Governance in a Rapidly Changing Arctic
Background

The Arctic is experiencing fast-paced and far-reaching changes associated both with the effects of climate change and with the impacts of global economic forces. Suddenly, major players are focusing on the prospects for rapid growth in marine shipping, offshore oil and gas development, commercial fishing, and eco-tourism in areas that have been inhospitable to such activities until recently. Understandably, others are concerned increasingly about the likely impacts of such activities on the Arctic’s small and often traditional human communities and on the region’s ecosystems. This has resulted in an explosion of interest in a wide range of governance issues. What regulations are needed to minimize the environmental impact of marine shipping in the Arctic? How can the interests of the region’s indigenous peoples be protected in the face of large-scale industrial activities? More generally, do we need a new and comprehensive regime for the Arctic to allow all legitimate stakeholders to participate in decisions regarding emerging activities in the region and to ensure that new developments unfold in a fair and balanced way?
Project aim

The aim of the Arctic Governance Project is to contribute to the development of responsible and broadly acceptable answers to these questions. The project seeks to collect the views of all interested parties regarding options for addressing the demand for governance in the Arctic, to subject these views to careful scrutiny, to arrive at a series of compelling conclusions about the way forward in this realm, and to ensure that these conclusions are communicated effectively to policymakers charged with coming to grips with the challenge of creating and implementing governance systems that will prove effective in the changing conditions the Arctic will experience in the coming years. The project will draw on the insights arising from traditional ecological knowledge as well as scientific knowledge; it will pay particular attention to opportunities for strengthening existing mechanisms like the Arctic Council, but be open to arguments calling for supplementing or even replacing these arrangements to achieve success in meeting the emerging demand for governance in the Arctic.
Project stages

The Arctic Governance Project will proceed in three stages during the course of 2009 and 2010.

• Stage 1 features the development of an Arctic Governance Compendium, an electronically searchable collection of governance systems applicable to the Arctic. Users will be able to locate existing or proposed arrangements by (i) governance type (e.g. international convention or treaty, regional agreement, national law, local ordinance), (ii) subject matter (e.g. fish, shipping, pollution), and (iii) source (e.g. regional government, indigenous peoples organization, environmental NGO, independent scholar). The compendium will become a tool that is helpful in exploring questions of the following sort:

  o Is there a need for a comprehensive and legally binding treaty-based governance system covering the Arctic as a whole?
  o How can we address issues of multi-level governance – integrating local, national, regional, and global arrangements – in the Arctic?
  o How can we make good use of scientific knowledge and traditional types of knowledge in meeting the demand for Arctic governance?
  o What are the relative merits in the Arctic of governance systems that emphasize ecosystem-based management (EBM) in contrast to sectoral or issue-specific arrangements?
  o How can we incorporate non-traditional governance systems, such as the Greenland Self-Government,
the Finnmark Estate, Canadian co-management arrangements, or the Alaskan regional non-profit corporations, into integrated Arctic governance?

- How can we implement Arctic governance systems and, in the process, ensure a successful transition from paper to practice?

- Stage 2 will focus on a Synthesis Workshop, planned for December 2009. Bringing together 40-60 participants associated with a wide range of stakeholders, the workshop will engage in a systematic assessment of the capacity of existing governance systems to meet the growing demand for governance in the Arctic and the relative merits of a wide range of proposals for new or restructured arrangements where existing systems fall short. The goal is to find common ground wherever it exists, to identify a small number of critical, cutting-edge questions about Arctic governance, and to formulate a set of principles that can guide debates about the relative merits of specific proposals.

- Stage 3 will center on a series of activities designed to communicate the findings of the workshop to members of the policy community and to interested members of the broader public. Specific means of communication will include: (a) an electronically accessible version of the Arctic Governance Compendium; (b) a report presenting the main conclusions of the Synthesis Workshop; (c) multi-audience articles suitable for publication in widely read newspapers and journals, and (d) a series of briefings and PowerPoint presentations for use in many settings. Senior members of the project will play an active role in ensuring that the project’s main messages are communicated effectively to key policymakers.
Project management

The project’s Steering Committee is responsible for managing the project and ensuring that it fulfills its goal. The committee consists of a team of senior people who have extensive Arctic experience and who represent a diversity of communities throughout the Arctic. Individual members have participated in the policy community as well as in the science community; they are exceptional in terms of their experience working in a variety of policy settings. The members of the Project Team are: Oran Young (US, Chair), Hans Corell (Sweden), Udloriak Hanson (Canada, Inuit), Paula Kankaanpää (Finland), Jacqueline McGlade (Denmark), Tony Penikett (Canada), Stanley Senner (US, Alaska), and Nodari Simoniya (Russia).

The Heinz Center in Washington, D.C. serves as the administrative and financial host for the overall project. Leading the Heinz Center effort is Robert Corell, world-renowned expert on Arctic issues and an ex officio member of the Steering Committee. A high-level consultative body or Blue Ribbon Panel is under development. The project is also served by a team of scientific consultants who will provide input during all stages of the project. Else Grete Broderstad at the Centre for Sami Studies, University of Tromsø, Norway serves as the project’s Executive Secretary. The Secretariat is responsible for preparing all substantive products of the project and has primary responsibility for organizing the Workshop.
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