themes. In the first phases, the focus in regards to sustainable development and socioeconomic issues was mainly on assessments and identifying priority areas on the socioeconomic dimension. Initially, declarations focused on the need for knowledge on the socioeconomic dimensions. As more knowledge was gained, through various reports, priority areas become somewhat clearer. From the mid-2000s, focus on climate change was increased (Rottem 2015, 52). At the same time, broader areas of sustainable development were addressed. For example, Norway and Canada focused on economic development as important parts of the agenda for their chairmanships. This can also be connected to economic interests and using the Council as a forum for promoting these interests. Other actors, such as the US and Sweden focused more on environment and climate. In recent years, a stronger focus on adaption has also emerged. This is among other things exemplified by agreements on search and rescue and preparedness and prevention of oil spills (Rottem 2015, 52). Generally, themes of the chairmanships are not explicitly connected to previous focus areas, and it is difficult to identify long-term strategies through these documents. For example, the programmes make little reference to the Sustainable Development Action Plan, or to previous chairmanships. Still, attempts have been made to clarify long-term goals.

In 2013, the Arctic Council released the "*Vision for the Arctic*". The document commits to leadership regionally and globally to address challenges affecting the Arctic home, safeguarding indigenous peoples rights, to support the sustainable development in the Arctic and build self-sufficient, vibrant and healthy Arctic communities for the present and for the future. It vows to put economic development at the top of the agenda, to support the development of a safe and a healthy Arctic environment, and to continue to deepen the knowledge and the understanding of the Arctic. It was stated that:

*"The economic potential of the Arctic is enormous and its sustainable development is key to the region's resilience and prosperity. Transparent and predictable rules and continued cooperation between Arctic States will spur economic development, trade and investments. We will continue to work cooperatively to support the development of sustainable Arctic economies to build self-sufficient, vibrant and healthy Arctic communities for present and future*

*generations. Economic cooperation will be on the top of our agenda"* (Arctic Council Secretariat 2013, 2).

Under the heading of "A healthy Arctic Environment", the document stated: *"We are concerned with the growing effects of climate change, and the local and global impacts of large-scale melting of the Arctic snow, ice and permafrost. We will continue to take action to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and short-lived climate pollutants, and support action that enables adaptation"* (Arctic Council Secretariat 2013, 3).

The first cited paragraph mentions sustainable development shortly, but does not define it explicitly. The main goal is to create transparent and predictable rules to spur economic development in the region. The second cited paragraph mentions the commitment to reduce emission of greenhouse gasses. Further along, it goes on to say that the region should be managed with an ecosystem-based approach, which balances conservation and sustainable use of the environment (Arctic Council Secretariat 2013, 3). The view seems to be that spurring economic development can be done in a sustainable manner. Little is said about the contrast inherent in this question, and "development" seems to be conceptualized as economic growth or "prosperity" which is a word that is often used in these documents. When it comes to climate change, adaption and mitigation are as we have seen two complimentary approaches. These paragraphs take up both these issues. However, the Arctic Council is not seen as the right forum for dealing with mitigation. The Nuuk meeting instead identified the UNFCC framework as the right forum for addressing such matters (Arctic Council 2011). Adaption is on the other side a priority area for the Arctic Council, as also emphasised in many of the chairmanship programmes. Adaption also lies close to the focus that was formulated early on, on capacity building where one of the goals was to develop skills to adapt to changing circumstances (Arctic Council 2000a). According to Steinberg et.al, the ACIA was to a large degree responsible for shifting the commonly held perspective from a frozen Arctic to a changing Arctic (Steinberg, Tasch, and Gerhardt 2015, 168). According to the same authors, the ACIA also supported an important dimension of policy recommendations when focusing on adaption. The shift in attention to adaption is significant. Special attention is placed on the necessity of Arctic residents to strengthen adaptive capacity, and little on holding distant polluters accountable for their impact on the Arctic environment and peoples (Steinberg, Tasch, and Gerhardt 2015, 169). This view corresponds with the content of the chairmanship programmes, where focus in the framework of the AC is almost exclusively on adaption.

There are many components to the Arctic Council sustainable development strategy. Mainly, it can be said to be focused on creating a knowledge foundation, as it was stated in the Vision for the Arctic. "*We will continue to deepen the knowledge and understanding of the Arctic, both inside and outside the region, and to strengthen Arctic research and transdisciplinary science, encourage cooperation between higher education institutions and society, and synergies between traditional knowledge and science*" (Arctic Council Secretariat 2013, 3). The connections between the SDAP or chairmanship programmes and the Vision for the Arctic document are limited, as the Vision for the Arctic is not situated within this general framework. The SDAP should in theory be a red thread for the sustainable development work of the Council. Initially, the SDAP was intended to also include a "Table of Actions", that was to be a living document under regular updating (Arctic Council 2004a). This could have been a useful tool for keeping the various projects in coordination under a general strategy. However, such a table of actions, or the general action plan is not referenced in chairmanship programmes, nor in working-plans. Updated versions of it are not found in the document archive. Generally, long-term strategies seem somewhat unfocused and hard to grasp. The next section will assess the implementation of sustainable development, through looking at projects undertaken or planned between 2011 and 2017, and policy recommendations for the AHDR reports and the ACIA.

The Arctic Council has been criticised for insufficient or no implementation of self-imposed recommendations or guidelines (Graczyk 2012, 265). There is little knowledge on this area, as there are no systems or feedback mechanisms to secure information on follow-up. Even if output such as the oil and gas guidelines are regularly revised, there is no systematic evaluation as to whether they are being followed (Riksrevisjonen, 2015, 64; Koivurova et al., 2009, 36). Because there is such limited information, the implementation of policy recommendations will not be included in the assessment. This is, however, an important aspect of the AC working structure that is important to include in the wider analysis. The focus in this section is on recommendations, or policy to the degree that the Arctic Council is concerned with policy. In the Vision for the Arctic, the Ministers expressed hope of moving in the direction of policy making, from what is now mainly policy shaping (Arctic Council Secretariat 2013). The section will focus on the Sustainable Development Working Group, along with the ACIA and the AHDR reports and their sections on "policy relevant conclusions". As the Icelandic Minister of Foreign affairs stated in the foreword to the AHDR-II: "*(….) the report reflects neither the policies of the Arctic States nor the position of the Arctic Council (…)*" (Larsen and

Fondahl 2015, 10). Nonetheless, scientific assessments that strive for objectivity do involve a range of choices and priorities. The reports of working groups can then be understood not only as presentations of information, but as deliberate process to produce and frame knowledge (Steinberg, Tasch, and Gerhardt 2015, 167). In terms of the general approach, the evaluation turns back to the classifications of mainstream or radical approaches, strong or weak sustainability, or status, quo, reformist or transformist approaches. When turning to the actual projects undertaken, one fundamental question is how policy oriented these programmes are, what areas the programmes are aimed at, what groups they are aimed at, what is to be done, and how it is to be done.

In appendix A. there is an overview of SDWG projects from 2011 to 2017, based on the three work plans from this period. In the appendix, they have been sorted in accordance with six thematic areas: 1. Arctic Human Health, 2. Arctic Socio-Economic Issues, 3. Adaption to Climate Change, 4. Energy and Arctic Communities, 5. Management of Natural Resources, and 6. Arctic Cultures and Languages. Some projects reach across several thematic areas, and thus were somehow hard to sort by theme. For example, the project on the Arctic as a food producing region could in theory be placed both under socioeconomic issues, under management of natural resources, or under Arctic human health. The projects were placed in the framework in accordance to emphasis in project descriptions. The overview shows that the SDWG has performed projects in most areas, but that there are no projects directly relating to management of natural resources. Some projects are relevant to the theme, such as the Water Resources Vulnerability Index, or the Artic as a Food- Producing Region. These have instead been placed under adaption to climate change and socio-economic issues, due to the focus in the project texts. The thematic area of culture and language that in many ways constitutes an important part of Arctic sustainable development has consistently been worked on, with a focus on the preservation of language, cultural practices (such as reindeer herding and food culture), youth, health issues or the use of traditional and local knowledge. These projects represent the only projects that are aimed at specific groups of Arctic inhabitants, either youth or indigenous peoples.

Further, the work plans show that the SDWG is moving in the direction of more crosscutting projects with a broader scope. The way that the work-plans are formed has changed from listing specific projects to pointing out broad focus areas for the work. This is for example seen when comparing the work-plan from 2011-2013 and the work-plan from 2015-2017 (SDWG 2011; SDWG n.d). Where the first work plans lists single projects, the latest is more

focused on wider thematic areas. Single projects are instead referred to under these different headings. Further, lead countries are less commonly referenced in the 2015-2017 work plan. The form of the work-plans can be seen as a reflection of the general approach in the Arctic Council on sustainable development. It is however important to note that the outtake from this overview is limited, as the projects listed only represent a limited time period. Further, it was hard to place projects in the list, as the forms of work plans changed. Where the first work-plan separated between ongoing and new projects, the latest did not do so. Additionally, single projects seemed to continue over several work-periods, but this was at times hard to assess, because changes in name were made. There is no general overview of SDWG projects on the Arctic Council website or in documents in the archive. This is something that would make evaluations easier. The overview does show an increased focus on energy, with two projects during the current American chairmanship as opposed to none during the Canadian and Swedish chairmanships (SDWG n.d; SDWG 2013; SDWG 2011). On socio-economic issues, projects have focused on assessments through the ASI and the AHDR, Corporate Social Responsibility, Economy of the North, and the Arctic as a food-producing region. Although the SDWG does not directly work on environmental issues, it is strongly included in many of the projects. This includes in human health, socioeconomic issues, adaption to climate change, energy and cultures and languages. Further, the SDWG engages in projects in cooperation with other working groups. The following paragraph will assess the policy relevant conclusions of some of the most significant projects of the Council related to sustainable development.

Major projects undertaken in the Council include the ACIA and the two versions of the AHDR. The last two are SDWG projects, while the ACIA was produced by AMAP and CAFF in cooperation with the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC). The assessments include a section or a statement on policy relevant conclusions. These are worth investigating. In the months leading up to the ministerial meeting in 2004, there had been much speculation whether consensus on the ACIA policy recommendations would be achieved. The initial intention had been that a group of experts should develop the policy documents. The US, however, opposed the idea and the issue was brought to the Senior Arctic Officials. The SAOs negotiated a text that was referred to as the policy document (Hoel 2007, 126). This document focused on policy actions in response to the findings of the ACIA. Here it was stated that in response to climate change, the member states were taking two types of actions: mitigation and adaption. Mitigation included considering the findings of reports in implementing commitments under the UNFCC, adopting mitigation strategies across sectors, promoting development of

appropriate energy sources and technologies, and conserving and enhancing carbons sinks in accordance with the principles of sustainable development (Arctic Council 2004d, 4). On adaption, the document promised to work closely with Arctic residents, including indigenous and local communities, to help them to adapt to and manage the environmental, economic and social impacts of climate change and ultraviolet radiation change. It recognized that opportunities related to climate change, such as increased navigability of sea routes and access to resources, should be developed and managed in a sustainable manner, including through the consideration of environmental and social impacts and taking appropriate measures to protect the environment, local residents and communities. Further, the Council should implement, as appropriate, adaptive management strategies for Arctic ecosystems, making use of local and indigenous knowledge and participation, and review nature conservation and resource use policies and programmes (Arctic Council 2004d, 5). Otherwise, the document stressed the ACIA recommendations for further research both from natural and social sciences, and the need for circumpolar cooperation on research and monitoring (Arctic Council 2004d).

The Arctic Human Development Report was the first social science driven report conducted under the auspices of the Council. The AHDR-I section on policy relevant conclusions focused on two broad propositions.

1.) "*Arctic societies have a well-deserved reputation for resilience in the face of change. But today they are facing an unprecedented combination of rapid and stressful changes involving environmental processes (e.g. the impacts of climate change), cultural developments (e.g. the erosion of indigenous languages), economic changes (e.g. the emergence of narrowly based mixed economies), industrial developments (e.g. the growing role of multinational corporations engaged in the extraction of natural resources), and political changes (e.g. the devolution of political authority)*".

2.) "*The issues that dominate the Arctic agenda today typically involve institutional issues or matters of governance. These concerns arise at the local level (e.g. creating co-management regimes), the regional level (e.g. resolving frictions between public governments and indigenous peoples organizations, finding ways for county, state, and territorial governments to generate needed revenues), and the circumpolar level (e.g. sorting out relations between the Arctic Council and the Northern Forum)*".

<div align="right">(Einarsson et.al 2004, 10)</div>

Both major propositions are quite general. The first identifies some of the major changes happening in the Arctic region. The second proposition relates this to issues of governance on several levels. Although the propositions identify issue areas, they do not contain specific policy recommendations. Neither of them specifically concern the consequences of the challenges identified. Although researchers understandably want to restrain from explicit policy recommendations, consequences of developments are still a central part of policy relevant findings.

Key policy relevant conclusions of the second Arctic Human Development Report focused on findings of the report that were relevant to policy makers, and not as much the possible policy implications of these finds. Most of all, it identifies important focus areas under each heading, such as disparities under education between men and women and between indigenous and non-indigenous people, or adaption or best practices under resource governance. The conclusions were sorted under the themes; *Arctic population and migration, cultures and identities, economic systems, political systems, education and human capital, human health and well-being, legal systems, resource governance, globalization, and community viability and adaption* (Larsen and Fondahl 2015, 21–22). Examples of conclusions were that the Arctic will continue to be a high cost-region in terms of business and that climate change is not likely to change this, as benefits to increased accessibility will be balanced or even outweighed by infrastructure damage. Among other conclusions were that urbanization in the Arctic is accelerating, that the Arctic is becoming more "marketable", and that while legitimate participation is increased, indigenous fiscal and human resources are stretched to the limit in this area (Larsen and Fondahl 2015, 21-22). The conclusions also identified direct or indirect effects of climate change where more knowledge is needed, such as on food and water insecurity, gendered dimensions of Arctic change, or the effectiveness of institutional arrangements (Larsen and Fondahl 2015, 23-24).

The second AHDR version is more detailed than the first in terms of lifting specific priories under each theme, rather than "just" identifying broad issue areas. This can be interpreted as a sign that also the content of academic reports is moving towards highlighting specific political priority areas. Although the second AHDR is also limited in terms of policy recommendations, it goes further in outlining consequences of change, and specific challenges. Still, formulations such as "we need" are oriented towards gaps in knowledge, and where more knowledge is needed. As such, the reports reflect how the Council is situated in the realm of knowledge production. They all without doubt serve to build a comprehensive knowledge base.

The same can be said of the Council as a whole. It is more questionable whether this aim can be placed within the framework of "political approaches", as there is a lack of policy recommendations as opposed to knowledge production (not to say that knowledge production is not important). Instead then, we have to take the focus areas of the projects and reports more as indications of the general political approach. The general approach to sustainable development is mainstream or reformist in most ways. What stands out in the conception of sustainability as opposed to a general definition is the position of indigenous peoples as important stake holders. Their position is however limited by the member states conceptions of indigenous statehood and is therefore not radical in the sense of fundamentally altering societal structures. Further, added focus on culture and health are central hallmarks of an Arctic sustainable development. A central component in the mainstream approach is a focus on economic growth. As the previous sections have showed, there is a strong focus on this dimension on increasing economic activity and prosperity, and building infrastructure and capacity. This relates also to the special circumstances of the Arctic, and the challenges that come with establishing increased economic activity in the region. In other ways, the approach is more status quo oriented. One could say that this is the case in relation to mitigation of climate change. Although it is referred to, it is seen as something that is not within the scope of the Arctic Council. Some statements of mitigation commitments have been made, but always with reference to the UNFCC and that work should continue there. In this way, the AC does not aim to directly affect the status quo in the processes around climate change mitigation and agreements on emissions. Further, it could be argued that the focus on knowledge production contributes to a status quo approach. It is still mainly up to the member states to take policy actions, based on the information produced by the Arctic Council. Changing the status quo would happen indirectly, through affecting preferences or perceptions of actors through the cognitive niche. However, the thesis has in many ways been built on the presumption that this cognitive niche, and thus the Arctic Council can be powerful and meaningful. The intriguing question is what is communicated through this cognitive niche. What is the Arctic Council message on sustainable development? A summary of thoughts on the institutional approach will be presented in the next chapter, which summarises, analyses and concludes on the empirical finds of the PAA analysis in light of theory in institutions an ideas.

# Chapter 11: The institution and the idea

This analysing and concluding chapter will attempt to give a shorter answer to a wide and complex question. *How does the Arctic Council institutionally approach sustainable development?* "The institutional approach" includes both the ideational and the institutional. As a concept, it differs from the policy arrangement in that it more explicitly communicates that the investigation is centred on a formal political institution. Further, the discussion will centre more on the ideational and institutional as two main dimensions, rather than the PAA dimensions themselves. The institutional approach is generally loosely conceived of, and the main purpose of the analysis is to reflect on the theme of sustainable development Arctic Council in light of theory on institutions and ideas. As the theory chapter shows, ideas are a challenging subject to write about, from an ontological, epistemological and methodological perspective. Perceptions of institutions also vary, and perceptions of the relationship between institutions and ideas vary even more. Even though the thesis employed an analytical separation between institutions and ideas, this can be theoretically and practically challenging. The empirical investigation did indeed confirm this complexity.

For example, indigenous issues were identified as central in the discourse on sustainable development. This trait builds on both acceptance and legitimisation of ideas regarding indigenous rights, building on both global and domestic processes, as well as the institutional inclusion of IPOs as permanent participants. The institutional inclusion can in turn lead to other actors accepting these ideas and a strengthening of the indigenous focus in general. Another example is the separation of pillars of sustainable development and environmental protection, which seems to have contributed to a limited treatment of the connections between the three dimensions of sustainable development. In this way, the institution has affected the idea and its development, but again, this outcome is built on a compromise between the ideas and the interests that the different discourse coalitions have held. As seen, the US sought to limit the mandate of the Council to environmental protection rather than sustainable development as the overarching goal. Canada and the ICC sought to promote sustainable development as a broadening of the environmental focus. The question of primacy between these goals went largely unresolved, as seen in the establishment of the institutional structure. It is thus problematic to attribute aspects in the institutional approach to either ideational or institutional factors, or to structure or agency. In the end, the institutional approach as a result rests on a combination of ideas, institutions, agency and structure.

As shown in the theory chapter, there is disagreement as to whether ideas should be seen in a causal or constitutive light. The finds of the thesis contributes to an understanding of ideas as defining the universe of possibilities. Further, it contributes to a dialectical understanding of the relationship between the ideational and the material. Institutions do not appear by themselves, but are built on actors' perceptions of what is possible, what is preferable and what is suitable, among other things. Discourse and discourse coalitions carry, communicate and deliberate on these ideas. In discursive institutionalism, actors must rely on perceptions, which are inaccurate at best, to strategically navigate a complex and changing context. The Arctic Council was a result of actors' agency, and it was structured in accordance with the "universe of possibilities" that actors perceived. This universe contained ideas about sustainable development, about Arctic governance and about indigenous rights, to name a few components. When an institution is established, it can contribute towards the broadening or curtailing of the universe of possibilities in various issue areas. Indigenous influence was in some ways broadened as the organizations gained a voice and institutional space. In other ways, it stays curtailed by ideas on state sovereignty and control, that the Arctic Council also is built on and that its actors continue to hold. In this way, the influence of ideas and institutions on each other are multidimensional and complex themes. Although both can be said to influence the other, it is important to keep the discussion at a level of nuances to avoid oversimplification and inappropriately fixing meanings and causal relationships.

The PAA analysis has thoroughly described the institutional approach to sustainable development in the Arctic Council. The inductive case study approach has facilitated analysis where the limits between the object of analysis and its context are not evident. The main challenge is to make sense of the findings in a theoretical light, and summarising the large amounts of information is some sort of short answer. A long answer has already been given during the PAA analysis. A wide array of interesting questions and avenues of thought arise from the data material, although the data material only represents a limited selection of how the Arctic Council "approaches" sustainable development. The results therefore come with certain reservations. The analysis will present findings on both the ideational and the institutional dimension, but concentrate on how they relate to each other, and the theme of ideational and institutional change. It will conclude with some observations and experiences that are relevant to regime effectiveness, as well as advantages and disadvantages to the institutional approach, even though this has not been assessed directly in the thesis.

An important motivation for studying the Arctic Council is in the cognitive institutional niche. The Council can have an impact on actors' perceptions and interests through the production of knowledge and research, as well as through being a focal point for important discussions on Arctic governance. In uncertain times, actors can be unsure of what their interests are, and interests thus need to be explained rather than used as explanations. In light of the rapid socio-economic changes presented under political modernisation, the Arctic Council can play an important role through the cognitive niche, playing a role in forming ideas and interests in uncertain time. Therefore, it becomes important to understand how it approaches sustainable development, and communicates about it. Institutional effectiveness through a cognitive niche can be understood as having an impact on the views, interests or perceptions, and thereby actions, of actors. This has not been investigated directly in the thesis. However, there is agreement that the Council has strongly contributed to region-building and increased awareness of Arctic matters in international fora. This illustrates effectiveness through a cognitive niche.

Instead of assessing effectiveness in the sense of contributing to solving a problem (achieving sustainable development, to the degree that it can be "achieved"), the thesis has looked at the substance of how the Arctic Council approaches sustainable development, both in terms of institutional arrangement and in terms of discourse and ideas. The institutional approach itself constitutes communication, not only through the ideational dimension but also through the institutional dimension. The way that sustainable development was incorporated in the structure alongside with environmental protection communicates something about how actors perceive of the concept, its importance, and its relation to environmental protection. The Arctic Council has the objective of addressing the special circumstances of the Arctic in the context of global sustainable development. The thesis has investigated how a globally used concept and global processes of change takes on a distinct form or interpretation in the Arctic and in the Arctic Council. The concept of an institutional niche is characterised by how institutions find a way to contribute something beyond what already existing institutions contribute. A precondition for effectiveness on sustainable development through a cognitive niche can be understood as communicating something different than other institutions do, an Arctic-specific perception of, or approach to, sustainable development. The Council is central in the production of scientific knowledge of Arctic challenges, which contributes to changing the views and perceptions of actors and thus might influence their actions. This investigation, however, centres more on how various actors' views are incorporated into a (more or less) joint

approach in the Arctic Council, and what characterizes this approach. The discursive institutionalism- based approach enables us to see a nuanced picture of how discursive and institutional elements relate to each other and produce new practices. In this way, it can be used to not only describe, but also explain the development of the current institutional approach. However, the format has been quite explorative, and more knowledge as well as more extensive data is needed to fully understand sustainable development in the Arctic Council.

Along with fundamental processes of change such as climate change and globalisation follows a changing internal composition of the policy arrangement. The PAA analysis showed that both meaning coalitions and power relations are changing, and can hardly be described as a permanent state. The political modernization dimension was in this case important to include, increasing our understanding of the changes in the policy arrangement, and our contextual understanding of the institution-wide discourse. The discourse and policy on sustainable development is still evolving. Openness to change can also be seen in the political role of the Council and its informal rules, although its formal rules are more likely to be stable. This corresponds well with the narrative of "a changing Arctic". The analysis will explore the theme of change, as this also corresponds well to some central theoretical challenges in terms of institutions and ideas. It will start at the transition from the AEPS to the Arctic Council, and discuss the long lines in how the institutional approach to sustainable development has taken form in the twenty years following it.

The establishment of an institutional approach to sustainable development in the Arctic Council shows how both endogenous and exogenous processes of change can affect it. In discursive institutionalism, the functionality of institutions is an open, historical and empirical question, and it has been treated as such in the thesis. When the AEPS transitioned to the AC, it was an endogenous process of change, coming from actors within (although with varying enthusiasm). Canada and the ICC lobbied extensively for a broader institution, and the inclusion of indigenous peoples. The US, especially, was more hesitant. The Canadian view to a certain degree prevailed, as the AEPS was broadened to include sustainable development, and indigenous peoples gained a central role. Scholars have argued that Canada was more advanced in terms of its Arctic discourse, and thus came to the transition processes more prepared than others. However, there are many nuances to sustainable development in the Arctic Council and it is hard to pinpoint certain actors or discourses as dominating. This is shown in how the institutional arrangement came to be formed. In the end, sustainable development and environmental protection came to be the two founding pillars. Two sides of the same coin, many

would say, and a win for the more narrow environmental agenda according to some. Thus, even if the establishment of the Council might at first look seem to be a success for the sustainable development discourse coalition, the reality is more nuanced. Further, in a ground-breaking development on the international stage, indigenous peoples were given a significant space and voice as permanent participants. These two aspects are shown to have left a mark on the Arctic-specific conceptualization of sustainable development. Relations and competition between different discourse coalitions came to fundamentally affect the institutional approach on the dimensions of rules of the game, power relations and discourse and policy programmes. In the further development of the institutional approach, change can be initiated of all the dimensions identified in the PAA framework.

The theme of ideational and institutional change is contested. Both institutions and ideas can be seen as more or less stable. While some see ideas as powerful because of their stability, others argue that they do not typically reach an equilibrium. The Arctic Council institutional approach developed not only as a result of replacement of ideas, but rather from developments within them. The analysis showed that sustainable development has taken shape gradually, and that it is still evolving. It was not included or broadened after a critical juncture or external happenings, but as a result of ideational development and agency within the actors of the Council. Further, while some see institutions as mainly restricting the actions of actors, others see them more as resulting from them. As shown, the Arctic Council might be less restrictive than other institutions due to its loosely organized form. In many ways, its role depends on the actors themselves, and there is little institutional autonomy. Partially, the difficulties in separating the idea from the institution is also due to the nature of the Council. As a "high level forum", the Arctic Council is largely what the actors make of it. This is strongly exemplified by the debates over its role that have taken place. In this setting, the ideas and perceptions of actors of the Council are decisive of its role, which is adaptable to these circumstances.

The Brundtland concept of sustainable development, and the Rio summit, served as a basis for the ideational development in terms of sustainable development. This is explicitly communicated also in the Councils declarations. Other ideas have been "incorporated" into this general framework underway, such as the focus on indigenous challenges. The idea of sustainable development has several components, but it has not in the thesis been disaggregated into categories such as causal or normative ideas, world views, principled beliefs and so on. Disaggregation of the components within it could be an interesting avenue for further understanding it. For the purposes of the thesis, however, it has been viewed as a whole,

although various components have been discussed. This facilitates an understanding of how various parts of the idea relate to each other and to the institutional approach at large. The investigation has showed that the idea of sustainable development has not reached an equilibrium in the Council. It is not powerful because of its stability and clear prescriptions, but rather because of its flexibility. This is both a strength and a weakness. As the review of sustainable development showed, the concept can be said to maximise consensus rather than clarity. It has been successful in facilitating cooperation of a broad range of different actors under the same banner. Perhaps at the cost of this, its meaning and prescriptions are more unclear. In many ways, the same can be said of the Arctic Council. It has been successful in facilitating Arctic-wide cooperation, and ensuring the peaceful environment needed to tackle issues that may arise from Arctic change. Again, perhaps at the cost of this, its intentions and policies on sustainable development are harder to grasp. The theme of "broadness versus clarity" is theoretically interesting. Is there necessarily a contradiction inherent between broad ideas and clarity in programmes? To which degree can sustainable development involve clear prescriptions, without losing its appeal to a wide range of actors? The thesis will not conclude on this question, apart from identifying it as a possible avenue for research in relation to regime effectiveness and institution building.

The Arctic Council was not designed to govern, or to be an autonomous body. In some ways, it seems strange to analyse as if it had an autonomous voice as separate from that of member states. The institution is exclusively based on the full consensus of all member states, with the full consultation of indigenous peoples. At the same time, its institutional approach is more than the sum of all member states interests and ideas. It is a forum for debating, discussing and reviewing these interests and ideas. More knowledge is needed about the processes happening within such institutions, about "what comes in", and "what comes out" and what happens in between. The thesis has not reviewed processes from the inside and eventual changes in actors' discourse, ideas or interests (which can be seen as a sign of institutional effectiveness), but rather attempted to grasp aspects of institution-wide aspects of sustainable development discourse. This can represent a first step towards understanding the processes that go on within. This "outcome" has been contextualized by including political modernisation and global discourses on sustainable development, although context is to a large degree viewed in an institutional light.

The Arctic Council in 1998 established a working group on sustainable development, the SDWG, to attain to the pillar of sustainable development. Five other working groups are

devoted mainly to environmental protection. Several authors have argued that sustainable development should be the overarching principle, and the Council has itself stated that sustainable development should permeate all activities. Still, the sustainable development work has been criticised for being incoherent and lacking of a long-term strategy. The final PAA chapter also illustrated how it is hard to find a long-term strategy throughout declarations and other important documents or programmes. This can be connected to the separation of the pillars, as well as issues of communication and division of labour that have not made the process easier. However, these challenges are also very much related to the structure of the Council as a whole. The states opted for a low-commitment solution, in that no enforcement mechanisms or financial commitments were implemented. As seen, funding is ad hoc. This makes long-term strategic planning difficult for the Council and its working groups. A treaty basis would likely allow the states to enter into more controversial policy areas. However, there are many advantages to the current institutional form as well, perhaps most markedly the thorough establishment of an environment for Arctic-wide cooperation and the production of important scientific assessments. It is not obvious that a change in institutional structure would make work more effective.

Not only institutional features make for challenges in the sustainable development work. As seen, the concept itself has been criticised for being subjected to woolly thinking and competing agendas. Opinions differ on whether the concept is too vague, or whether its vagueness can be seen as a strength. Either way, it does not come with clear instructions or priorities for balancing the social and economic development and environmental protection. As the Brundtland report also specified, sustainable development is a process of change and not a fixed state. It must rest on political will. In the early years, it was impossible for the Council to agree on a coherent plan for the sustainable development programme. It was instead to be composed of a string of projects proposed and adopted by the member states. Attempts have been made of clarification, and the work has gradually broadened and deepened. Examples of this include the Sustainable Development Action Plan, which identified several priority areas, the Arctic Human Development Report, which identified important gaps in knowledge, and the Arctic Social Indicators, which identified important Arctic indicators of sustainable development. The shifting form of work plans, which have transitioned from focus on single projects to identifying broader focus areas and crosscutting projects, further strengthens clarification and coherence of the Arctic Council sustainable development work.

Gradually, a more Arctic-specific view on sustainable development has materialised. In the early years, focus was on gaining more knowledge. The Arctic Human Development Reports have been instrumental in assessing and mapping gaps in knowledge and priority areas. The actors have acknowledged that the Council work on sustainable development lagged behind. What was not acknowledged by the actors (in this data material) is that the separation of environmental protection and sustainable development might constitute a problem. In the mid-2000s a stronger discourse on what Arctic sustainable development entails became emergent. The concept is, and has been since the start, fundamentally grounded in the Brundtland definition. It builds on the same dimensions: the social, economic and environmental dimension of sustainable development. The institutional structure signals that the social and economic dimension can be grouped together as sustainable development, separate but complimentary to environmental protection. This is one, perhaps unintended, distinction of Arctic sustainable development as opposed to the more general concept. It can be questioned whether this shifts the discussion away from the fundamental connections between the two pillars. In this data material, explicit connections between them seem weak, but firm conclusions on this requires more in-depth knowledge and exploration of other sources. As acknowledged in the methods chapter, I have not been "on the inside" of these processes, and therefore I therefore have limited knowledge about how actors approach the connections and complexities in sustainable development, apart from in more general sources such as declarations, programmes and so on.

The institutional inclusion of indigenous peoples has made its mark on the conception of sustainable development. In its definitions of sustainable development, culture is emphasised at an equal status as the other three dimensions. Cultural concerns can be strongly linked to indigenous issues, as seen in the chapter on political modernisation. The assessment of projects showed that culture and indigenous challenges have been consistently worked on throughout the cooperation. The perhaps strongest signal of the centrality of indigenous issues, however, comes from the Arctic Social Indicators. Three of the indicators are considered uniquely "northern", and all three can be explicitly linked to indigenous issues. These include fate control, cultural well-being and closeness to the natural world. The indigenous focus has been central in conceptualizing an Arctic approach to sustainable development. The separation of pillars and the inclusion of indigenous peoples are both central traits on the institutional dimension. Although the forum is loosely organised, it can be seen here that institutional features do seem to have a persistent impact on sustainable development as an idea.

The AC has identified a number of priority areas under the heading of sustainable development. On the economic dimension, the conceptualization is characterised by an emphasis on prosperity and economic growth, through capacity building, development of infrastructure and economic cooperation. This is also characteristic of a mainstream approach to sustainable development, where fundamental structures of society and the growth paradigm are not addressed. The social dimension emphasizes health, culture and education as important areas. On the environmental dimension, emphasis is on monitoring and assessment, pollution, biodiversity and the prevention and response to ecological disasters, as well as capacity building and adaption. The AC, as well as its scientific reports have identified priority areas under sustainable development. This was among other things formulated in the SDAP and the Vision for the Arctic. It does not go as far in outlining consequences of changes or policy actions tied to a long-term strategy on the priority areas. Generally, focus is on gaining knowledge and to a lesser degree on following up on the knowledge that is produced. This is shown by the limited information and focus on implementation and follow-up regarding projects. The discourse and policy on sustainable development, as indicated through important documents and prioritization of research projects, is largely centred on a mainstream approach to sustainable development. The strong focus on capacity building and adaption, rather than mitigation in terms of climate change points to elements that are perhaps more a "status quo" approach.

However, there was not, and is not, one single idea of sustainable development in the Arctic. An important assumption in the PAA framework is that there exists several (and competing) discourse coalitions. The analysis identified an initial conflict between a discourse coalition driven by Canada and the Inuit Circumpolar Council, and the American and Russian discourse. Further, it outlined other possible meaning coalitions, such as the grouping of the five littoral states, the A5, or the cooperation between permanent participants. Since the formal inclusion of sustainable development in 1996, the Arctic Council has gradually broadened and deepened its focus on economic and social challenges. Although it might initially have been a "win" for the environmental agenda, sustainable development arguably has become more central to the institution. This find contributes to an understanding of ideas and interests as open to change, as opposed to powerful due to their stability. It also points to the centrality of soft power and discourse in the Arctic Council. Discourse coalitions are not necessarily stable over time. Actors have increasingly accepted and adopted the focus on and the language of sustainable development, and the purely environmental agenda thus seems weakened. This cannot only be ascribed to endogenous changes in the policy arrangement, but also has to be

seen in light of global processes of change and increasing focus on both the Arctic and sustainable development. The analysis identified several possible coalitions, and illustrated how increasing attention towards the Arctic can contribute to changing patterns in coalitions and power relations. One example is the sudden policy shifts in the A5 vs the A8 debates in the late 2000s. Discourse coalitions, and their success, should be seen in connection to power, influence and resources. Power resources concerns which actors have the ability to mobilize for their preferred outcomes. Power is hard to conceptualize and empirically assess generally, maybe even more so in light of the consensus-base where all member states at least formally have equal power. The analysis showed that discursive power and agenda setting is important in this framework, along with the more practical resources that were identified as the ability to contribute financially and scientifically. On the discursive dimension, several authors have claimed that Canada was more developed in its northern policies and discourse. It was therefore more prepared and could dominate the discourse in the wider cooperation as well. This dominant position can, however, not be taken for granted. From images of a frozen north far away, actors from all over the world are becoming more aware of the Arctic and its possibilities and challenges. The Arctic Council has also contributed to the perception of the Arctic as a distinct region, where the narrative has changed from a "frozen Arctic" to a "changing Arctic", and where new opportunities as well as threats are central. In this context, powers such as the US and China are becoming increasingly attentive to their Arctic interests. These developments could serve to change power relations in the Council, as actors are more willing to deploy their power resources towards the Arctic region. At the same time, actors within the Council have been somewhat cautious when it comes to non-Arctic actors. This concerns not only member states, but also permanent participants, who fear that their position within the Council could be weakened if member states and PPs were to be substantially outnumbered by observers. This could alter the somewhat fragile position of power that the PPs inhibit, and possibly weaken the focus on indigenous issues in the sustainable development policy, discourse and projects. Within the institutional framework that actors are still committed to, the Arctic states with inclusion of permanent participants will continue to play a dominating role. It remains to be seen whether outside actors will accept what has been seen as a limited position within the Council. At this time, however access to the Artic Council through observer status is still seen as the best formal pathway to inclusion in Arctic governance. Exogenous processes of change can serve to change the role of the Arctic Council, and with it the idea of and discourse on sustainable development.

When it comes to the institutional form, the Council is more likely to be stable. Given the political challenges of establishing a "hard law" regime and earlier success in the production of scientific assessments, it is likely that soft power will continue to play the dominating role (Nilsson 2012, 193). Still, the Council has become more institutionalized, and made important steps towards reform, within its general framework. An example is the establishment of a standing secretariat in 2011. The same level of institutionalization cannot (yet) be found in terms of the ideational dimension of the institutional approach to sustainable development. The concept of Arctic sustainable development is still in a process of maturing. Mainly this concerns long-term strategies, as well relating projects to such a strategy. Outside actors have also been sceptical of the sustainable development work in the Arctic Council. For example, in a Greenpeace commissioned report called "The practice and promise of the Arctic Council", the authors wrote: "*the SDWG conducts a series of interesting and important, but essentially uncoordinated projects*" (Fenge and Funston 2015, 19). A recent Centre for International and Strategic Studies (CSIS) report also concluded that the AC has successfully lived up to its mandate on protecting the Arctic environment, and to a much lesser extent sustainable development (Conley and Melino 2016, 19).

Schmidt and Radaelli argue that it is one thing for a discourse to appear relevant, applicable and coherent when it is situated primarily in the realm of ideas (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004, 202). This stage is passed, as the discourse and language of sustainable development has been accepted and adopted by all actors. The inclusion of, and increasing focus on, sustainable development signals that it is seen as relevant, applicable and coherent in the realm of ideas. It is more unclear how it should materialize. The question if it is still seen primarily in the realm of ideas. Schmidt and Radaelli continue:

"*But when its policy recommendations are put into action, a certain amount of incoherence in the discourse- vagueness in its description, passing over in silence the areas which do not fit the discourse and so on- may be natural and even necessary to ensure the continuation of the policy programme. The question here is how much disconnection between the discourse and the policy programme may be acceptable, or even beneficial to their survival* (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004, 202).

The Arctic Council is in the process of putting the policy recommendations of sustainable development into action, and has formulated a wish to move from policy shaping to policy making. It may be necessary to go through a phase where a certain incoherence and vagueness is natural or productive. It is hard to say how long this phase should last. The Arctic Council

has passed 20 years since sustainable development was agreed to as a founding pillar. Observers have pointed out that as it entered the second round of chairmanships, it potential would truly be revealed. The main challenge, based on this evaluation, is to form a long term, clear and coherent strategy, bettering communication and securing information on follow-up and implementation. In addition to institutional challenges, there are political challenges relating to sustainable development itself, for example discussed by Keohane and Victor in relation to climate change. In the case of the Council and Arctic governance, generally, an atmosphere for cooperation has developed, and the Council can indeed be what the actors make of it. Overcoming institutional challenges is the most important hindrance to more effective sustainable development work, given that there is sufficient political will and commitment (which is not an insignificant reservation). Actors within the Arctic Council seem partly aware of the problems in creating a holistic approach to sustainable development. However, the actors mainly recognize that work on social and economic dimensions has lagged behind, rather than connecting this explicitly to institutional challenges.

As seen in the analysis, issues of communication have been problematic for the institution, especially in light of forming a coherent strategy to sustainable development when working groups are separated. Some more practical issues of communication exist as well, most clearly for outside observers in external communication. The experience of working with the document archive shows that documents are generally hard to locate as documents of the same kind are located in different places, and some documents referenced other places are nowhere to be found. This is an important experience to include, because it speaks to the level of institutionalisation as a whole, and to the transparency and accountability of the Council. Further, information on implementation of projects and strategies is needed. The SDAP (or a similar updated document) does not function as a red thread that goes through all activities. A table of actions is not utilized, as planned, to clarify for the Council itself as well as outside actors how the projects are connected to a general strategy or framework. Currently, project and work plans are generally not explicitly placed in the wider framework of a sustainable development programme or an action plan. Further, there is little or no information on implementation and follow-up. If projects are to be structured according to an overarching plan or goal, it is important to have some kind of information of whether the outcomes of projects, such as guidelines and recommendations, are actively utilized by target groups and member states. In light the cognitive niche, it is important to know something about how actors interact with the information produced by the AC. This is also an interesting avenue for further research.

The idea of sustainable development has been accepted partly because of its ambiguity, which can be both an advantage and a problem. Important work can be done through the Arctic Council while sustainable development is still situated in the realm of ideas. Moving from "low hanging fruit" and *policy shaping* to *policy making* requires that the Council and its actors moves out of the realm of ideas, where contentious issues also have to be discussed and dealt with. One of the clearest examples is the somewhat one-sided focus on adaption and not mitigation as a strategy to deal with climate change. The fact that the AC is not the politically appropriate forum for dealing with emissions seems to have shifted the discourse away from connections between emissions and economic development. Again, this observation comes with certain reservations, as I do not possess in-depth knowledge about these discussions. In this data material, there are few clear statements or priorities on how these are connected and how this should be dealt with. As the Brundtland report emphasised, sustainable development must in the end rest on political will. That it must rest on political will reflects that sustainable development cannot only be about the low hanging fruit. Themes like mitigation of green house gasses or regulation of oil and gas activities needs at least to be on the agenda, if the Council has ambitions of being the preeminent forum for Arctic sustainable development. As shown in the final PAA chapter, this these are not focus areas for the Council, in neither declarations nor projects.

The Arctic Council has been very successful in facilitating a cooperative environment for the Arctic states, which seems to be relatively independent of tensions arising over other geopolitical developments. It has further produced large amounts of knowledge, identifying important priority areas and gaps in knowledge. Reports, policy documents, ministerial declarations and chairmanship declarations, however, need to take a step further in outlining consequences of changes and of different political choices. Further, the Council has had an important role in region building and promotion of an Arctic focus in global fora. It has the potential to become a significant actor on sustainable development, if it can overcome some political and institutional challenges. The Council is what actors make of it.

**11.1 Conclusion and further research**

The research question asked how the Arctic Council institutionally approaches sustainable development. This was conceptualized through an institutional and an ideational dimension. Generally, the institutional approach, much like the concept of sustainable development can be said to maximise consensus rather than clarity. On the institutional dimension, the most significant aspect is the separation of sustainable development and environmental protection as two separate pillars, and as separate working groups. This institutional feature affects the ideational dimension as well, where connections between socioeconomic issues and environmental protection are weak. Further, long term strategies and overarching frameworks for sustainable development are not explicitly tied to projects that are undertaken. The Council is, however, moving towards a broader agenda and towards more cross-cutting projects. Sustainable development as an idea in the Arctic Council resembles the mainstream Brundtland definition, with an added focus on culture and indigenous issues.

The thesis has represented a step towards a deeper understanding of the Arctic Council and sustainable development. It has provided a general, but by no means exhaustive overview of sustainable development in the Arctic Council. It has to a large degree concentrated on the Sustainable Development Working Group. Analysing the Council and sustainable development more holistically, as well as assessing relationships and division of labour between working groups would be an interesting avenue for further research. Several aspects of the institutional approach were challenging to treat. This includes for example the changing nature of discourse coalitions and power in a context of Arctic change, in the context of a "high level forum". Further, a discourse analysis was not undertaken, but a stronger inclusion of it would have strengthened the analysis. The Arctic Council is an interesting case for understanding the relationship between ideas, interests, and change at a more general level, and how this materialises in soft-law institutions. Generally, we need to know more about sustainable development as "the mantra of our time" and what it really entails. The Arctic Council is an immensely interesting and multidimensional case, where a range of different approaches can illuminate themes as varied as sustainable development policy, Arctic governance, the cognitive impact of institutions or power in scientific assessments.

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**Appendix A. SDWG projects 2011-2017. By thematic area**.

Based on work-plans for 2011-2017.[8]


**Arctic Human Health:**

- **Comparative Review of Circumpolar Health Systems Report**. 2011- 2013. Leads: Arctic Human Health Group, Canada, Greenland.

- **Arctic Human Health Initiative**. 2011-2013. Lead: USA.

- **International Circumpolar Surveillance**. 2011-2013. Lead: USA.

- **Arctic Human Health Expert Group.** Developed 2011-2013[9].

- **Food and Water Security.** Developed 2013-2015. AMAP and SDWG Health Experts.

- **Promoting Mental Wellness in Northern Circumpolar Communities.** Developed 2013-2015. Leads: Canada, United States.

- **Community Water, Sanitation and Public Health.** 2015-2017.

- **Operationalizing One Health in the Arctic.** 2015-2017.


**Arctic Socio-economic issues:**

- **Arctic Social Indicators.** 2011-2013. Lead: Iceland

- **Arctic Human Development Report II:** Developed 2011-2013. Leads: Denmark, Greenland, Canada, Iceland.  Continued into 2013-2015 period.

- **Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Business in the Arctic.** Developed 2011-2014. Lead: Sweden.[10]

- **Gender and Equity in the Arctic- conference and network.**  Developed 2013-2015. Lead: Iceland.

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[8]

Note: some projects are reoccurring and listed under each of the periods where they were ongoing. Projects may have changed slightly in title, or parts of the overarching projects are listed under a slightly changed name. Leads of projects in parenthesis. The overview is based on work plans for the SDWG (SDWG 2011; SDWG 2013; SDWG n.d, see literature list).

[9] In "Main Achievements 2011-2013". Work Plan 2013-2015.

[10] ----

**- ECONOR III.** 2015-2017. Lead: Statistics Norway.

- **The Arctic as a Food Producing Region.** 2015-2017.

## <u>Adaption to Climate Change:</u>

**-Adaption Actions for a changing Arctic Part a.** Developed 2011-2013. Lead: SDWG.

**- Facilitating Adaption to Climate Change.** Developed 2013-2015.

-**Arctic Adaption Exchange: Facilitating Adaption to Climate Change.** 2015-2017.

**Arctic Water Resources Vulnerability Index.** 2015-2017. Will feed into Arctic Adaption Exchange.

## <u>Energy and Arctic Communities</u>

**- Remote Communities and Renewable Energy.** 2015-2017. Lead: USA.

**- Arctic Energy Summit.** 2015-2017. Support of multidisciplinary event.

## <u>Management of Natural Resources</u>

None

## <u>Arctic Cultures and Languages</u>

**-Assessment of Cultural Heritage and Monuments and Sites in the Artic.** 2011-2013. Lead: Norway

**- Areas of Heightened Cultural Significance AMSA Recommendation II c.** 2011-2013. Lead: Norway.

**- Arctic Indigenous Languages Symposium Follow-up.** Developed 2011-2013. Lead: Canada.

 **- ICC Response to AMSA Recommendations Follow-up.** Developed 2011-2013. Lead: Canada. **A Circumpolar- Wide Response to the AMSA.** 2013-2015. Leads: ICC, Canada, United States.

- **Reindeer Herding and Youth.** Developed 2011-2013. Leads: Russia, World Association of Reindeer Herders.  Continued into 2013-2015 period. Lead by Norway, supported by Russia.

-**Assessing, Monitoring and Promoting Arctic Indigenous Languages.** 2013-2015. Leads: Canada, USA, Denmark/Greenland. Continued into 2015-2017.

- **Traditional and Local Knowledge.** Developed 2013-2015. Lead: Canada.  Continued into 2015-2017.

- **RISING-SUN: Reducing the incidence of suicide in indigenous groups.** 2015-2017.

- **EALLU: Arctic Indigenous Youth, Climate Change and Food Culture.**


**Strategic Planning/ Others**

- **SDWG Strategic Planning: On a Way Forward.** 2011-2013. Leads: Canada / SDWG Strategic Planning Task Force.

- **Electronic Memory of the Arctic.** Developed 2011-2013. Lead: Russia. Continued into 2013-2015 period. Leads: Norway and Russia.

-  **The Arctic Maritime Aviation and Transportation Infrastructure Initiative.** Developed 2011-2013. Lead: USA.

-

**Appendix B. Actors in the Arctic Council.**

 (Arctic Council 2016a) (Arctic Council 2016c)

**MEMBER STATES**

USA

Canada

Russia

Iceland

Finland

Norway

Denmark

Sweden


**PERMANENT PARTICIPANTS**

Aleut International Association (AIA)

Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC)

Gwich'in Council International (GCI)

Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC)

Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON)

Saami Council (SC)


**OBSERVERS**

**Non Arctic States**

1. **France** - Barrow Ministerial meeting, 2000
2. **Germany** - Iqaluit Ministerial meeting, 1998*
3. **The Netherlands** - Iqaluit Ministerial meeting, 1998*
4. **Poland** - Iqaluit Ministerial meeting, 1998*
5. **Spain** - Salekhard Ministerial meeting, 2006
6. **United Kingdom** - Iqaluit Ministerial meeting, 1998*
7. **People's Republic of China** - Kiruna Ministerial meeting, 2013
8. **Italian Republic** - Kiruna Ministerial meeting, 2013
9. **Japan** - Kiruna Ministerial meeting, 2013*

10. **Republic of Korea** - Kiruna Ministerial meeting, 2013
11. **Republic of Singapore** - Kiruna Ministerial meeting, 2013
12. **Republic of India** - Kiruna Ministerial meeting, 2013

## Intergovernmental and inter-parliamentary organizations:

1. International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) - Barrow Ministerial meeting, 2000
2. International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) - Barrow Ministerial meeting, 2000*
3. Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) - Iqaluit Ministerial meeting, 1998
4. Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) - Reykjavik Ministerial meeting, 2004
5. North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) - Barrow Ministerial meeting, 2000
6. Standing Committee of the Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (SCPAR) - Iqaluit Ministerial meeting, 1998
7. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE) - Iqaluit Ministerial meeting, 1998
8. United Nations Development Program (UNDP) - Inari Ministerial meeting 2002
9. United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) - Iqaluit Ministerial meeting, 1998

At the Kiruna Ministerial Meeting in 2013, the Arctic Council "receive[d] the application of the EU for Observer status affirmatively", but deferred a final decision. Until such time as Ministers of the Arctic States may reach a final decision, the EU may observe Council proceedings.

## Non-governmental organizations:

1. Advisory Committee on Protection of the Seas (ACOPS) - Barrow Ministerial meeting, 2000*
2. Arctic Institute of North America (AINA) (Formerly Arctic Cultural Gateway (ACG)) - Reykjavik Ministerial meeting, 2004 (as: Arctic Circumpolar Route)
3. Association of World Reindeer Herders (AWRH) - Barrow Ministerial meeting, 2000
4. Circumpolar Conservation Union (CCU) - Barrow Ministerial meeting, 2000
5. International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) - Iqaluit Ministerial meeting, 1998*
6. International Arctic Social Sciences Association (IASSA) - Barrow Ministerial meeting, 2000
7. International Union for Circumpolar Health (IUCH) - Iqaluit Ministerial meeting, 1998*
8. International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) - Inari Ministerial meeting, 2002
9. Northern Forum (NF) - Iqaluit Ministerial meeting, 1998
10. University of the Arctic (UArctic) - Inari Ministerial meeting, 2002