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Transnational Cooperation in Times of Rapid Global Changes

The Arctic Council as a Success Case?

Dorothea Wehrmann

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Abstract

Global agreements, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Agreement, illustrate the need for transnational cooperation to solve complex and interrelated challenges that affect humanity at large. But how can transnational cooperation be more successful in times of rapid global changes? This Discussion Paper shows that many of the premises discussed in the literature on transnational cooperation and on multi-stakeholder partnerships mirror the praise and concerns brought forward with regard to the Arctic Council as a case of success. At the same time, it would be possible under the auspices of the Arctic Council to further transnational cooperation, in particular by advancing its process management.

This study proceeds as follows: It introduces and compares various different approaches in global governance research that are thought to strengthen transnational cooperation and critically explores in how far the Arctic Council can be considered an example to learn from in encouraging transnational cooperation. Moving on from the case of the Arctic Council, the study then expands further on the premises brought forward in the literature and suggests that more attention be paid to the dimension of knowledge as particularly in times of rapid global changes a shared understanding of challenges is an important basis for transnational cooperation.

Keywords: Arctic Council, transnational cooperation, institutional success factors, global common good

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Abbreviations

AC	Arctic Council
AMAP	Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme
Arctic-5	Canada, Denmark (on behalf of Greenland), Norway, Russia, United States
Arctic-8	the Arctic-5 plus Finland, Iceland, Sweden
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung / German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
EU	European Union
HLFP	High-level Political Forum
IO	international organisation
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGO	non-governmental organisation
SAO	Senior Arctic Official
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
US	United States
VNR	Voluntary National Review

Executive summary

Global agreements, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Agreement, illustrate the need for transnational cooperation to solve complex and interrelated challenges that affect humanity at large. While the number of forums and institutions that seek to enhance cooperation in coordinating different approaches and policies transnationally has increased in the past decades, not all of them have been assessed as being a success. But what factors help to strengthen transnational cooperation in the first place? Research in the field of global governance in particular has investigated factors that determine “successful transnational cooperation”. This Discussion Paper compares the various different approaches that are thought to strengthen transnational cooperation and critically explores in how far, according to these factors, the Arctic Council can be considered an example to learn from in encouraging successful transnational cooperation, particularly in times of rapid global changes. The Arctic Council is a telling example in this respect because cooperation between state and non-state actors in a cross-border setting is at the core of this intergovernmental forum. Moreover, the Arctic, as a region, is shaped by both transboundary challenges and its exposure to rapid global changes.

This study proceeds as follows: By drawing on research on global governance, this paper begins by showing that in the literature very different perspectives consider similar factors as strengthening transnational cooperation. After that, it focuses on lessons learned from the Arctic Council (AC) as a forum that is widely perceived as facilitating transnational cooperation successfully. This section outlines how the AC has adhered to various factors identified in the literature but also identifies the need to improve its process management. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement are central for the policy field of development cooperation, which is why the concluding section evaluates the relevance of this study’s findings, particularly in relation to international relations and development studies. This final section concludes that many of the premises discussed in the literature on transnational cooperation and on multi-stakeholder partnerships mirror the praise and concerns brought forward with regard to the AC and, at the same time, that transnational cooperation under the auspices of the AC allows these premises to be expanded.

1 Introduction

Transnational cooperation is often considered a key with which to address and solve global challenges – not only, but particularly in times of rapid global changes.¹ Eradicating poverty and addressing climate change, for example, are framed as “a common concern of humankind” (Paris Climate Agreement, UN [United Nations], 2015a, p. 2), “the greatest global challenge” (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN, 2015b, p. 1), and as entangled problems that require actions “of all countries, all stakeholders and all people” (2030 Agenda, UN 2015b, p. 1). Because these definitions are shared globally, many experts recognise that today’s challenges can only be addressed collectively – ideally, by following holistic approaches (Horner & Hulme, 2017). The question of how to “transform our world” (as demanded by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) and to implement the goals agreed on and adopted by the parties to the Paris Climate Agreement and by the United Nations General Assembly is, however, contested – particularly in terms of how the related policies can be best coordinated and how responsibilities can be divided in a just manner (Chaturvedi et al., in press). Moreover, at present, multilateralism seems to be “in crisis” (Brühl, 2019) as nationalism and “my country first”-movements are growing worldwide (Kaukkala, Wetering, & Vuorelma, 2018).

At the same time, new types of cooperation have emerged and transnational cooperation² continues to be on the rise. Particularly at the transnational level, non-state actors are increasingly being included in policymaking, most notably in climate initiatives (Chan & Amling, 2019) and in multi-actor partnerships (Wehrmann, 2018). But how can such formats of cooperation be strengthened and geared towards the global common good³ as prioritised in the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

Global governance-research on transnational cooperation has focused on questions such as how transnational relations may encourage attitudinal change and influence policymaking beyond states (Keohane & Nye, 1971; Keck & Sikkink, 2002). In this regard, researchers have explored the potential of norm-setting networks (Jakobeit, Kappel, & Mückenberger, 2010) and the formation of transnational political spaces (Albert et al., 2009; Kaelble, 2002). In particular, the governance of transnational cooperation is a perennial question of various scholarly works. They discuss the shift from public to private forms of governance (Pattberg, 2005); how transnational interactions can be regularised or institutionalised (Eberlein, Abbott, Black, Meidinger, & Wood, 2014; Faist & Ozveren, 2004); and how different formats and regimes function in response to growing worldwide interdependences (Albert, 2016; Meadowcroft, 2007; Ostrom, 2009; Poteete, Janssen, & Ostrom, 2010; Zürn, 2018).

The more recent debate focuses on specific models, exploring, for example, how transnational governance can be guided by indirect governance via delegation and orchestration (Abbott,

1 In line with Cooperrider and Dutton, rapid global changes are understood here as “alterations (positive or negative) in human or environmental systems whose effects are not and cannot be localized and for which appropriate human response is likely to require transboundary thought, organizing, and action” (Cooperrider & Dutton, 1999, p. 7). While there have always been changes, in the age of climate change and of digitalisation the quality of the changes defined by Cooperrider and Dutton in 1999 have reached a new quality, as they proceed more rapidly than before and have effects for the entire planet.

2 This is defined as interactions among actors from different actor groups (including at least one non-state actor) that occur on a regular basis, cross borders but are not global in scope (Albert, Bluhm, Helmig, Leutzsch, & Walter, 2009; Pries, 2010).

3 The global common good can be defined as goals or parameters that are relevant for the global community (Messner & Scholz, 2018). Global public goods, on the other hand, are understood as commodities which enjoy global application in terms of use, cost or both aspects (Kaul, Blondin, & Nahtigal, 2016).

Genschel, Snidal, & Zangl, 2016) and how the democratic legitimacy of such governance models can be strengthened (Bäckstrand & Kuyper, 2017). Although these models and their (potential) application have limitations, such investigations are central for those seeking to overcome the contestation of approaches and responsibilities, to avoid backward steps and gridlock when negotiating policies on “how to transform our world,” and to improve the coordination of different strategies geared towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement. These models aim at improving different (but related) aspects of transnational cooperation when focusing, for example, on the effectiveness of transnational governance settings (Reed et al., 2018; Young, 1999) or a better integration of multiple perspectives (Abbott et al., 2016).

To understand the factors that may determine “successful transnational cooperation” in the first place, this paper compares different approaches that aim at strengthening transnational cooperation. Under consideration of these approaches, it critically assesses whether the Arctic Council can be considered an example to learn from for encouraging successful transnational cooperation, particularly in times of rapid global changes. With regard to the latter, both the Arctic and the Arctic Council are particularly relevant for two specific reasons, which will be explained below.

First, for a long time, the Arctic⁴ was understood and treated as a unique and somehow “exotic” region due to its remoteness, sparse population, and special landscape. Today, researchers and practitioners more often refer to the “Global Arctic,” acknowledging entanglements of regional dynamics in the Arctic with worldwide phenomena such as climate change and their significance for the global economy (Keil & Knecht, 2017; Kerry, 2013). While the impacts of climate change are manifold in the Arctic, similar to climate change itself, they accelerate faster than expected in the Arctic and faster than in any other region.⁵ Environmental challenges that result from the “Arctic Opening” (LeMière & Mazo, 2014) are, for example, rising sea-levels, coastal erosion, the migration of species, and changing ecosystems. In addition, new economic opportunities enhance discussions on how development in the Arctic can be managed sustainably (for example, in view of freight transportation, tourism, and the development of fossil fuels), and to what extent sustainable development policies in the Arctic harmonise with the 2030 Agenda. However, both environmental challenges and economic opportunities do not only affect “the people from the North”; they also offer benefits and entail risks for people from afar, who at the same time contribute to these changes (for instance, via consumption patterns). Given the region’s experience with transboundary challenges and its exposure to rapid global changes,⁶ it seems likely that there are various lessons to be learned from the Arctic when discussing how transnational cooperation can successfully contribute to the governance of far-

4 In this study, the Arctic is foremost understood as a political region, as a region in which a number of actors are linked together because of their geographic relationship with the region (building on a definition provided by Nye, 1968). In geographic terms, definitions of “the Arctic” differ and often mirror the political interests of actors engaged in the governance of the Arctic. While generally speaking the Arctic Circle is considered its geographical boundary, official definitions of the Arctic provided, for example, by the Arctic-rim states and used by the Arctic Council sometimes also include areas that are located South of the Arctic Circle (Wehrmann, 2019).

5 The average temperature in the Arctic (and Antarctic) has been rising at twice the rate compared to other regions, and the rapidly melting sea ice and permafrost make the resulting environmental changes more visible than in other regions. Moreover, climate change in the Arctic has a strong influence on the global climate system as a whole and, as such, the more recent 2019 Arctic wildfires that were unprecedented in size and intensity have also boost climate change beyond the region (NASA, 2019).

6 In this way, “sustainable development” and “environmental protection have been the two main thematic pillars of the AC since its formation in 1996.

reaching, entangled, and complex challenges such as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement.⁷

Second, the Arctic Council is an example of the benefits arising from transnational cooperation in times of rapid global changes. The cooperation of non-state and state actors in a cross-border setting is at the core of “the leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction *among Arctic States, Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants*” (Arctic Council, 2018, emphasis added), and the AC has often been described as a very “successful forum” in this respect (SIPRI [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute], 2018). Some highlight the numerous distinct actor groups that are engaged in the Arctic Council (Knecht, 2017) and refer particularly to the inclusion of non-state actor groups (most notably to indigenous peoples’ organisations with Permanent Participant-status, encouraging the prominence of the concerns of Arctic indigenous peoples in the AC (Smieszek, 2019). Others emphasise that the AC has managed to increase transnational cooperation and to maintain peace in a region that is still often represented as a region prone to international conflicts (the 2015-Iqaluit Declaration, Arctic Council, 2015)⁸ that used to be a “military theatre” and an “arena of the superpowers” during the Cold War (Lackenbauer, 2010). In this way, the popular notion of an “Arctic exceptionalism” (Heininen, Exner-Pirot, & Plouffe, 2015; Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015) builds on the perception that the region “remains outside global geopolitical confrontations” (Heyman, 2016; Jorbenadze, 2017; Schaller & Gjørsv, 2018), as (despite the Ukraine-crisis) the ongoing cooperation with Russia exemplifies. Also due to this continuity of cooperation, the AC is widely considered the primary forum for policymaking in the Arctic (Nord, 2016), the “promoter voice of the Arctic” (Heininen, 2004, p. 33), and “the most important multilateral framework in the region” (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015, p. 9).

This paper proceeds as follows: First, by drawing on research on global governance, this paper shows that in the literature very different perspectives consider similar factors as strengthening transnational cooperation. Second, it focuses on lessons learned from the Arctic Council, as a forum that is widely perceived as facilitating transnational cooperation successfully. This section outlines how the AC has adhered to various factors identified in the literature but also points out the need to improve its process management. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement are central for the policy field of development cooperation, which is why, third, the concluding section evaluates the relevance of this study’s findings, particularly for international relations and development studies. This third section concludes that many of the premises discussed in the literature on transnational cooperation and on multi-stakeholder partnerships mirror the praise and concerns brought forward with regard to the AC and, at the same time, that transnational cooperation under the auspices of the AC allows these premises to be expanded.

Overall, this paper aims at contributing to the discussion of how transnational cooperation and the implementation of ambitious global visions, such as the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate

7 In this regard, the Finnish chairmanship programme for the AC (2017-2019) describes the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Agreement as the “two recent milestones which have major relevance to the Arctic” while the government of Finland has used both agreements as points of departure to justify Finland’s priorities during its chairmanship (Government of Finland, 2017). Even though the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement are not specifically mentioned in the current Arctic Council chairmanship programme (2019-2021), the government of Iceland also prioritises “a sustainable Arctic” and “climate and green energy solutions” (Government of Iceland, 2019).

8 Particularly, speculation about the existence of raw materials invigorated projections of future inter-state conflicts on territorial rights in the Arctic that have dominated the headlines of newspaper articles on the Arctic for decades (Wehrmann, 2019).

Agreement, can be advanced. Despite the growing attention paid to non-state activist groups such as the Fridays for Future- and Extinction Rebellion-movements, those arguing that it is either “too late” to change anything or “too difficult” to find effective solutions often seem to dominate the discussion. Thus, more balanced, constructive contributions are needed to identify pathways for reaching the goals agreed upon, for example, through intensifying cooperation between state and non-state actors. One may argue that the complex nature of collective action problems hinders any transferability of possible solutions and best practice-examples to the global level in the first place. This study does not doubt limitations in this regard. However, complex collective action problems still have their origin in the actions “undertaken by individuals, families, firms, and actors at a much smaller scale” (Ostrom 2009, p. 3), and concrete examples such as those provided in this study might be helpful to encourage changes in that way.

2 How can transnational and multilateral cooperation be enhanced in times of rapid global changes?

In times of rapid global changes that are expected to cause fundamental environmental, economic, and social shifts, policymaking faces various challenges. As negotiations on agreements such as the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda have shown, policies require to be ambitious to encourage effective decision-making at all levels; they should consider and integrate various (also conflicting) perspectives to be comprehensive; they should be negotiated in a timely manner; and they need to be adaptive if they are to adequately address urgent problems. Moreover, to implement such agreements, it is important to overcome problems and factors that limit cooperation and to take advantage of the factors that enhance cooperation at the sub-national, national, and global levels. While the problem of free-riding, for example, is said to demotivate actors in contributing to collective goods and ultimately leads to collective inaction or socially sub-optimal outcomes, social control mechanisms can be applied to regulate the sustainable use of the commons (Ostrom, 2009). In this section, I discuss various different perspectives on how transnational multilateral cooperation can be enhanced and differentiate between actor-, process- and context-dimensions (as done in research on multi-actor partnerships) to show the various perspective overlaps. Not only in regard to social control mechanisms have scholars repeatedly found that “most influences which transcend national borders emanate not from the globe but the neighbourhood” (Mann, 2006, p. 28) and similarly highlighted that “individual behaviour is strongly affected by the context in which interactions take place rather than being simply a result of individual differences” (Ostrom, 2009, p. 431). Consequently, to implement global agreements, it is necessary to link them more strongly to individual contexts (Jakobeit et al., 2010). In this regard, transnational interactions and networks in particular have the potential to guide behaviour and to enhance cooperation because they are intermediate to both the global and the individual levels. But what factors enhance transnational cooperation with a view to achieving the global common good?

Ten years ago, Elinor Ostrom argued:

Many of the decisions made that affect the release of greenhouse gases – how and with whom to travel to work and other destinations, the level of energy use, the type of investments in building infrastructure and new technologies for energy production – are made independently by multiple actors *without communicating with others* making similar decisions. And no central authority exists at the global level *making authoritative decisions* about payments for energy use and investments in new technologies – and enforcing these decisions. (Ostrom 2009, p.9, emphasis added)

Thus, Ostrom pointed out that cooperation to achieve global common goods must be based on communication and coordination across multiple scales and levels to encourage mutual learning, innovation and offsetting. In this way, Ostrom and others promoted multilevel approaches such as polycentric governance which is based on the premise that different centres of authority interact without standing in hierarchical relationship to each other (Ostrom, 2009). In polycentric governance, thus, different (state and non-state) actors are able to take responsibility, which encourages the consideration of multiple perspectives and the implementation of location-specific conditions, among other considerations.

Within the context of rapid social and environmental changes, however, polycentric governance has not been proven “fit for purpose” (Jordan, Huitema, Asselt, & Forster, 2018). Due to competition between the different levels and the related “costs in time and money of collective action” (Morrison et al., 2017, p. 6), among other things, polycentric governance leads to “high transaction costs, inconsistencies, freeloading, unanticipated effects, gridlock, and ultimate implementation failure” (Morrison et al., 2019, p. 2). Moreover, polycentric approaches have been criticised for ignoring “not only different types of power at play but also how their distribution may affect both governance processes and environmental outcomes” (Morrison et al., 2017, p. 2).

As a soft and indirect mode of governance in a polycentric system, the concept of orchestration, on the other hand, acknowledges the presence of power asymmetries explicitly. According to this concept, orchestrators (for example, international organisations) seek to influence the behaviour of targets (for instance, individuals) via an intermediary (such as states) (Abbott, Genschel, Snidal, & Zangl, 2012). The concept of orchestration also supports the integration of the various different approaches that intermediaries may pursue (Caplan, 2013; Klingebiel & Paulo, 2015). These approaches are all geared towards achieving a shared goal and the related agenda as defined by the orchestrators, who may, however, end up actually cooperating with intermediaries in order to achieve this goal and with targets that prioritise “desirable norms such as local participation, representation, equity, legitimacy, accountability, innovation, and efficiency” differently (Morrison et al., 2017, p. 1).

As shown in climate governance, orchestration in polycentric governance settings has encouraged the formation of organisations, contributed to the coordination among organisations and has the potential to promote systematic experimentation and learning, which is why promoters argue in favour of further orchestration within the context of climate governance (Abbott, 2017). In this way, orchestration may be perceived as a “plug-in” to polycentric governance, which facilitates the strategic ordering of priorities and potentially contributes to its “success” also under consideration of rapid social and environmental changes (Wehrmann, 2018). Having said that, what factors and mechanisms are needed to enhance and strengthen cooperation between different entities at the transnational level in the first place?

From the scholarly literature focusing on questions related to cooperation, this study presents findings from various different strands that pertain to the transnational level. Based on an in-depth analysis of the key literature available on transnational multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development, Pattberg and Widerberg, for example, suggest differentiating between three different conditions (dimensions) of relevance for cooperation: i) **actors**, ii) **process**, and iii) **context** (Pattberg & Widerberg, 2016).

They argue that an optimal mix of partners with different resources, types of knowledge and capabilities enhances “successful cooperation” in multi-stakeholder partnerships, understanding success in this way as “the use of synergies and an effective division of labor” (Pattberg &

Widerberg, 2016, p. 46). Considering the process-dimension, Pattberg and Widerberg highlight the need to align goals with international norms. Thus, when applied to the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda, they would emphasise the need to develop a “common problem-definition” and to aim for “clear and measurable goals” (Pattberg & Widerberg, 2016, p. 47). When acknowledging the distinct features of problems, Pattberg and Widerberg characterise them by high levels of complexity (“malign problems”) or understood as “benign problems” in cases, in which “actors’ interests and preferences converge, and solutions are easier to identify” (Pattberg & Widerberg, 2016, p. 49). Pattberg and Widerberg thus argue that, with regard to the context-dimension, it is important to reflect on different administrative challenges and institutional setups that are needed to address different kinds of problems.

Peinhardt and Sandler, among others, base their analysis on game-theoretic foundations. Where the actor dimension is concerned, they argue that collective action is “usually easier to achieve among a small number of agents” that are like-minded and possess similar means (Peinhardt & Sandler, 2015, p. 10), which contradicts Pattberg and Widerberg’s findings that stress the differences and optimal mix of actors. Considering the process dimension, Peinhardt and Sandler support the premises of the orchestration concept when stating that country-specific incentives can motivate participation as well as those gains that “cannot be achieved independent of the collective action” (Peinhardt & Sandler, 2015, p. 10) and when arguing that “the presence of a leader country [...] is a favorable catalyst for collective action in terms of leading by example” (Peinhardt & Sandler, 2015, p. 11). They further support Pattberg’s and Widerberg’s suggestion to define clear and measurable goals as from Peinhardt and Sandler’s view, collective action is “bolstered if payoffs are immediate and certain” (Peinhardt & Sandler, 2015, p. 11). With regard to the context dimension, they also agree with Pattberg and Widerberg when stating that “institutional rules can [...] bolster collective action by offering selective incentives” and that cooperation under the auspices of institutions contributes to the development of trust and to the formation of alliances, both enhancing further cooperation also as regards other thematic areas (Peinhardt & Sandler, 2015, p. 11).

From the analysis of transnational movements, Bandy et al. add to Pattberg and Widerberg’s and to Peinhardt and Sandler’s findings by outlining the international legitimacy that large international non-governmental organisations and international governmental organisations give to specific norms. Thus, in connection with the context dimension, the political and institutional space provided by these organisations can be seen as encouraging the development of shared strategies and coalition-building (Bandy & Smith, 2005, p. 233). In line with Pattberg and Widerberg and with Peinhardt and Sandler, Bandy et al. also stress the value of established cooperation as a factor contributing to the emergence of more cooperation, as cooperation that builds on other cooperation seems less time-consuming, resource-intensive, and risky (Bandy & Smith, 2005, p. 233). Resources, specialised knowledge and “access to centers of economic and political decision making” are also factors that Bandy et al. identify with regard to the actor dimension as beneficial for the sustaining of transnational coalitions. In this way, they emphasise advantages arising from the inclusion of actors “from the North” that are said to “have larger organizational capacity, financial power, and abilities to join IGOs, national governments, or transnational corporations” (Bandy & Smith, 2005, p. 233).⁹ Also, regular contact and even conflicts may foster cooperation when generating “new sensitivities” and contributing to “conscious-raising efforts” (Bandy & Smith, 2005, p. 233), thereby enhancing “the development of solidarity, trust, and shared values among participants” (Brown & Fox, 1998, p. 455). These behavioural conditions are also stressed by Messner and Weinlich, who emphasise the “human factor in international relations” when investigating how and under

9 This also applies to cooperation among think tanks (Ordóñez-Llanos, in press).

which conditions global cooperation can succeed (Messner & Weinlich, 2015). In this regard and based on the so-called “Cooperation Hexagon”, Messner et al. suggest that reciprocity is “the fundamental prerequisite for cooperation to be sustained [over] time”. They further identify four mechanisms (trust; communication; the ability to determine people’s reputation as trustworthy partners; and the perception that the interaction is fair) as necessary to “create conditions conducive to reciprocity”, which may then be expanded by “enforcement” (via punishment or rewards) and a “we-identity” (Messner, Guarín, & Haun, 2013, p. 16).

While constructivist approaches are valuable in considering discourses as important for successful transnational cooperation, they do not necessarily differentiate among the actor-, process-, and context-dimensions. From the perspectives of frame analysis (Goffman, 1974) and critical geopolitics (Tuathail, 1992), for example, geopolitical imaginaries and narratives, such as the framing of China’s Belt and Road Initiative as a “new Silk Road” or of the Arctic as a “military theater”, contributed to the formation of alliances among different actor groups (Pincus & Ali, 2015). From that perspective, not only coalitions among actors but also framing processes shape the process of agenda-setting, or as Altheide “frames it”, “[f]rames focus on what will be discussed, how it will be discussed, and above all, how it will not be discussed” (Altheide, 1997, p. 651). This also relates to the more recent analysis of ideas as coalition magnets that policy entrepreneurs frame and use strategically “to garner the support of a diversity of individuals and groups” (Béland & Cox, 2015; Janus & Lixia, in press).¹⁰ Constructivist approaches thus add to all three dimensions an additional layer highlighting the representation of the purpose that is encouraging cooperation in the first place, of which the aim to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement are just two examples.

Overall, there are various overlaps and fairly few contradictions between the different theoretical approaches, investigating factors and mechanisms encouraging cooperation between different entities at the transnational level (see Table 1). The research introduced above further supports Pattberg and Widerberg’s differentiation between the actor-, process-, and context-dimensions. This differentiation will also guide the analysis presented in the next section, which critically assesses in what regard the Arctic Council can be considered an empirical example to learn from when examining transnational cooperation in times of rapid global changes.

10 According to Béland and Cox, ideas can become coalition magnets if an idea is high in valence and has an ambiguous or polysemic character “that makes it attractive to groups that might otherwise have different interests” (Béland & Cox, 2015, p. 428).

Table 1: Factors and mechanisms to enhance and strengthen cooperation between different entities at the transnational level

	Transnational multi-stakeholder partnerships	Transnational movements	Game-theory	Behavioural conditions	Constructivist approaches
Actors	Optimal partner mix (various resources, knowledges and capabilities) encouraging the use of synergies and effective division of labour		Like-mindedness and similar means to collaborate (“We-identity”)	Reciprocity as the fundamental prerequisite for cooperation	Framing of problems, construction of shared narratives and ideas
	Effective leadership	Large international organisations give legitimacy to specific norms			
Process	Stringent goal-setting		Define clear and measurable goals to ensure that payoffs are immediate and certain		
	Sustained funding		Country-specific incentives		
	Professional process management	Specialised knowledge, access to economic and political decision-making through actors with organisational capacities and financial power (often “actors from ‘the North’”)	Presence of a leader country to lead by example	Enforcement (rewards or punishments)	
	Regular monitoring, reporting and evaluation to support organisational learning	Regular contact to develop solidarity, trust and shared values		Trust, communication, trustworthiness, fairness	

Table 1 (cont): Factors and mechanisms to enhance and strengthen cooperation between different entities at the transnational level

Context	Active meta governance	Political and institutional space provided by international organisations (IOs) encourages development of shared strategies and coalition-building	Institutional rules to offer selective incentives		
	Favourable political and social context	Established cooperation enhances further cooperation (less time-consuming, resource-intensive or risky)	Cooperation under the auspices of institutions support development of trust and the formation of alliances while enhancing further cooperation	“We-identity”	
	Fit problem-structure				

Source: Author

3 Lessons learned from the Arctic Council

As the great relevance ascribed to the Arctic Council indicates, in Arctic studies the question of whether the Arctic Council has enhanced and strengthened transnational cooperation in the Arctic is not new. Various studies have focused, for example, on the effectiveness¹¹ of the Arctic Council, and found amongst others that “the effectiveness of the AC has exceeded the expectations of many of those who were present during its inception” (Kankaanpää & Young, 2014, p. 1). As Smieszek assesses, however, these studies are mostly grounded on empirical observations and lack a systematic inquiry. The missing systematic inquiry therefore “hampers our ability to accumulate knowledge about the performance of the AC” (Smieszek, 2019, p. 3) and to transfer knowledge on the AC to other related studies in the field of global governance. Following the different approaches presented above, this current section first examines transnational cooperation under the auspices of the Arctic Council within the context of the various factors and mechanisms that relate to the actor-, process- and context-dimensions introduced above: the mix of actors; leadership; reciprocity; goal-setting; funding; incentives; process management; knowledge; presence of a leader country; enforcement; monitoring; reporting and evaluation; regular contact; trust; communication; trustworthiness; fairness; meta-governance; institutional rules; political and institutional space; political and social context; cooperation under the auspices of institutions; “we-identity”; fit to problem-structure. Second, it briefly evaluates to what extent polycentric governance approaches such as the concept of orchestration may be of use for advancing the performance of the Arctic Council.

The Arctic Council celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2016.¹² Since it was set up, the intergovernmental forum has evolved in many ways, particularly in relation to the actors collaborating under its auspices, its institutional structure, and thematic priorities. When assessing in how far the **mix of actors** collaborating under the auspices of the AC has enhanced transnational cooperation in the Arctic, a look at this **actor-dimension** shows that the Arctic Council has clearly “opened up”. Initially, the AC representatives from the eight circumpolar countries (the Arctic-8)¹³ with voting rights collaborated with three non-governmental indigenous peoples’ organisations with consultation rights, obtaining Permanent Participant-status. Within a few years, the number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with Permanent Participant-status grew to six; additionally, the number of non-Arctic states, inter-governmental-, inter-parliamentary-, and other non-governmental organisations that participate as Observers in the Arctic Council tripled (during the last Ministerial Meeting in 2019, 39 states and organisations were approved as Observers

11 As Smieszek emphasises, “there is no single, clear-cut definition of institutional effectiveness in the literature on international regimes”, which is also why the analyses of the AC’s effectiveness focus on different aspects. Smieszek herself defines institutional effectiveness for the purpose of her study as “the extent to which a regime contributes to solving or mitigating the problems that led to its creation” (Smieszek, 2019, p. 4).

12 For an introduction to the Arctic Council, an explanation of its formation, primary functions and structures see Nord (2016).

13 The states that directly border the Arctic Ocean – Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United States – are also known as Arctic-5. Together with Finland, Iceland and Sweden, who all also call themselves Arctic states, they form part of the Arctic-8.

to the AC (see Annex 1 for an overview).¹⁴ Over the course of time, the number of actors contributing to the AC has thus significantly grown.

At least two specific reasons explain the Arctic Council's enlargement: First, the need to include the expertise, resources, and capacities of relevant actors, for example, for the preparation of the AC's "landmark" cooperative scientific publications (The Northern Forum, 2015)¹⁵; and second, the need to enlarge to strengthen the Arctic Council's legitimacy (Knecht, 2017). Particularly in view of the latter, Knecht shows how, at different times, the Arctic Council decided strategically to admit access to some actors and deny it to others. Prominent actors with an interest in the Arctic Council that have constantly been denied Observer-status are, for example, Greenpeace and the European Union (EU) (the EU's interest in the activities of the Arctic Council was already highlighted at the Barrow Ministerial Meeting in the year 2000). Similarly, even though Observer status was granted to a number of Asian states in 2013, this enlargement-round was accompanied by much discussion in and beyond the Arctic Council.¹⁶ Valur Ingimundarson explained the reasons for these discussions by sketching the following dilemma:

From the perspective of the eight Arctic states, the key problem has been to reconcile the desire to elevate the international standing and legitimacy of the Arctic Council by keeping its door open to non-regional actors with a determination to maintain their own privileged position. (Ingimundarson, 2014, p. 183)

The same dilemma applied to the cases of Greenpeace and the European Union, whose position on seal-hunting particularly conflicts with the traditions maintained by indigenous peoples' organisations with Permanent Participants. In contrast to these two Observer applicants, however, the admission of the Asian states as Observers was considered an important strategy to "enmesh them into 'Arctic' ways of thinking" and to avoid that "otherwise these states may pursue their Arctic interests via other means, which would undermine the Arctic Council's place as the primary authority on Arctic issues" (Manicom & Lackenbauer, 2013).

The aim to strengthen its legitimacy and "role as the central governance forum in the region" (Etzold & Steinicke, 2015, p. 2) has been the main reason for the enlargement of the Arctic

14 Similar to the actors engaged as Observers, the role ascribed to this status has also changed over time (see Knecht, 2016a for an assessment of the latest procedural reform of the AC's Observer Manual).

15 Among the prominent Arctic Council reports are, for example, the "Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) Assessment Report: Arctic Pollution Issues" (1998); the "Arctic Climate Impact Assessment" (2004) – "a major Council four-year report that highlighted that climate change is a global issue" (Charron, 2014, p. 178); the "Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment" (2009); and the "Arctic Biodiversity Assessment" (2013).

16 Although it has been argued that Observers are fairly weak actors in the AC, actors are interested in this status because they "seek to contribute to the governance of environmental issues of global importance" by contributing to Arctic science and "strive to gain as states develop the economic potential of the Arctic region" (Charron, 2014, p. 174). The latter has often been ascribed a central interest for observers from Asia and, particularly in view of China, the so-called "polar orientalist"-perspective (Dodds & Nuttall, 2016, p. 162) gained much attention according to which China was positioned as an "energy-hungry" country in Arctic geopolitical discourses (see, for instance, Charron, 2014, p. 179). Until today, no corporate actor has received Observer status, but representatives of private sector actors (for example, from the Association of Oil and Gas Producers) have been invited to participate as experts in Arctic Council meetings.

Council, as these cases exemplify. This enlargement-strategy thus underlines the AC's "political ambition to shape regional processes and their interaction with climate change and globalisation" (Etzold & Steinicke, 2015, p. 2). In a similar vein, among the main reasons presented *against* the inclusion of new actors has been the fear of the Arctic states (and Permanent Participants) of losing exclusive control of the AC and of the region as such (Graczyk & Koivurova, 2015; Humrich, 2017; Lackenbauer & Manicom, 2015). What is more, interviewees stressed that the increasing complex topics of concern also required the inclusion of more actors to take advantage of the "cross-pollination of ideas" (Charron, 2014) and to come to a qualified outcome. In this regard, the enlargement of the AC can also be seen as a strategy deriving from the "practical need" to manage complex challenges in a changing Arctic (cf. Wehrmann, 2017, p. 203) and thus strengthens Pattberg and Widerberg's claim that the desire to use synergies and to divide labour enhances transnational cooperation. At the same time though, the strategic consideration of the Arctic states also supports Peinhardt and Sandler's argumentation, according to which an "optimal partner mix" also builds on the like-mindedness and means of actors, which is why some actors – such as the EU and Greenpeace – have still not attained Observer-status in the AC. Overall, the openness of the Arctic Council to non-state actors and the prominent status ascribed to indigenous peoples have been particularly reviewed as contributing to the success of circumpolar cooperation conducted under its auspices (Kankaanpää & Young, 2012, p. 4).

Any assessment on the **effectiveness of the AC's leadership** – another factor of relevance in regard to the actor-dimension – needs to investigate the different chairmanships of the Arctic states that obtain "the influential agenda-setting position" and rotate every two years (Smieszek & Kankaanpää, 2015). Those arguing that the AC has been a successful forum, often highlight that it "has made a difference since its establishment in 1996" (Kankaanpää & Young, 2012), particularly in the "realms of knowledge generation, issue framing and agenda setting". Moreover, despite the regular rotation of the AC's chairs, the AC's leadership has maintained the institutional character and purpose of the council as defined in its founding declaration. Even though the AC's thematic priorities have expanded over the past decades, they all relate to issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic. As I show in an analysis of the chairmanship-programmes released between 1996 and 2016 however, despite this continuity, various projects and institutional transformations have been carried out under the umbrella of these themes, which mirror their multiple meanings (Wehrmann, 2016, p. 100).¹⁷ Moreover, as a chairmanship period is usually limited to only two years, it has often been demanded that the Arctic states should align their chairmanships better to carry on projects and to ensure that initiatives have a greater impact. For the first time, the Scandinavian Arctic states did so during their consecutive chairmanships from 2006 to 2013. Also, the chairs of the AC's subsidiary bodies (working groups, task forces, expert groups) rotate biennially. While in theory, this rotation supports the consideration of multiple perspectives and an integration of knowledge as is often demanded in polycentric governance, interviewees highlighted that in practice the hierarchical position of chairs in

17 "Sustainable development", for example, has been related to very different issue areas ranging from the development of the Arctic transport infrastructure, to cooperation with businesses, the strengthening of circumpolar communities and preservation of traditional lifestyles. While these priorities all address different challenges that have been discussed more prominently in the AC over time, they can also be perceived as mirroring the strategic interests of the Arctic states (Wehrmann, 2016).

working groups allowed them to greatly influence the content-related directions taken and also the atmosphere of (and inclusion in) cooperation (Wehrmann, 2017).¹⁸

Lastly, in respect to the actor-dimension, research has emphasised **reciprocity** as a fundamental prerequisite for transnational cooperation. In the case of the Arctic, reciprocity relates particularly to the need to cooperate in order to deal with transboundary challenges caused by the remoteness of the region (for instance, in the context of search- and rescue-operations), environmental challenges (particularly climate change effects such as the melting sea-ice, coastal erosion, the release of black carbon and toxic gases), and the aim to maintain influence and to avoid territorial conflicts. Given the estimated resource riches in the Arctic, particularly the latter has often been stressed as an incentive for transnational cooperation even though most of the estimated resources are located in areas under the jurisdiction of the Arctic coastal states (Wehrmann, 2019). More recently, it is more often climate change and its dramatic effects in and beyond the Arctic that particularly non-Arctic states and environmental organisations emphasise to justify their interests in the region (for example, China frames itself in this way a “near-Arctic”-state). Despite their different interests for cooperating, all actors collaborating under the auspices of the AC share an interest in strengthening the legitimacy of the Arctic Council, fearing that otherwise their say would be much more limited if the Arctic Ocean were governed by any other international organ, for instance, under the auspices of the United Nations. Consequently, the Arctic Council supports the premises brought forward in the literature cited above according to which the success of transnational cooperation very much depends on reciprocity.

When examining how the AC could modify **processes** in order to be more effective, in the literature it is often argued in favour of stringent **goal-setting**. The definition of clear and measurable goals is intended to ensure that payoffs are immediate and certain. Beyond the mandate of the Arctic Council, goals are usually set biennially in the chairmanship programmes and, in the past, these have not necessarily built on each other, nor did they outline measurable goals. In this respect, the work of the Arctic Council (and particularly that of the Arctic states) could be improved, starting, for example, with more concrete and detailed chairmanship programmes, which would also put more pressure on chairmanship countries **to lead by example** and facilitate the identification of **country-specific incentives** arising from cooperating in the AC. In a similar vein, the Arctic Council does not provide any **regular monitoring, reporting and evaluation** of its work which – as discussed in the literature – would support organisational learning. The AC also does not have any mechanism to oversee in how far its work is implemented and aligned with policies at the national level.¹⁹ Due to the lack of a follow-up mechanism that, ideally, should also oversee

18 The work of the Arctic Council has been perceived as following a bottom-up principle (Graczyk & Koivurova, 2015; Spence, 2015) as all programmes and projects, all research activities and negotiations of agreements and strategies are carried out by the Arctic Council subsidiary bodies (Wehrmann, 2016, p. 92). However, the agenda of the AC and the mandates of all subsidiary bodies are defined at the biennial Ministerial Meetings in the respective declarations adopted by the Arctic-8 (mirroring again the aim of the Arctic states to maintain control over the governance of the region). Even though new actors may raise new concerns of interest to the AC and contribute to a co-production of knowledge (see also Kankaanpää & Smieszek, 2014, p. 44), it thus remains in the hands of the Arctic states to decide about whether or not new topics receive a priority.

19 This is not only in view of the binding agreements negotiated under the auspices of the AC (that only the Arctic-8 are committed to) but also more generally that the Arctic Council does not have a monitoring function: “The Arctic Council does not and cannot implement or enforce its guidelines, assessments or

“how the council’s recommendations and guidelines are interpreted, even if many government agencies involved with the AC agree that it would be useful to have some type of such a reporting mechanism” (Kankaanpää & Young, 2012, p. 4; Smieszek, 2019, p. 12), it is also almost impossible for the AC to **enforce** cooperation via **rewards and punishments**.

The establishment of a permanent Secretariat in 2013 already addressed some of the weaknesses of the AC in its process management, for example by contributing to a greater transparency of the work conducted under the auspices of the AC. However, up till now, monitoring and evaluation have still not been regularised by the AC. In addition, because of this lack of information, it is difficult to assess the AC’s effectiveness in regard to the different issue areas that it addresses. It is only possible to guess that its effectiveness differs across the various issue areas, given the broad mandate and number of issue areas that it deals with (Smieszek, 2019; Wehrmann, 2016). Moreover, most of the problems that the AC works on cannot be solved by the AC on its own but require “ongoing efforts and periodic adjustments in [...] governing arrangements, rather than one-time solutions to ensure that the undertaken actions account for observed changes and deeper comprehension of issues at stake” (Smieszek, 2019, p. 11). Given this, it comes as no surprise that reforms of the AC have been discussed in the past. Critics argued, for example, that “long overdue steps to reform the Arctic Council are on hold” (Etzold & Steinicke, 2015, p. 1) and have questioned whether the AC is sufficiently prepared to address the challenges in the Arctic (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015; Stephen, 2017). Thus, as far as **professional process management** by the Arctic Council is concerned, there is much room for improvement.²⁰ The same applies to the funding of the AC, which is also largely based on the priorities identified in the chairmanship programmes. As a consequence, cooperation initiatives cannot calculate on the basis of **sustained funding**. Based on a survey with practitioners in the AC, Kankaanpää and Young highlighted that respondents identified “the lack of a reliable source of funding to cover general operating expenses” as “the greatest hindrance to the effectiveness of the council” (Kankaanpää & Young, 2012).

In general, however, the actors collaborating under the auspices of the Arctic Council have managed to develop significant outputs. Most prominently, their flagship reports (such as the Arctic Council Climate Impact Assessments) prepared by the AC’s working groups have been perceived as influential and “the most effective products of the AC” (Kankaanpää & Young, 2012, p. 4). Also due to their scientific quality, these reports have given the AC “the reputation of being a “cognitive forerunner [...] for its role as a fact finder and consensus

recommendations. That responsibility belongs to each individual Arctic State” (Arctic Council, 2018). The non-state Observer WWF emphasised this gap by conducting “a first-ever assessment of national and joint implementation of Arctic Council commitments” (WWF [World Wide Fund For Nature], 2018). The six resulting scorecards outline strengths and weaknesses, for example, as regards oil spill cooperation among the Arctic-8 and in the Arctic Council, and have been presented at international conferences (such as Arctic Frontiers in 2016).

20 Particularly the diversification of the AC’s institutional structure and the growing number of meetings conducted under the auspices of the AC (most often in Arctic locations that are difficult to reach) have led to growing costs and extra-coordination for those seeking to attend and participate. The diversification and enlargement of the AC illustrates a growing sensitivity towards the complexity of the issues that are addressed by the AC. As participations lists reveal, this has also affected the representation of different actor groups and their means to influence the work of the AC (Knecht, 2016b; Wehrmann, 2019). A more specific goal-setting in chairmanship programmes that also takes the different purposes of the AC’s subsidiary bodies into account could help to avoid a duplication of efforts and perhaps even reduce the number of meetings.

builder on Arctic environmental challenges” (Smieszek, 2019, p.13). Others even argue that the AC is successful because of this focus on scientific outputs when arguing “the most important and still enduring element of the Council’s work is the pragmatic, hands-on scientific cooperation in its working groups, not high politics” (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015, p. 14). In this way, the AC has contributed to the formation of **specialised knowledge** – and at the same time builds on the specialised knowledge provided, amongst others, by the indigenous peoples’ organisations participating in the Council. While the literature on multi-stakeholder-partnerships presented above emphasises access to economic and political decision-making through actors with organisational capacities and financial power, the consideration of “traditional knowledge” and of community-based monitoring of environmental changes in the Arctic by “locals” have especially been considered beneficial to the work of the Arctic Council (Johnson et al., 2015). Based on the specialised and shared knowledge, the AC was also able to successfully negotiate three binding agreements.²¹ For a soft-law forum, the negotiation of these agreements is remarkable and can be considered an example for the growing and shared sensitivity towards some issues that has developed through the transnational exchange among various different actors.²² The agreements also illustrate that cooperation in the AC builds on the often demanded **trust, communication, trustworthiness, fairness, and solidarity** as shared values supported by the AC and in **regular contacts** under its auspices. In contrast to other regional settings that have evolved “as security or trade complexes” (Heininen et al., 2015, p. 18), the AC’s main thematic pillars are also based on the perception that “mutual trust was to be built above all through cooperation in the areas of research, environment, business and culture” (Etzold & Steinicke, 2015, p. 1). Consequently, the Arctic states have related their aim to enhance “cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of the Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues” (Ottawa Declaration, 1996) almost entirely to these two pillars (Heininen et al., 2015, p. 18).

Turning now to the **context-dimension**, as was shown above, the **active meta-governance** and **institutional rules to offer selective incentives** promoted in the literature on transnational cooperation are areas that seem to be expandable in the Arctic Council. Whether transnational cooperation in the AC is based on a **fit to problem-structure** is difficult to assess (particularly in terms of effectiveness) given the lack of monitoring and

21 The Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic in 2011; the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution, Preparedness and Response in the Arctic in 2013; and the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation in 2016.

22 In the Arctic, maritime traffic has increased not only with the opening of the Northwest Passage and the Northern Sea Route but also with the growing number of initiatives focusing on the exploration of oil and gas resources. These developments have pressured the Arctic coastal states in particular to formalise their cooperation in case of (the more likely transboundary) emergencies. Under the auspices of the Arctic Council, the respective Task Forces on Search and Rescue and on Arctic Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response have been established on a temporary basis to negotiate binding agreements which were adopted in 2011 and 2013. The third and most recent legally binding agreement, the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation adopted in 2017, was similarly negotiated under the auspices of an AC task force, which was implemented to provide a framework that “grants facilitated access to land research areas of Arctic states [...], which is normally not included in the bilateral science and technology cooperation agreements [...]” (Smieszek, 2017, p. 443). Moreover, the agreement is intended to enhance research activities with parties that do not officially form part of the Arctic Council (for instance, Observers or invited experts) and, in view of climate change, the agreement thus allows a better exchange on knowledge created inside and outside the Arctic.

evaluation and interconnectedness of problems addressed by the AC. However, when evaluating the work of the AC against the backdrop of the popular narrative that the Arctic is a region prone to international conflicts, the AC's inclusive structure has clearly supported a continuity of peaceful relations between all actors cooperating in the AC. Thus, the AC has also proven that its **political and institutional space has encouraged the development of shared strategies and coalition-building**. Moreover, in times of crisis (such as when the United States withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement and changed its position in the AC respectively), the AC has encouraged continuous cooperation (in this case: the other Arctic states accepted the position of the United States at the Ministerial Meeting in 2019 but released a Ministers' statement emphasising their continuous joint efforts to deal with climate change in the Arctic) by enhancing "dialogue among different knowledge groups" (Kankaanpää & Young, 2012, p. 4). What is more, cooperation in the AC has contributed to **further cooperation and the formation of trust** in and also outside the Arctic Council, for example through the formation of new "Arctic institutions" that have been established to address topics explicitly excluded or given less priority in the Arctic Council (such as the Arctic Economic Council and the Arctic Coast Guard Forum). Vice versa, cooperation in the Arctic Council has also been inspired by cooperation in other settings: When comparing the declarations under the auspices of the AC since 1996 for example, references to global discourses illustrate that the negotiation of thematic priorities has not taken place detached from global contexts. Even though the Arctic region might be regarded "exceptional" in some regards, the framing and wording of declarations illustrate that – similar to other international institutions – the Arctic Council does not operate "in isolation" (Etzold & Steinicke, 2015, p. 1) nor in a political "vacuum" (Smieszek & Kankaanpää, 2015, p. 3). After the coming into force of the Kyoto Protocol, for instance, the Arctic states started to broaden the AC's Arctic-specific focus by "[r]ecognizing the significance of the Arctic environment for the global community" (Salekhard Declaration, 2006).²³ Similarly, two years after the adoption of the Agenda 2030, the Arctic Council also "[r]eaffirm[ed] the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the need for their realization by 2030" (Fairbanks Declaration, 2017).

Transnational cooperation under the auspices of the Arctic Council seems to have benefitted particularly from a **favourable political and social context** and the formation of a "**we-identity**". In regard to the former, since the establishment of the AC, the countries collaborating under its auspices, have excellent governance capacities; they are not hampered by fundamental subversive challenges (such as experiencing violent inner-state conflicts, extreme poverty, and so on) limiting their capacities to engage in the AC. Instead, they all have a shared understanding that the problems in the Arctic which affect them constitute circumpolar problems that they ("We") need to address collectively. Times of crisis have exemplified the quality of this unity among the Arctic-8, for example, during the Crimea crisis: while in other Arctic-specific settings, the Crimea crisis resulted in limited cooperation with Russia (for example, causing the cancellations of the Northern Eagle naval exercise and of the annual Chiefs of Defence meeting or the organisation of the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable without Russian participation; Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015, p. 12). In the Arctic

23 Although all subsequent declarations recognise climate change as a threat not only for the Arctic, this "global"-perspective was particularly emphasised under the 2015-17 US chairmanship, as its main theme "One Arctic" promoted the understanding of a shared Arctic "not just for the nations that touch it, but for the way that what happens here, for the stewardship that we have responsibility to execute, for the way that it touches every single person around the world and our way of life" (Kerry, 2013).

Council, the decision of Canada and the United States to boycott an Arctic Council task force meeting in Russia was much criticised by the other members of the Arctic Council (Etzold & Steinicke, 2015, p. 2; Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015). This practice of boycotting a meeting remained an exception among the Arctic-8 and “there is widespread agreement in the US, Canada, Europe and Russia that it is important to continue the pragmatic grassroots-level co-operation in governance structures, and particularly in the AC” (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015, p. 15).

Overall, the Arctic Council was formed as a forum in “response to practical needs” (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015, p. 8) and even though this analysis has identified mechanisms and factors that the AC could improve in order to intensify transnational cooperation under its auspices and in the Arctic, it has also shown that the AC is already applying many of the mechanisms and factors identified in research that also explain the widespread perception of the AC as being a successful forum (see Table 2). Moreover, the case of the Arctic Council supports constructivist approaches investigating transnational cooperation as it shows that some mechanisms and factors identified in the literature can conflict with the purpose of cooperation in the first place: While the lack of long-term strategic planning and the broadness of its mandate and goals limit the effectiveness of the AC, for example, both allow the council to adapt to the changing context in which it operates. It encouraged “locally oriented projects rather than major circumpolar initiatives” and in the context of sustainable development, for example, it allowed that “the meaning of the term has evolved over time, considering broader political and economic contexts and their changes” (Smieszek, 2019, p. 10). In order to be “fit for purpose” in times of rapid global changes, however, critics question whether the Arctic Council as a fairly static entity is sufficiently prepared; at the same time, perspectives also differ as to whether the AC has succeeded in addressing pertinent issues in a sufficient/effective manner (Stephen, 2017). In this sense, the AC may benefit particularly from improved process management and from more orchestration in aligning its work internally (to ensure more effective policymaking) and also with other fora, such as the United Nations and the Arctic Circle to harmonise agendas and, ideally, to contribute to more holistic approaches.

Table 2: Assessing mechanisms and factors perceived as enhancing transnational cooperation in the AC		
	Mechanisms and factors that have proven to be successful in the AC	Mechanisms and factors to be improved in the AC
Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening up of the AC strengthened its legitimacy and global relevance • Diversity of actors enhanced the use of synergies • “We-identity” particularly among Arctic states has supported the development of shared approaches also in times of crises • Reciprocity principle: all actors cooperating in the AC have access to specialised knowledge needed to address complex, transboundary challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership: the programmes of the rotating chairmanships are often not aligned and apply a rather vague and unspecific wording
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The inclusion of non-state actors and the focus on scientific output have enhanced the sharing of specialised knowledge • Regular contact in working groups, task forces and expert groups has contributed to the development of shared values, of trust and solidarity • The possibility to contribute to and to participate in policy dialogue can be perceived as a main incentive for actors cooperating in the AC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stringent and measurable goal-setting in chairmanship programs • Sustained funding • Professional process management (the AC-Secretariat fills this function only partly) • (Regular) monitoring and evaluation of the work conducted under the auspices of the AC • Need to agree on enforcement-practices
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The promoted bottom-up approach and new agenda every two years facilitates a “fit-to-problem”-structure • The political and institutional space of the AC has encouraged the development of shared strategies and coalition-building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In how far the AC provides an active meta-governance very much depends on the chairmanship-countries; more orchestration is needed to develop shared strategies systematically
Source: Author		

4 Conclusions: “Our North is the South” – why the Arctic matters for research on transnational cooperation and for development studies

At present, complex, interdependent problems such as the question of how to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions are being discussed at the individual, the national, the transnational and the global level. Within the context of the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda, the communication of policies across these levels have already improved through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). Regular submissions of NDCs to the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) secretariat and the reviewing of VNRs at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) further allow for some sort of monitoring. However, a central authority facilitating the coordination and regulation of different approaches is still missing. Moreover, as the NDCs and VNRs illustrate, self-organisation and voluntariness towards achieving common goals are important drivers of supportive policies but, at the same time, they do not necessarily lead to holistic approaches and likely increase incoherence in polycentric governance (Chan, Iacobuta, & Haegele, 2020). As scholars advocating

polycentric governance approaches have been arguing for quite some time, to advance goal coherence and to avoid “policy areas hampering each other” (also between policies that concern the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement) “integrated policy coordination and integration is needed” (Tosun & Leininger, 2017, p. 3). The voluntary character of the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda, however, indicates that it is highly unlikely that the parties to these agreements will agree on the establishment of a central authority with a mandate to coordinate (and regulate) the various different approaches aimed at implementing the agreements at some point in the near future. Instead, it seems more likely that transnational (regional) institutions will take over such responsibilities. Because their members have to deal with similar problems and share a joint responsibility to address them, they may encourage intense cooperation on a regular basis and thereby generate trust (see, amongst others Ostrom, 2009).²⁴

In this way, this study has investigated lessons that can be learned from the Arctic Council and has explored to what extent this case adds to and challenges the conception of models, concepts, and success factors for transnational cooperation identified in the literature. It has shown that many of the premises discussed in the literature on transnational cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships mirror the praise and concerns brought forward in connection with the AC; at the same time, transnational cooperation under the auspices of the AC would allow these premises to be expanded.

Considering the **actor-dimension**, for example, it was shown that the inclusion of actors in the AC was not solely driven by the aim to include more expertise and resources and access further capacities contributing to a better division of labour and use of synergies. The inclusion of actors in the AC was also used as a strategy to strengthen the AC’s institutional legitimacy. Similarly, assessing the effectiveness of leadership is more complicated than described in the literature if leaders (as in the case of the AC) rotate, contexts (agendas) change over time, and if the problems addressed by the institution/forum/partnership under analysis cannot be solved by the entity on its own due to their interconnected character.

In view of the **process-dimension**, the case of the AC illustrates that whether or not the approaches chosen relate to each other very much depends on the definition of goals (even if the same goals are stressed over time, their meaning and relevance may differ). In the case of the AC, the broad mandate and rather general wording in chairmanship programmes gives room for different interpretations, hampering the measurement, monitoring, and evaluation of the work conducted under the auspices of the AC as well as the enforcement of cooperation via rewards and punishments. In addition to more sustained funding, these are all areas of the process management which need to be improved by the AC. At the same time, the broad mandate allows the AC to address and adapt to the changing context in which it operates. Moreover, the case of the AC exemplifies that, despite its expandable process management, it has succeeded in forming and accessing specialised knowledge, establishing trust, communication, trustworthiness, fairness, and solidarity among those cooperating in the AC.

24 In this regard, Ostrom also identifies the following characteristics as essential for settings encouraging cooperation: “1. Many of those affected have agreed on the need for changes in behavior and see themselves as jointly sharing responsibility for future outcomes. 2. The reliability and frequency of information about the phenomena of concern are relatively high. 3. Participants know who else has agreed to change behavior and that their conformance is being monitored. 4. Communication occurs among at least subsets of participants” (Ostrom, 2009, p. 12-13).

This success can also (at least partly) be explained by the **context-dimension** (thereby pointing to the need to likewise explore interrelationships between the different dimensions identified by Pattberg and Widerberg and the overall relevance of the differing factors and mechanisms in further research) as it has been noted that most often the AC's inclusive structure and consideration of multiple (particularly "local") perspectives encourage the development of shared strategies, coalition-building, and further cooperation even in times of crisis. However, the political and social context has also contributed to coalition-building, as the collaborating Arctic states have had the capacities to form and to maintain the AC to address their needs.

With regard to the three different dimensions (actors, process, and context) that Pattberg and Widerberg have perceived as being of particular relevance for assessing and improving transnational cooperation, the case of the Arctic Council suggests that these dimensions be expanded and that one consider **the additional dimension of knowledge** in further research. Particularly the AC's focus on developing specialised knowledge and the publication of high-quality scientific outputs has enhanced the legitimacy and reputation of the Arctic Council externally and at the same time strengthened its inclusive approach internally. Moreover, in contrast to other settings, the exercise of authority in the AC seems to be shaped less by moral attitudes or by power but seems to depend on expertise, which encourages the maintenance of robust cooperation over "high politics" – also in times of crisis.

Overall, this study has aimed at contribute to research on transnational cooperation and also to research in the field of development studies, for which the question of how to enhance transnational cooperation to achieve the global common good as identified in the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement is central. A look "up North" seems of great relevance for development studies that have traditionally focused more on "the Global South," given the growing new understanding of "development" promoted in development studies (Klingebiel, 2017), the relevance ascribed to social environmental research (Scholz, 2018) and the principle of universality agreed upon in the 2030 Agenda. Similar to other regions in an interconnected world, in the Arctic also "regional development is both constrained and enabled by global forces and dynamics – be they economic, political or environmental in nature" (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015, p. 18). A better understanding of how these global forces and dynamics may be shaped by transnational cooperation in one region may be of use for other regions despite their differences. Or put differently: "There is much to learn from successful efforts as well as from failures" (Ostrom, Burger, Field, Norgaard, & Policansky, 1999, p. 282). While a transfer of the lessons learned from this analysis of transnational cooperation in a highly institutionalised forum such as the Arctic Council comes with obvious limitations for other non-institutionalised cases of transnational cooperation, the case of the AC illustrates that, particularly in times of rapid global changes, efforts geared towards creating a shared understanding of challenges is an important basis for transnational cooperation.

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Annex 1 - Acceptance of state and non-state actors as Observers to the Arctic Council

	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017
Germany	X		X	X	X					
Netherlands	X		X	X	X					
Poland	X		X	X	X					
United Kingdom	X		X	X	X					
France		X	X	X	X					
Spain					X					
China								X		
India								X		
Italy								X		
Japan								X		
Republic of Korea								X		
Singapore								X		
Switzerland										X
Nordic Council	X	X	X	X	X					
Northern Forum	X		X	X						
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)	X		X	X	X					
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)	X		X	X	X					
International Arctic Science Committee (IASC)	X	X	X	X	X					
Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region	X	X								
World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)	X	X	X	X	X					
International Union for Circumpolar Health (IUCH)	X	X	X	X	X					
North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO)		X	X	X	X					
Advisory Committee on the Protection of the Sea (ACOPS)					X					
Association of World Reindeer Herders (ICR)				X	X					
Circumpolar Conservation Union (CCU)			X	X	X					
International Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)			X	X	X					

International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)			X	X	X					
Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region			X	X	X					
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)			X	X	X					
Advisory Committee on Protection of the Seas, Association of World Reindeer Herders			X	X						
International Arctic Social Sciences Association (ICASS)			X	X	X					
International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)			X	X	X					
University of the Arctic (UArctic)			X	X	X					
Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO)				X	X					
Arctic Circumpolar Route				X	X					
International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)										X
Oceana										X
National Geographic Society (NGS)										X
Oslo-Paris Commission (OSPAR)										X
West Nordic Council										X
World Meteorological Organization (WMO)										X
Source: Author										

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