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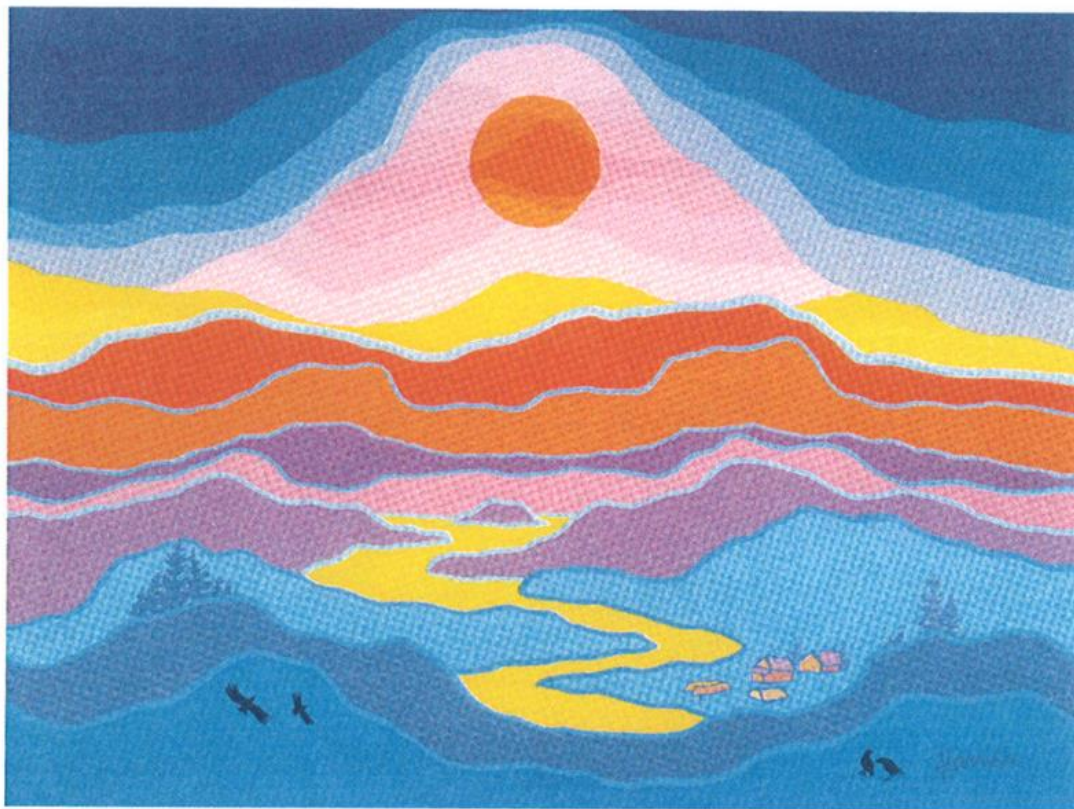
The evolution and effectiveness of the Arctic Council - lessons for Arctic governance and beyond

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The Changing Arctic. Strengthening research cooperation between
Estonia and Norway. April 14, 2021

Introduction

- 25th anniversary of the Arctic Council (AC)
- From inauspicious beginnings to “**primary intergovernmental forum** for cooperation on issues of environmental protection and sustainable development in the Arctic”
- Fascinating case of a regional institution at the **forefront** of global **climate change**
- Features that set the AC apart – how to think systematically about its **performance** and **effectiveness**?



Arctic Council

Arctic Council

- Based on a **non-legally binding instrument**
- Largely unique form of involvement of organizations of Arctic indigenous peoples as **Permanent Participants**
- Open to non-Arctic states and organizations as **Observers**
- Strong **knowledge-generation** and **science-policy** component
- From peripheries closer to center of international affairs

Evolution over time

- Since 2005/2007 rapidly growing interest in the Arctic - and in the Arctic Council
- Adaptive measures taken by the AC (no major change in the rules of procedure)
 - Criteria for and the admission of new Observers – today 38 + EU
 - Permanent Secretariat opened in 2013
 - Arctic Economic Council (AEC)
 - Executive SAO meetings, Task Forces, legally-binding agreements
 - Changing character around Ministerial meetings



Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting
Rovaniemi, Finland, May 2019

How effective has the Arctic Council been?

AC's contributions to Arctic governance

- AC has done best in **identifying emerging issues**, generating knowledge and **setting agenda** for policy considerations
 - New issues: marine litter, plastics, wildfires, COVID-19
- It informed – and occasionally influenced – international processes
- It continues **supporting work** of the Stockholm & Minamata Conventions, IMO (Polar Code – PAME), CBD (CAFF), IPCC (AMAP)
- Provided **forum for negotiations** of 3 legally-binding agreements

Moving forward

- Need for governance arrangements suitable to operate under **conditions of change** and **interconnectivity**
- No single legally binding mechanism for the Arctic - various international conventions + national regulations
- Limitations of regulatory and legally-binding arrangements
- Inclusion of a wide range of actors



ARCTIC COUNCIL



In closing

- Most critical problems in the world today are highly complex and interconnected
- Rapid change in the Arctic foreshadows similar transformations worldwide
- Need to **think creatively** about ways to address challenges ahead
- Arctic Council is an ***innately flexible*** mechanism
 - Relatively easy adjustments
 - Allows for much enhanced participation of non-state actors



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Thank you.

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