

# First CArGo Conference on Transitions in Climate Arctic Governance

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Copenhagen University

This report summarizes the presentations and discussions during the first CArGo Conference on Climate Arctic Governance. The Conference consisted of two keynotes, three panels and a closing session.

The three panels addressed:

- Setting the Scene- Climate Arctic Governance
- Climate Vulnerability and Resilience
- Arctic Resources and Activities

## Keynotes

BEATRIZ MARTINEZ ROMERA (University of Copenhagen, Centre for International Law and Governance) opened the conference, thanking the organizing committee for their efforts and welcoming the participants to Copenhagen.

GUNHILD ROSQVIST (Stockholm University) stressed the need for addressing the cumulative impacts on Arctic regions in the first keynote. Sami reindeer herders' livelihoods are not only threatened by direct impacts of climate change, but also by the effects of mismatched land-use and spatial planning. Climate impact assessments as part of a larger set of impact assessments are necessary, to understand the overall picture and challenges that Sami reindeer herders are facing.

KATHERINE RICHARDSON (University of Copenhagen) highlighted: a) the importance of addressing the biodiversity crisis as the world faces climate-related challenges; and b) that with an increase of 1.5 degrees in Earth's temperature, irreversible tipping points will be reached, and the crossing of many planetary boundaries is expected. Thus, merely addressing the SDG's focusing on human health and wellbeing is not enough, as these are closely linked to the planetary ecosystem. Rethinking the current status of the environment is necessary in the age of the

Anthropocene – this calls for a move from local commons thinking to planetary commons thinking, in which we preserve Earth system resilience.

## Panel 1: Setting the Scene – Climate Arctic Governance

BEATRIZ MARTINEZ ROMERA (University of Copenhagen, Centre for International Law and Governance) and Ylva Sjöberg (University of Copenhagen, Department of Geoscience and Natural Resource Management) stressed the need for interdisciplinary thinking to bring solutions in Arctic climate governance and gave a brief overview of the network's past activities and research as well as future plans for action. They presented, as an example, a paper on how Arctic freshwater resources are affected by climate change, showcasing how interdisciplinary dialogues and research is necessary

MEDY DERVOVIC (Reykjavik University) highlighted the necessity of changes in the LOSC convention to account for climate change impacts, in order to prevent law of the sea-related disputes and optimize adaptation efforts. Possibilities for such changes are either through *amendment*, through *modification*, or through *substitution*. Although each of these avenues comes with certain challenges, an investigation into how climate change can be addressed through UNCLOS legal provisions has potential for addressing related challenges.

PAVEL TKACH (University of Lapland, Arctic Center) outlined future developments in Arctic sub-national climate governance. Currently, municipalities in the Arctic are vested with a large amount of power to make decisions concerning emissions planning as well as environmental management and the management of infrastructure. However, a

lack of coherent data across the region, as well as sharing data and results across municipalities and boundaries can frustrate adequate climate governance efforts. It is expected that there will be more obligations towards local municipalities to undertake climate planning and budgeting, and that more Arctic Cities will join the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy to foster cooperation. SUPRITA SUMAN (Independent researcher) highlighted the role of Canada as a middle power between Russia and the United States. The current deadlock due to Russia's war in the Ukraine leads to a significant lack of data and rapid deterioration of relations. In order to prevent more loss of data and encourage future cooperation, a middle power is necessary. Canada can fulfill this role as it has maintained good relations with both nations (despite some past challenges). Additionally, the situation calls for an overall strengthening of scientific communities within the Arctic Council, as well as more clearly defined roles for indigenous communities within the Arctic Council's workings.

FRANK SEJERSEN (University of Copenhagen, Department of Cross-cultural and Religious Studies) brought the need for new governance approaches in the light of a post-oil future into the discussion. *Thick and deep governance* approaches hold potential to re-think forms of governance. Thick governance refers to the inclusion of multiple actors across various governance levels. Deep governance approaches refer to addressing the colonial roots of today's governance approaches. While these processes are more time consuming, and possibly more costly, they are nevertheless necessary. Climate change creates new situations, and in order to address these adequately, governance has to re-engage with paradigms and re-think future imaginaries.

The discussion, chaired by KRISTIAN SØBY KRISTENSEN (University of Copenhagen, Centre for Military Studies) coalesced around the role of law in re-thinking governance. According to FRANK SEJERSEN, first steps in re-

thinking governance are already possible within the current legal system. However, a more thorough reform of the system is needed in order to allow for new governance approaches in the light of climate change.

### **Panel 2 : Climate Vulnerability and Resilience**

SILJA ZIMMERMAN (Utrecht University, Copernicus Institute) presented leverage points to enable effective sustainability transformations in Arctic Indigenous food systems. The findings of the large-scale literature analysis show, that research conducted into Arctic Indigenous Food systems is currently mostly western-based, with little inclusion of traditional ecological knowledge. Additionally, research is conducted in disciplinary silos, neglecting interdisciplinary and systemic links in the food systems. This calls for a de-colonialization of research practices and the western scientific paradigm to allow for true co-production and challenge power asymmetries. Additionally, recognizing cross-scale feedback between different leverage points, and conducting transdisciplinary action-oriented research can contribute to fostering just and sustainable food systems transitions.

ESTHER JONSDOTTIR (University of Amsterdam) drew attention to Greenlandic women's experiences of the impacts of climate change. The Greenlandic Indigenous population, which arguably is an example that can be applied to many indigenous cultures across the Arctic, currently experiences a loss of Inuit culture. While indigenous women are not disproportionately affected by climate change impacts, the effects that they experience differ from those expected by men. Currently, environmental injustices are linked to Greenland's colonial past, as social dimensions of environmental issues are rooted in colonial systems. Thus, addressing climate change also entails addressing the colonial issues underpinning the Greenlandic society. JOHANNA SOPHIE BUERKERT (University of Copenhagen, Centre for International Law and Governance) presented the need to invest

research efforts in the law-science nexus, based on an analysis of the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement. Although the agreement is hailed for its precautionary approach, as well as its flexibility, it is questionable to what extent indigenous knowledge is recognized in the proceedings of the Joint Program of Scientific Research and Monitoring, and to what extent the Joint Program's recommendations will be followed by decision-makers in general. Additionally, the possibility for indigenous representatives to participate in decision-making are very limited under the current framework. In order to prevent injustices caused by resource exploitation in the Central Arctic Ocean possibilities for active participation of all stake- and right holders under the framework must be investigated, and ensured.

RANJAN DATTA (Mount Royal University) and KEVIN LEWIS (University of Saskatchewan) shared experiences from joint research and learning efforts between indigenous and non-indigenous researchers. While indigenous peoples recognize the value of western knowledge as an addition to their own traditional knowledge, joint research efforts have faced problems of miscommunication, and a lack of true collaborative approaches. Joint processes of learning take time, and should be approached collaboratively, and from a de-colonialist perspective. Knowledge centers where indigenous children can learn more about their indigenous culture, and where indigenous and western knowledge-holders can interact and learn from each other are becoming more and more important and can contribute to bridging the divide between types of knowledge and counter euro-centric education approaches.

Guided by the chair FRANK SEJERSEN, participants discussed possible ways of interaction between western and non-western knowledge-holders. ESTHER JONSDOTTIR expressed gratefulness towards the Inuit participants in her research that were willing to share their knowledge and experiences with

her. SILJA ZIMMERMAN highlighted the importance of indigenous agency in research, and the ethical importance of having indigenous-driven research approaches. RANJAN DATTA and KEVIN LEWIS shared their experiences on interacting from a western- and non-western knowledge point of view, and the possibility to mitigate challenges in research cooperation between researchers from different backgrounds.

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### **Panel 3: Arctic Resources and Activities**

TESS VAN GEELEN (University of Oslo) proposed the interpretation of the Human Right to a Healthy and Safe Environment through the ecosystem approach. As ecosystems are interconnected globally, changes in the Arctic will affect individuals worldwide. This calls for the argument that the newly recognized Human right to a healthy and safe environment could be interpreted through an ecosystem approach.

A. STELLA EBBERSMEYER (University of Copenhagen, Centre for International Law and Governance) demonstrated the need to research the role of actors in the regulation of black carbon emissions from shipping in the Arctic. Although there is currently a vast body of regulation surrounding Arctic shipping, there is a regulatory gap regarding black carbon emissions. Understanding the role of actors and their motives may help to close the knowledge gap surrounding this regulatory vacuum and generate understandings on barriers to and opportunities for legislation surrounding shipping-induced climate change in the Arctic.

ALEXANDRU GOCIU (Trinity College Dublin) discussed whether Strategic Environmental Impact Assessments should take climate effects into account. Currently it is unclear what exact 'climatic factors' count as significant environmental facts. Hence, more research and jurisprudence is necessary, especially in light of new oil drilling projects that may cause damage to fragile ecosystems. EBRU CAYMAZ (Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University) assessed the relationship between

resilience and sustainability regarding shipping on the Northern Sea route. While the two concepts are different in meaning, adaptive governance approaches can further both sustainability and resilience of Arctic shipping, as adaptive governance includes multiple actors, but also facilitates activities such as infrastructure investment, search and rescue, as well as research efforts.

STANISLAV KSENOFONTOV (ARCTICenter, University of Northern Iowa) alerted about the large-scale acts of infrastructural violence against local populations and ecosystems by Russian energy megaprojects. These energy projects (e.g. pipelines) reduce access to land and lead to pollution of resources and individuals that consume them. Thus, these energy projects are responsible for forced migrations of communities and species.

The session's chair YLVA SJÖBERG and participants discussed that there is very little that the local communities can do against these energy megaprojects. TESS VAN GEELEN also clarified that her approach to assessing the human right to a healthy and safe environment through the ecosystem lens is fairly new, and may be at odds with the current conception of human rights. EBRU CAYMAZ expanded on the actors she contacted during

her study and the methodology that had been used in the context of her research.

#### ***Closing panel***

The founding partners BEATRIZ MARTINEZ ROMERA (University of Copenhagen, Centre for International Law and Governance), YLVA SJÖBERG (University of Copenhagen, Department of Geoscience and Natural Resource Management), FRANK SEJERSEN (University of Copenhagen, Department of Cross-cultural and Religious Studies) and KRISTIAN SØBY KRISTENSEN (University of Copenhagen, Centre for Military Studies) closed the conference, summing up highlights and outlining future steps of the network.

Overall, the discussions during the conference make it apparent that climate change in the Arctic is a wicked problem that requires different approaches and forms of knowledge. A business as usual scenario cannot continue, so imagining a sustainable future for the Arctic can only be done by incorporating knowledge and investigating the issue of climate change through different lenses. Special attention ought to be paid to interactions in governance on different scales (international-regional – local).

Despite the problems, there is strength in the globalization and multi-facetedness of the CArGo network, which can create synergies in research.

