

Multilevel Governance and Interregional Cooperation in the Arctic and North

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Why to focus on multilevel governance and interregional cooperation

A series of seminars and workshops focusing on the multilevel governance and interregional cooperation was organized in 2021 (mainly online). The institutional framework of this initiative were Japan's Arctic Challenge for Sustainability (ArCS) II project and the Human Resource Development Platform for Japan-Russia Economic Cooperation and Personnel Exchange (HaRP). The former includes the research program "Elucidating the Complex Dynamics of Arctic Politics and Its Contribution to Japan's Arctic Policy" that has a subgroup focusing on non-state actors and paradiplomacy. The latter is an undertaking funded by Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), which focuses on the areas

covered by the 2016 Japan-Russia 8-point Plan for Economic Cooperation and includes 8 specialized sections corresponding to these points. One of these sections is called "SDGs: Environment, Resource Development, Multicultural Education", and its participants have demonstrated a particular interest in the Arctic-related matters.

The intellectual premise of this series is the notion that international relations and cross-border activity are not a field or domain that solely belongs to nation-states and national governments. In fact, a wide range of actors from subnational governments and multinational companies to NGOs and epistemic communities are involved in and possess capacities to plan and implement their own initiatives. Although the increasing influence of such actors on issues transcending national borders has long attracted the attention of researchers (as manifested by the emergence of such concepts as multi-level governance, two-level games, paradiplomacy etc.)¹, recent studies focusing on international

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¹ Putnam, P. (1988). Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games. *International Organization*, 42, 3, Summer 1988; Duchacek, I. D. (1990). Perforated sovereignties: Towards a typology of new actors in international relations. In H. J. Michelmann & P. Soldatos (Eds.), *Federalism and international relations: The role of subnational units*. Oxford; Aldecoa, F. & Keating, M. (Eds.) (1999).

relations and governance research in the Arctic context argue that too much weight has been given to sovereign states and geopolitics, and there is a lack of research focusing on multi-stakeholder collaboration, multilevel governance, and the role of indigenous organizations and subnational entities, for instance².

Although a number of books, articles and edited collections concerning these issues have been published during the recent years³, the organizers of the series considered it important to bring together scholars and other stakeholders / practitioners around the same (virtual) table. The starting point

for this series was a series of the following questions:

- What are possibilities and limitations of different actors and forums for interregional cooperation?
- What issue areas are meaningful for cooperation between non-state actors?
- What can and should be done at the subnational level?
- Can top-down initiatives lead to fruitful cooperation at the regional or local level?
- How can national and regional actors support local initiatives?

Paradiplomacy in action: The foreign relations of subnational governments. London; Dickson, F. (2014). The Internationalisation of Regions: Paradiplomacy or Multi-level Governance? *Geography Compass*, 8(10), 689–700. doi:10.1111/gec3.12152; Kuznetsov, A. S. (2015). *Theory and Practice of Paradiplomacy: Subnational Governments in International Affairs*. Abingdon: Routledge.

² Knecht, S. and Laubenstein, P. (2020). Is Arctic governance research in crisis? A pathological diagnosis. *Polar Record*, 56, e35. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247420000352>; Tsui, E. (2020). Looking around: Opportunities of Using Paradiplomacy Scholarship in the Arctic Discussions. In T. S. Axworthy, S. French & E. Tsui (Eds.), *Lessons from the Arctic: The role of Regional Government in International Affairs*. Mosaic Press.

³ Rowe, E. W. (2018). *Arctic Governance: Power in Cross-Border Cooperation*. Manchester: Manchester University Press; Sergunin, A. (2019). Subnational Tier of Arctic Governance. In M. Finger and L. Heininen (Eds.), *The Global Arctic Handbook*. Cham: Springer; Ackren, M. (2019). Diplomacy and paradiplomacy in the North Atlantic and the Arctic – A comparative approach. In M. Finger & L. Heininen (Eds.), *The Global Arctic handbook*. Cham: Springer; Kossa, M. (2019). China's Arctic engagement: Domestic actors and foreign policy. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 32(1), 19–38. doi:10.1080/14781158.2019.1648406; Landriault, M., Charter, A., Rowe, E. W. and Lackenbauer, P.W. (2020). Governing Complexity in the Arctic Region. Abingdon: Routledge; Kossa, M., Lomaeva, M., and Saunavaara, J. (2020). East Asian subnational government involvement in the Arctic: A case for paradiplomacy? *The Pacific Review*, 34(4).

- What opportunities can be offered by public-private partnerships?
- What can be achieved through multilateral cooperation, and what role do bilateral ties play?

Workshop and seminar series

This series is based on cooperation between various actors. The organizations and projects that have been involved in all workshops and seminars include Hokkaido University

Arctic Research Center, HaRP, ArCS II project, and the UArctic Thematic Network on the Arctic in Asia, Asia in the Arctic. In addition, various other actors, such as UiT – the Arctic University of Norway, University of Lapland, Moscow State University, Khabarovsk State University of Economics and Law, and UArctic Thematic Network on Arctic Law, have contributed to the planning and implementation of different events.

Table 1: Multilevel Governance and Interregional Cooperation series
Online workshop “Multilevel Governance and Interregional Cooperation: Vol.1 – The Pacific Arctic” held on January 12, 2021 https://russia-platform.oia.hokudai.ac.jp/en/event/5486
Online workshop “Japan-Russia Interregional Cooperation in the Arctic and North – Theory and Practice” held on March 3, 2021 https://russia-platform.oia.hokudai.ac.jp/en/report/5871
Online workshop “Multilevel Governance and Interregional Cooperation: Vol.2 – The Barents Region” held on June 9, 2021” https://russia-platform.oia.hokudai.ac.jp/en/report/6318
Online workshop “Sustainable Regional Development, International Cooperation and the Protection of the Arctic Environment” held on September 14, 2021 https://russia-platform.oia.hokudai.ac.jp/en/report/6866
International online conference “Cross-border interregional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region as a driver for the development of the Russian Far East and the Asian Arctic” held on October 18, 2021 https://russia-platform.oia.hokudai.ac.jp/en/report/7175
Seminar on “Strengthening Region-building through Multilevel Governance and Interregional Cooperation: Urban Sustainability through the Arctic Mayors’ Forum: Part 1” held on November 15, 2021

Key actors

Although there has been variation between different workshops and seminars (also reflecting the geographical focus of individual events), most speakers and participants of the series have come from Russia and Japan (which was an anticipated outcome, determined by the design and institutional framework of this series), followed by Norway and Finland. The speakers represent various academic institutions, local, regional and national governments, NGOs and private enterprises.

The Russian speakers represented not only the central venerable research and educational institutions (such as Moscow State University, Saint Petersburg State University, Moscow State Institute of International Relations and Higher School of Economics) but also regional centers of the Arctic and northern research in both the western and eastern part of the Russian Arctic Zone (Kola Science Centre, Economic Research Institute of Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences Khabarovsk State University of Economics and Law). The latter are playing a prominent role in the regional networks on the Arctic-related issues, providing advice to the local and regional authorities and

private companies, cooperating with environmental NGOs, and at times also acting as a conduit for cross-border cooperation of the actors in these networks with the neighboring regions in the Barents, Bering and Far East regions. Most Japanese speakers, on the other hand, came from research centers in the regions with a long history of paradiplomatic (sister-city and sister-region) engagement with the Russian Far East (Hokkaido, Niigata and Kobe), which have also played a major part in shaping Japan's Arctic policy.

This series at the intersection of the two research avenues – the Arctic and north-related cross-border cooperation, and the Northeast Asian countries' (such as Japan and China's) cross-border cooperation with the Arctic countries' regions – provided a good opportunity to take stock of the actors involved, their past and current projects and forums, which may be useful in streamlining further collaboration and establishing links between the existing networks.

Recurrent themes and key findings

While the workshops and seminars described above have placed focus on different actors and geographical areas, several recurrent themes and

discussions related to the multilevel governance may be identified:

- *The past, present, and future of different forums and organizations supporting international and interregional cooperation in the Arctic* (How initiatives such as Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation and the Northern Forum have contributed to development of the Arctic and north; what can be achieved through more recent initiatives such as the Arctic Mayor's Forum and Bering / Pacific-Arctic Council, etc.)
- *The role and added value of cross-border interregional cooperation* (What can be achieved through interregional cooperation in the Arctic and north; can interregional cooperation act as a driver of economic development; what is the value of cultural exchange across national borders; does cross-border interregional cooperation provide benefits to the entire participating regions, or are these benefits only felt by a small number of actors directly involved in these activities, etc.)
- *Challenges attendant on cooperation between different types of non-state actors in the Arctic and north* (How to identify objectives and working methods that are common to different actors; how non-state actors' international activity is supported/restricted by national governments, etc.)
- *Local and regional actors, international cooperation, and the protection of the Arctic environment* (How local communities (both indigenous and non-indigenous) have contributed to the protection of the environment and how their leverage could be increased; the role of NGOs/NPOs and international environmental cooperation, etc.)
- *The role of science and academic cooperation in the sustainable development of the Arctic and north* (Can academic community contribute to the regional development and strengthening ties between different regions; how science-policy interaction and industry-academia-government cooperation can contribute to the sustainable development of the Arctic, etc.)
- *Different types of settlements and projects, and their relation to the sustainable development of the Arctic and north* (Should the development be based on relatively small settlements, or does the Arctic need bigger cities as engines of growth;

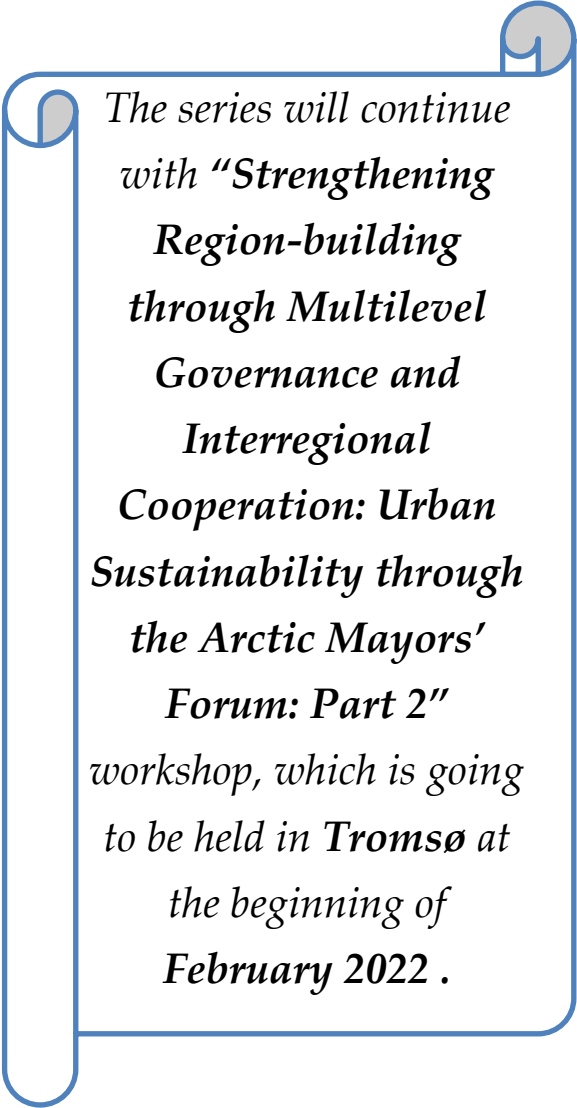
can the large-scale industrial projects, which are often based on the “fly-in, fly-out” model, support the sustainable development, or should it be based on greater number of locally owned SMEs, etc.)

Although aiming at holistic circumpolar approach, many of the presentations given during the series focused on the Eurasian Arctic, especially those concerned with the issues related to the Russian Arctic, the Far East and East Asia. The smaller share of speeches elaborating on the developments in the North American Arctic is mainly due to the difficulties of timing and time-differences between different continents (which is clearly an issue also affecting the interregional cooperation in the Arctic and north).

Future activities

The series will continue with “Strengthening Region-building through Multilevel Governance and Interregional Cooperation: Urban Sustainability through the Arctic Mayors’ Forum: Part 2” workshop, which is going to be held in Tromsø at the beginning of February 2022. The two events focusing on the Arctic cities will pave the way for a publication of a special issue in a peer reviewed journal.

Furthermore, the issues discussed during the series are also going to be included in the forthcoming publication by the ArCS II program focusing on international relations and cross-border cooperation. While the world is gradually opening after the shock caused by the still ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the experience gained from online and hybrid events is so valuable and rewarding that we are most certainly going to continue this series in the future.



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