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Between an archipelago and an ice floe: The know-where of Arctic governance expertise

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Abstract

This paper examines the production of Arctic governance expertise, understood here as the specialised knowledge through which international cooperation is regulated in the region. Instead of presuming that such expertise is created primarily in the capitals of Arctic states, I ask a more open-ended question: *where* specifically does that process take place? I argue that Arctic governance expertise increasingly operates in a transnational and networked fashion: an array of think tanks, foundations and events like conferences are as important as the obvious places like foreign ministries and universities. It is a quasi-diplomatic social field characterised by blurry boundaries between different states, professions and institutional settings: between government and academia, legal and political fields, public and private sectors. The paper foregrounds that field of expertise as an object of study.

Introduction: Locating Arctic diplomacy

Locating Arctic governance expertise is more complicated than first meets the eye. For starters, the capital cities of most Arctic Council (AC) member states are far from the Arctic: most people in most Arctic states have never been to the region. As resource extraction, tourism, shipping and other economic activities make the Arctic more lucrative for financial investment, actors with little existing expertise in the region enter the scene. These include non-Arctic states and a myriad of private companies and advocacy groups new to the region. The place of Arctic governance expertise, one could argue, is shifting away from the Arctic.

The opposite argument could be made as well. Peoples in the Arctic have wrestled more autonomy from their national governments. It is no longer possible to overlook local and indigenous concerns as those who live in the region are increasingly asserting their presence in national and international governance fora. Although the AC has given observer status to 13 states, especially over the last 10 years, it has also asserted its role as the gatekeeper that determines who is at the table. The observer states are just that: observers and not participants. The space of Arctic governance, one could argue, is centred firmly on the capitals of Arctic states.

This paper takes that process of knowledge production as its object of analysis. Focusing on international governance, that is, the broadly diplomatic processes through which international-level issues are discussed and regulated in the region, I examine the expanding constellation of think tanks, universities and other non-governmental nodes of knowledge within which governance expertise is produced. My central question is not about national capitals, consequential as those places are. Instead of asking what capitals matter most and how their influence waxes and wanes, I ask open-ended questions about the geographies of Arctic governance expertise or, in broader terms, what John Agnew (2007, p. 138) calls the "know-where" of geopolitical knowledge. My objective is not to provide a neat map of important places (or a comprehensive list of relevant actors) but to illuminate the fluid operation of the knowledge creation process. The fluidity is not about any formal changes in the *de jure* institutional structure but about the informal flows of *de facto* influence in transnational networks of knowledge. I accentuate places like think tanks that are outside foreign ministries and I accentuate ephemeral nodes of knowledge like conferences. The metaphor of in-betweenness in the title is important: the object of study is at once mappable, like an archipelago, and ever shape-shifting, like an ice floe. I use the terms "diplomatic" and "governance" expertise broadly synonymously to refer to knowledge in the realms of international cooperation and competition. Much of such knowledge circulates in diplomatic or quasi-diplomatic [e.g. European Union (EU) institutions, major think tanks] realms; I use the term "governance" to accentuate that the knowledge at hand is not exclusive to formal diplomatic negotiations but circulates in a wider range of networks and venues.

Because the Arctic is amidst momentous changes, knowledge is a valuable currency in the wheeling and dealing around the region. It is through expert knowledge that political agents establish what kind of place the Arctic is today, where it is going, what is desirable and feasible there and who can make informed decisions about it. As Sebastian Knecht (2020, p. 29) points out, the AC has "very limited" political power but "considerable epistemic authority in the sense of holding specialized and relevant knowledge to inform Arctic governance". As a result, there is

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substantial investment from states and businesses in Arctic expertise. It is significant that the 2020 Arctic Frontiers conference, a prominent venue of quasi-diplomatic networking in the region, was themed "Power and Knowledge" (Steinveg, 2020, p. 193). Given the centrality of expert knowledge in Arctic governance, we need to study the practices and practitioners of such knowledge in closer detail (Powell, 2017, p. 15).

Conceptually, the paper draws on geographical and related literatures on the geographies of expert knowledge, especially in the international arena. Much of the existing work on international governance in the Arctic is about the who, the what and the why: who are the most powerful players, what goals they pursue and why. To grasp the governance processes in greater nuance, we need to consider not only what the experts say about the Arctic but also from where they say it. To ask the where question is not to attempt a catalogue of places or to adjudicate among these places. It is rather to take seriously the point that where expert knowledge is produced has some impact, though not a neatly measurable impact, on how it circulates and with what effects. Too often, what passes for expert knowledge on world politics involves uncritical interpretive projection from the experiences of specific places onto all places: contesting such projections requires that we examine the actual geographies of knowledge (including explanatory schemes and narrative traditions) in empirical detail (Agnew, 2007; Kuus, 2018). To do so, we must avoid the assumption that knowledge is pristine from the material and institutional context in which it is created: the funding, the networks, the career trajectories of the key individuals. The point that knowledge creation "takes place" in concrete places is not a metaphor: the place of knowledge creation constitutes an integral part of what kind of knowledge is created. This is not to over-valorise specific institutions but to highlight the kind of sociology and geography of knowledge that has received little attention in Arctic research hitherto.

The rest of the argument proceeds in three steps. The next section situates the paper in the existing literature on Arctic diplomacy. I make the case for the "where" question and I highlight the strands of research most useful in tackling that question. The subsequent section examines the knowledge infrastructure of Arctic diplomacy beyond the well-established academic and diplomatic institutions. Drawing empirically on publicly available materials, the section highlights additional sites where Arctic governance expertise is created. It thereby sketches the contours of such expertise as a social field. A more subject-centred or "peopled" study of that field will need to follow, but it is not the goal of this paper. The concluding section lays out the argument for treating Arctic governance expertise as a transnational field of quasi-diplomatic knowledge.

Why the where question? Arctic expertise as a social field

The Arctic has become a prominent field of area studies and it is time to analyse it as such: as a distinct sphere of geographical and geopolitical knowledge used to both understand and manage the region. Because the Arctic as a political region only came into existence after the Cold War, it is a more recent construct than most other fields created in and by area studies (Koivurova, 2019, p. 13; see also Keskitalo, 2004). Beyond universities and national government institutions, many of the key nodes of expertise in the region—places like think tanks, foundations and coordination forums—were established the last decade or so (since about 2010); others are older nominally but have attracted growing attention and investment in about the same time. *The Arctic Yearbook*, as a prominent annual compilation of current social science research on the region, is well established now but was first published only a decade ago (in 2012) (*Arctic Yearbook*, n.d.). This does not displace earlier work, but it indicates an expansion of the field.

To chart that field of knowledge, the paper mobilises two partly overlapping bodies of research. Each is a vast, diverse and rapidly growing literature, which review is beyond the scope of this paper: I briefly profile both literatures because each brings a distinct facet to our understanding of the geographies of geopolitical knowledge.

Perhaps the most prominent strand in the Arctic governance literature is the body of work, mostly in international relations (IR) and related fields, that investigates the strategies of various states to enhance their presence in the Arctic. Whether in the form of edited books (e.g. Keil and Knecht 2017; Weber 2020) or nationally based studies (e.g. Bennett, 2015; Brady, 2017; Depledge, 2017; Østhagen, 2021; Väätänen, 2019; Sergunin and Hoogensen-Gjørv, 2020; Wilson Rowe, 2020), it combines a series of nationally based accounts or state-based comparisons with analyses of specific spheres of activity, such as shipping, security or the environment. That work showcases nationally or internationally oriented reviews of Arctic cooperation (but see Keskitalo, 2004 for a more transnational and interdisciplinary lens on Arctic regionalism). There is also a growing literature in international law on the transnational "order-making" in the Arctic (Shibata et al., 2019. p. 1; see also Bertelsen, 2019; Byers 2010; 2013). As Anne-Marie Brady (2017) points out, there is no clear precedent in many spheres of activity in polar regions: the precedents are being crafted and codified on the basis of specialised expertise right now (see also Koivurova et al., 2017, p. 3). Taken together, this literature offers a rich account of the activities of states and state-based international actors, such as the AC (e.g. Babin & Lasserre, 2019; Burke, 2019; Smieszek, 2019). It tracks the adoptions and revisions of a myriad of Arctic policies by AC member states and non-members alike (Heininen, 2020). The policies are so numerous that they have prompted an analysis focused entirely on the Arctic-related policy documents by states, Indigenous peoples' organisations and the AC (Heininen et al., 2019). In addition, there is also a literature on EU efforts to increase its presence in the Arctic—more on that work later (cf. Raspotnik, 2018; Kuus, 2020; see also Østhagen and Raspotnik, 2021; Powell, 2011).

Within this "big-picture" research on international processes, there is related work, located largely in geography but also in political theory, on how to conceptualise the Arctic spatially. More overtly theoretical, that work stresses the need for, and the difficulty of, imagining the Arctic in ways that are not neatly state based and territorial. It advises us to rethink sovereignty in the Arctic, especially in light of the growing visibility of indigenous interests and expertise (Dittmer et al., 2011; Dodds, 2018, Dodds and Nuttall, 2019; Medby, 2018, Nicol, 2017; 2018; Shadian, 2014; Steinberg & Dodds, 2015). In the Arctic, Ingrid Medby (2018, p. 119) points out, the application of "known" identity discourses to the "unknown" Arctic space has foregrounded the tension between the untraditional character of Arctic territory (largely inaccessible, oceanic, uninhabited) and the drive to make sense of it through "statising" it (see also Keskitalo, 2004 on the history and course of Arctic region building since the 1980s).

Whereas the first set of literature, referenced above, is explicitly about the Arctic and more obliquely about knowledge production, the second literature focuses overtly on the processes of institutional knowledge production, in contexts in and beyond the Arctic. Situated at the interstices of sociology, geography and IR,

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that work tackles the blurry in-between character of diplomatic and governance expertise.

A part of that scholarship focuses specifically on Arctic expertise—the scientific one usually, given the centrality of scientific research to how we learn about the region. For states, scientific research is an important (informal) entryway into AC discussions. It is especially valuable for the parties that have or seek observer status in the council and this is why such parties invest in it. And yet, as Powell (2017, p. 2) points out, although there is much research on environmental change in the Arctic, the social worlds of the scientists who produce that knowledge have received little attention (see also O'Reilly, 2017 on the Antarctic). Focusing on one site—a field station in Resolute in the Nunavut province in Canada—Powell (2017, p. 5) stresses that science "takes place" and must be studied as such. In a similar manner, Medby (2018) argues for "peopling" Arctic states so as to unpack how Arctic statehood (and, by extension, state-governing expertise) is narrated at the governmental level in these states (see also Wilson Rowe, 2020).

This literature explicitly considers the informal sites of connection that we do not necessarily associate with governance: sites like conferences and think tanks. Conferences, as "periodic or one-off gatherings" the professionals who produce knowledge on particular topics (Craggs and Mahony, 2014, p. 415), are a good example. Beate Steinveg (2020, p. 5) notes that conferences constitute an important element in Arctic regulation because they blur the line between dialogue and governance. She demonstrates how different conferences, such as Arctic Circle in Reykjavik and Arctic Frontiers in Tromsø, jockey for position in the Arctic knowledge complex. They compete for sponsors, speakers, participants, and, more broadly, for the title of the "Arctic capital" of knowledge.

In a similar effort to analyse conferences as nodes of knowledge, Duncan Depledge and Klaus Dodds (2018) conceptualise some of such sites—their empirical example is the Arctic Circle assembly in Iceland—as forms of "bazaar governance". Bazaar, they argue, drawing on Clifford Geertz (1978), is distinct not by the exchange of goods but by the flow of information that happens there. At a bazaar, Geertz (ibid., p. 29) argues, information is "poor, scarce, mal-distributed, inefficiently communicated, and intensely valued". "Every aspect of the bazaar economy" he continues, "reflects the fact that the primary problem facing its participants (that is, 'bazaaris') is not balancing options but finding out what they are" (ibid., p. 30). This rings true in the Arctic, where rapid change means a concomitantly intense repositioning and renegotiation of actors and positions. Dodds and Depledge's empirical example, British participation in the 2014 Arctic Circle assembly, demonstrates that the key asset traded at the assembly is intangible and often symbolic: information, visibility and reputation. That trading process thus requires careful dissection in its own right. The object of study includes something more than a set of ideas: it also encompasses a shared social space of knowledge creation, distribution and legitimation. Although the intended scale of knowledge claims is often national, the spaces of their creation cannot be mapped neatly in national terms (Kuus, 2021). If we understand expertise as "the property of a social collective" (Evans, 2015, p. 19), the transnational collective of Arctic experts and their spaces of work require explicit attention. More broadly, the Arctic, like the Antarctic, can teach us much about the interface of international politics and scientific expertise (O'Reilly, 2017; see especially the review of the relevant literatures therein).

This conceptual interest in the production of governance expertise, and of geopolitical knowledge more broadly, resonates with the literature on the social fields of policy expertise (Kuus, 2018). A field in that work is a social space that situates its agents. In Arctic governance, for example, individuals are legitimised to enter that field by possessing certain forms of capital, such as contacts or other credentials. For example, Keskitalo (2004) shows that Arctic cooperation is highly contingent on specific initiatives by particular countries and individuals. The conversations that eventually lead to the establishment of the University of the Arctic, for example, can be traced to the fairly ad-hoc activities by Bill Heal, a retired biology professor from Britain (see Keskitalo, 2004, Ch. 5). In order to understand the field, one must identify these networks and credentials; but to grasp these forms of capital, one must comprehend the specific logic of the field in question. The study of Arctic expertise as a field therefore requires a constant back-and-forth between structural conditions (of the fields) and individual tactics (of the agents). Such an approach enables us to situate multiple places and agents of expert knowledge in one analytical framework. It also enables us to link "big-picture" or macro-level dynamics to the more ephemeral and meso-level phenomena like professional networks (Kuus, 2021).

The difficulty with analysing the spaces of Arctic expertise is to account for the simultaneous stability and change therein. The object of analysis is the relatively stable *crossroads* of national, transnational and international levels on the one hand and of the (largely national) political, bureaucratic and academic spaces on the other (Vauchez, 2008, p. 138, emphasis added). We are looking at "perennially hybrid" settings (Vauchez, 2011, p. 342) or what anthropologist Janine Wedel calls "[an] institutional ecosystem of 'fragmented governing space and more liquid, diverse, and decentered power structures'" (Wedel, 2017, p. 154). Especially in the context of transnational processes, we need to grasp how strategically placed agents "serve as connectors" and "coordinate influence from multiple, moving perches, inside and outside official structures" (Wedel, 2017, p. 153). The agents of such fields are nomadic figures, mediators and jacks-of-all-trades. Because their careers depend on transnational connections as much as national ones, movement between places, functions and identities is the defining feature of their work (Wedel, 2017). This need to mediate and translate knowledge claims from different contexts is indeed increasing as more actors participate in diplomatic negotiations (see also Neumann, 2012, p. 118).

The concept of interstitial field offers the flexibility needed for theorising the spaces between state and non-state, diplomatic and non-diplomatic settings. An interstitial field, sociologist Lisa Stampnitzky (2011, p. 1) suggests, is a "space of knowledge production" that is oriented simultaneously to several fields, such as the state, business and academia. Such a field emerges "as a function of the struggles taking place in the spaces between them" (Eyal, 2013, p. 159). The concept enables the researcher to analyse the sites of "unnoticed cognitive coordination and resource-pooling" that are made possible by their in-between character (Vauchez, 2011, p. 344). It also foregrounds the blurry boundaries that are so pronounced in Arctic expertise. The task is to include the scientific and political science writing that have long been prominent in Arctic scholarship but also recognise the expansion of the field beyond a traditionally dominant field like IR.

Zooming in on Arctic governance expertise, the next step is to analyse where specifically its creation takes place. That task is empirical: to delineate how the field of Arctic expertise has

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developed over time and who people it. The spatial lens of analysis needs to be flexible enough to capture the networks and flows that connect states but are not neatly bound and defined by states. It is neither a macro- nor a micro-level lens, but a meso-level analysis of connections, flows and hinge-like spaces between different institutional settings. The next section begins that empirical task.

An archipelago and an ice floe: The places of Arctic expertise

Until the last two decades or so, diplomatic expertise in the Arctic was concentrated in national ministries, especially those of foreign affairs and defence. International cooperation was organised through intergovernmental institutions, especially the AC. The growing interest in the region has expanded the field. Two changes are particularly noteworthy: the expansion of Arctic expertise beyond Arctic states and the diffusion of such expertise beyond government agencies and universities. Both shifts take place not only in national or intergovernmental settings but also in the more interstitial field of conferences, think tanks and research networks.

At the international level, Arctic expertise has to transcend national concerns in order to be legitimate to other regional players. No Arctic state is entirely in the Arctic and most experts on the region (in diplomatic realms in any event) do not live or work there. Claims about the region that are crafted in national capitals need considerable buy-in from the region. This need for local support plays in all international negotiations to some degree, but it is accentuated in the Arctic because of the region-specific character of the issues discussed. To actors in the Arctic, agents and places in other Arctic states are often closer partners than "their" government officials in the national capital. Significantly, the University of the Arctic (UArctic) is a network of research and related institutions: although it has an international secretariat based in Rovaniemi, Finland, its mandate is to be "university without walls" in the Arctic (UArctic, n.d.). Equally significantly, the Calotte Academy, an international platform for policy-oriented dialogue, describes itself not as an institution but as "an annual travelling symposium" in the North Calotte region (Calotte Academy, n.d.). The Arctic Indigenous People's organizations (as Permanent Participants of the AC) have developed or revised their own policy documents to articulate local interests and priorities more fully (Heininen, 2020, p. 410). In parallel with this continuation and deepening of locally based expertise, new economic conditions bring in new forms of expertise, in issues that had hitherto seemed remote to the region. For experts in international maritime law, for example, the Arctic is a relatively new site; for experts in the Arctic, international maritime law is a relatively new focus. Even national foreign ministries turn to a transnational set of experts beyond their "own" capital. As Akiho Shibata et al. (2019, p. 1) put it in the context of international law: "Arctic change, it seems, is essentially of non-Arctic origin". In legal practice, they continue, "orders relevant for the Arctic have been influenced both by actors in the region and also 'by actors that are neither geographically not politically 'Arctic''".

The influx of money into Arctic expertise from non-Arctic states is fundamentally linked to the states and other players' (e.g. NGOs) interest in observer status in the AC. Both the observer states and those who are still seeking such a status have channeled funds into Arctic research. The European Commission (2021, p. 24) as the executive arm of one of such seeker (the EU) puts it clearly: "Science and research constitute the *basis* of international circumpolar collaboration" (emphasis added). Hence, the operation of major Arctic research centres in places like Kobe, Seoul, Canberra or Singapore. China, which now frames itself as a "near-Arctic state", has invested greatly in Arctic research (Brady, 2017). The interest of states far outside the Arctic to host Arctic meetings and send people to such meetings illustrates that they anticipate long-term gain, or at least feel they cannot miss the meetings. Such meetings themselves increasingly take place outside the region: countries like Japan or United Arab Emirates now host or seek to host Arctic conferences (e.g. Arctic Circle meetings).

In the second shift—towards a greater role of knowledge centres outside national ministries and universities—think tanks, institutes of international affairs and other practitioner-oriented nodes of knowledge deserve particular attention. Such nodes have gained prominence in response to the new requirements of expertise in the Arctic. As Arctic governance is expanding especially in areas like migration or tourism that have not been traditionally regulated in the region, AC working groups need new inputs of specialised technical expertise. In the process of creating such inputs and negotiating their import, the boundary between diplomatic and non-diplomatic actors is becoming increasingly blurred as much of the work takes place at the boundary of diplomacy and other spheres of expertise. Knecht (2020) calls such quasi-diplomatic mediating settings "shadow networks" to capture their flexible and relatively informal operation. He shows that a great deal of information flows in Arctic governance can be explained by the nitty-gritty of how the flow of information is organised at the AC working group level. Yet Knecht's study is rare in its effort to look at document creation and information flows in any detail.

The accent here is on interstitial institutions that do not fit in the usual classification of public or private, government or academia, scholarly and practitioner knowledge. The distinctions are not neat, of course: public universities are funded by governments and academic knowledge has direct policy uses. This said, in the context in with international organisations, governments and universities have received most attention, it is also important to pay closer attention to the newer more hybrid nodes of knowledge.

The scene of such mediating institutions is fast-moving. Many, indeed most, of the most prolific think tanks are only about a decade old. Thus, The Arctic Institute (in Washington DC) was established in 2011; The Polar Institute (also in Washington) at the Wilson Center was founded in 2017; The Polar Connection (in London) was created in 2016 and the Polar Cooperation Research Center at the University of Kobe (in Kobe) was set up in 2015. In the EU, EU-Polar net, a node of Arctic and Polar science was established in 2015; the European Polar Board became independent from the European Science Foundation in 2015. I list these centres because they were established less than a decade ago; the history of many others goes only another decade or so back. This is in addition to national think tanks or foundations, often prominent ones (e.g. The Fridtjof Nansen Institute, the Tampere Peace Research Institute or the German foundations linked to political parties). Several EU-level think tanks, such as the Center for European Policy Research, have beefed up their Arctic expertise in recent years. In EU member states, funding from the European Commission is noticeable through its research programmes (e.g. the Horizon 2020 Programme). The think tanks or their Arctic-oriented programmes are often young demographically as well: below the executive, board and senior analyst levels and sometimes even at those levels, many of the contributors are relatively junior, often recent doctorates and sometimes PhD

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students. Many university-based research centres and policy forums are likewise only a decade or two old. The Arctic is pulling in ideas as well as people.

One of the difficulties with analysing the scene is around categorisation. The organisations, think tanks, forums, centres and institutes all do research, advocacy and outreach. They all receive funding from multiple governmental and non-governmental sources and they all employ individuals who have doctorate degrees and extensive government or public affairs experience—sometimes all of the above. Thematically, all deal with climate change, security, resources, economic development and indigenous issues. The visual imagery of the websites is similar: eye-catching Arctic landscapes or equally picturesque photos of quaint lit-up settlements against the backdrop of snow and ice. The imagery that Powell (2017) calls Arctic Sublime may no longer pass without critique in academic circles, but it is still the lens through which Arctic expertise is represented to the public.

The hybrid character of the field in disciplinary, institutional and national terms is its defining feature. In terms of disciplines, political science dominates, but there are also lawyers, economists and geographers. Many experts write for multiple think tanks and their arguments interweave closely with existing patterns of writing in all those think tanks. Specific national and disciplinary perspectives are only sometimes discernible; other times the location of the writer remains oblique and not easily identifiable from the text. Revolving doors between government and think tanks are common. The key academics are also present in the governing boards of the various think tanks. Even against the backdrop of prolific writing, Cold War intellectual as well as institutional roots and continuities show: security is a key topic in Arctic-oriented writing and this is reflected in the number of security experts who serve on the various boards and committees. At the same time, it is not useful to view think tanks like the Arctic Institute (in Washington) or the Polar Research and Policy Initiative (in London) solely in terms of their connection to national politics: a closer look reveals that they serve as nodes for transnational networks of expertise. The same experts publish for and from different institutional locations, depending on their particular projects. The bazaar analogy is apt. As at a bazaar, the high uncertainty and rapid change lead to a certain clientelisation: the tendency for "repetitive purchasers of particular goods and services to establish continuing relationships with particular purveyors of them, rather than search widely through the market at each occasion of need" (Geertz, 1978, p. 30). As at a bazaar, relatively little is packaged or regulated and a great deal is approximative: the possibilities for bargaining along non-monetary dimensions are thus heightened (ibid., p. 31).

The boundary between government and academic circles is often blurred. As an example, consider the Arctic Institute of North America, a Canadian non-profit. It was established by the Act of Parliament in 1945, became a part of the University of Calgary in 1976, and now functions as an interstitial setting connecting academia and government. A similar point could be made about the blurry lines between public and private sectors. At Arctic conferences, a civil servants and businesspeople mix more than they do at the more established area studies events (see Steinveg, 2020 for discussion).

The Arctic Circle assembly can serve as another example of that difficult-to-categorise space. Nominally, the assembly is an international conference that has been held annually in Reykjavik since 2013. It is also an international organisation headquartered in Reykjavik. Significantly, the former President of Iceland, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, who founded the Arctic Circle assembly specifically sought to brand the meeting as an *assembly* and not a conference. "We create the platform, participants create the dialogue" he stated in 2013 (Einarsdóttir, 2018, quoted in Steinveg, 2020, p. 136). The ambition of the "big tent" approach is not lost on the participants, who quickly picked up on the meeting's potential to be the Davos of the Arctic region, the kind of "high-profile, dynamic conference where India and Google and Greenpeace—and countless others with a stake in the Arctic" can all vie for attention and influence (Koring, 2013). The Iceland piece is clearly part of the picture, but so is the aspiration to be the Davos of Arctic networking.

Brussels effects

A consequential actor that is relevant both in the non-Arctic and the non-state categories is the EU, acting especially through the European Commission as its civil service. Under the general heading of non-Arctic action, the EU deserves special attention both because of its regulatory power and because of its peculiar role in the production of Arctic expertise. It is not a state, but it has been a key medium through which non-Arctic EU states participate in Arctic governance.

The history of the union's engagement with the Arctic is documented thoroughly and lucidly by Andreas Raspotnik (cf. 2018; see also Raspotnik, 2021) and I will not repeat the story here (see also Powell, 2011). From about 2007 onwards, the region has been a growing focus for EU institutions. The Union has produced about a dozen Arctic-related framework documents to date (late 2022) (Raspotnik, 2021, p. 134). It is through such systematic engagement that the Arctic as an object of EU policy has been created. In that process, the union has crafted several related storylines to bolster its claim to be a legitimate and indeed central actor in the region. For example, the Union emphasises the urgency of climate change as a security issue for the EU: the warming Arctic will be less stable and thus necessitate stabilising action from the EU (Raspotnik, 2018, p. 151; see also the entire Ch. 6). The European Commission (2021, p. 10) stresses that since 2013, the EU has "enabled and led the creation of some of the world's largest consortia and networks in terms of polar research and infrastructure". In 2017, the European External Action Service as the union's diplomatic service created the post of Ambassador-at-Large for the Arctic. In October 2021, the Union issued its Arctic Strategy (European Commission, 2021). The documents reiterates that the Arctic is a region of "strategic importance" to the EU and announced increased EU presence in the region—through the establishment of Commission representation in Greenland.

The EU's actorness, Raspotnik (2021, p. 136) stresses, is "neither easily established nor easily understood", because the union differs from nation states in important ways that many non-specialists find puzzling. In particular, the union is easy to underestimate because its strategy documents are generic even by the standards of similar documents produced by states. This is because EU institutions need the consent of the member states: they cannot cross the states and they consequently tend to play to the lowest common denominator. A quote from Michael Mann, the union's Ambassador at Large to the Arctic in 2020-2022, illustrates some of the careful phrasing around state sovereignty that is the hallmark of EU diplomacy. Asked to comment on the union's role in the Arctic as a geographical region, Mann says:

> "I am not allowed to talk about 'the Arctic', I have to talk about the Arctic regions or Arctic matters or Arctic issues. Because, there are things that happen in the Arctic, but are not really caused by things that are done

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in the Arctic, climate change, for example. Also, certain things in the past were dealt with purely by the Arctic states, and they do still have a lead role in Arctic matters, of course as they should, because they are the sovereign states in the Arctic. But certain things happen beyond the borders – the strict borders – of the Arctic and that is when the EU comes in" (Canova et al., 2021).

At the same time, the technical expertise possessed by EU institutions, on everything from fish stocks to black carbon, is wide and deep. This is because of the regulatory and knowledge creation capacity of the European Commission. The Commission has been called the "regulator of the world" for a reason: it is custom built to manage complex transnational negotiations that both mediate and transform states in the process (see also Kuus, 2020).

To grasp the long-term directions of Arctic governance, we need to consider what Anu Bradford (2019, p. xiv) calls the Brussels effect: that is, the EU's "unilateral power to regulate global markets". The term "unilateral" in her definition does not negate the union's emphasis on multilateralism; it rather counters the trite vision of the EU as a fading power. A diplomatic professional puts the difference between national and EU diplomats this way: "An ambassador promotes trade; an EU ambassador creates the conditions in which trade can flourish" (quoted in Kuus, 2018, p. 263). This supports Bradford's (2019, p. 25) point that the EU's regulatory power results not only from its market size but also from the regulatory capacity of its institutions.

This empirical section made two points. First, it underscores the expansion of Arctic governance expertise as a field of knowledge. The entry of new actors into the field produces new places of Arctic expertise, sometimes far away from the region. As a result, Brussels or Beijing merits attention as centres of Arctic expertise alongside Washington or Moscow. That process of expansion and its associated travels of ideas requires study as a process of knowledge production with its own distinct dynamics. Second, many of the settings can be analysed as interstitial fields: they function as the hinges that regulate the movement of knowledge between government, business, academia and civil society. They must be situated not simply in "their" nation states but in a broader transnational social field of Arctic expertise.

Conclusion: Sketching the interstices of Arctic expertise

This paper charts the expansion of the institutional complex in which and through which Arctic governance expertise is produced today. It approaches that field of quasi-diplomatic knowledge through the question of "where". I enquire not about what the various knowledge claims are about—such as pollution, shipping or security—but about how and where these claims are produced. My goal is not to map Arctic expertise in a descriptive manner but to highlight the organisation and spatiality of that expertise beyond the conventional state-based map. To accentuate the shifts in that field of expertise is not to downplay the long-established centres of knowledge but to underscore the wave of expansion and diversification that the field is undergoing now. It is likewise not to make normative claims about the quality or value of any particular claim of expertise. The interstitial character of Arctic expertise indeed cautions against quick judgements about the boundaries between expert and non-expert claims. My effort here is not to define or measure expertise but to highlight it as an object of theoretically informed interdisciplinary study.

The paper argues that Arctic governance is a social space that operates through the intermingling of academic, diplomatic, defence and business expertise. It is a blurry formation in which it is difficult to distinguish national and transnational spaces, institutions and networks, diplomacy and other spheres of international activity. Spatially, it is increasingly a world not of territories but of crisscrossing boundary zones, hinges and revolving doors. In that space, close links among the key institutions and individuals matter: individual positions in specific networks are pivotally important, and those positions have a great deal to do with the key individuals' previous moves in these same networks. By sketching that social space, I advance our understanding of the diverse forms and flows of expertise in the North—commercial, scientific, diplomatic, indigenous, environmental and so on.

Conceptually, the picture that is beginning to emerge through the question of "where" is less territorial and more network like. The geography of Arctic expertise is less inter-national and more transnational than a look at national or intergovernmental documents would lead one to believe. Specifying *where* we talk about when we talk about Arctic expertise can tell us something about what kind of expertise it is and what effects it has on political actors in different places. Put differently, the geography of Arctic knowledge can help us understand the sociology of that knowledge. Within the literature of Arctic governance, the paper complements the theoretical repertoire of epistemic communities (Burke, 2019; Steinveg, 2020), communities of practice (Powell, 2017) or bazaar governance (Depledge & Dodds, 2017) by adding the concept of social field. The key issue here is not about any one term, however: it is about the need to understand a spatially variegated and rapidly expanding sphere of knowledge production.

A more detailed account of Arctic governance expertise requires a more "peopled" or experience-near—and thus also fieldwork-heavy—study: it would need to delineate in greater nuance the trajectories that bring groups and individuals to the Arctic. This paper, written entirely during the COVID pandemic, takes only the first step in the direction of such a "peopled" approach. Even as the first step though, the paper helps us to better appreciate Arctic expertise as a rapidly growing and increasingly complex social field of knowledge production .

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