

Hybrid Governance in the Arctic: Carving out a Political Space for Coastal Indigenous Communities in Arctic Emergency Preparedness and Response

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As the Arctic's ice recedes maritime and coastal traffic is expected to dramatically increase. Arctic climate change is also affecting indigenous coastal communities' abilities to hunt and travel on ice with the same predictability as traditionally existed. These factors become more complex in that extreme and unexpected Arctic weather happens at all times of the year and there will be a continued presence of seasonal and other forms of ice into the future. In a region where little, if any, infrastructure exists a well-coordinated regional regime focusing on Arctic Emergency Preparedness and Response (AEPR) is a necessity. To address these challenges, the Arctic Council (AC) states' have passed a number of binding declarations. Yet, there remains room to better account for the fact that emergency responses will begin from a number of indigenous communities along the Arctic's shores; communities which own or have rights (through domestic and international law) to the land, waters, and resources where they live, maintain invaluable traditional knowledge, and rely on the Arctic environment for sustenance, culture, and overall community well-being.

Recognizing the shifting landscape of global politics, many IR theorists have shifted their focus from interstate cooperation (formal treaties) to global governance (GG) which recognises the myriad of non-state actors ranging from scientists and consultants to indigenous collectivities, and private companies who also participate in the creation of new legal norms, best practices, hybrid and other multilayered governance solutions. Yet, who is invited, to what extent non-state entities participate, and who decides is not always clearly defined or understood by global governance theorists. Likewise, there remains much work to be done in finding adequate mechanisms to help make the shift from creating new theoretical concepts to their application. GG requires an entirely new set of analytical and practical tools which includes finding ways to create regional policy that begins from the point of the local community – the closest proximity to any Arctic coastal or maritime activity - and remain global in policy and accompanying governance structures. Accomplishing this requires collaboration among theorists and practitioners in a number of disciplines as well as natural scientists, social scientists, and traditional knowledge holders.

The question that our presentation will address, therefore, is how, and in what ways, can and should coastal indigenous communities play in AEPR policy and governance; how can indigenous peoples find their political space in a legal landscape that is filled with government overlap at the domestic levels and governance gaps at the subnational, regional, international, and transnational levels.