

# Negotiating the Arctic

*The Construction of an International Region*

 E. C. H. Keskitalo

STUDIES IN  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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# Contents

List of Main Abbreviations and Glossary	xi
Acknowledgments	xv
<b>Chapter 1 Region-building in “The Arctic”</b>	<b>1</b>
Region-building as a research perspective	6
Region-building as discourse	9
The operations of discourse: framing and hegemony	11
Views of historicity	15
The actor and knowledge in region-building	17
The inherently “critical” approach of discourse analysis and a region-building perspective	19
Methodology of the study	21
Aims of the work	23
<b>Chapter 2 Region-building and Definitions of “The Arctic”</b>	<b>25</b>
The High Arctic of exploration and comparison with the Antarctic: the establishment of a perspective	26
Environmental and historical definitions of “the Arctic”	30
Political and security definitions of “the Arctic”	34
“The Arctic” as an international region: the development of a discourse on the Arctic	35
Bases of description: the Arctic as frontier	39
The development of state region-building: the Murmansk momentum	42
Legitimate political actors: the official designation of an “Arctic Eight”	45
The development of the Arctic in research-policy networks	47
Conclusion	50
<b>Chapter 3 The “Arctic” in the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy and Arctic Council: An Environmental, Indigenous, and Foreign Policy Concern</b>	<b>53</b>
The Finnish Initiative for the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy	54
Establishing the AEPS: an environmental initiative promoting foreign policy	56
The Finnish foreign policy background	59

Designing the AEPS: the content of an Arctic approach	62
The development of the Arctic Council: the Canadian initiative	65
The design of the Arctic Council	69
Responses to the proposal for an Arctic Council	70
Conclusion	73
<b>Chapter 4 Sustainable Development in the Arctic: A Conflict Between Conservation and Utilization</b>	<b>75</b>
Sustainable development	76
The contested issues for a task force on sustainable development	78
The development of a sustainable development agenda: the role of the ICC	80
First meetings of the Task Force on Sustainable Development and Utilization (TFSDU)	82
The conflicting TFSDU agenda: strategy and marine mammals	83
Sustainable development as an overarching aim of cooperation?	87
Establishing the Arctic Council	89
Continued conflict	92
The issue focus for an “Arctic”?	94
Conclusion: an unproblematized region?	98
<b>Chapter 5 The Development of a Regional University for the Arctic</b>	<b>103</b>
Introducing the idea	104
Clientele and consultation	108
Values and focus of an Arctic regional university: who are the northern people?	113
Studies <i>of</i> rather than <i>for</i> the north?	117
The final report of the UoA feasibility study	119
An Arctic region?	121
<b>Chapter 6 Views of “The Arctic” in Different States</b>	<b>125</b>
The Canadian Arctic: geography and discourse	127
Canada’s frontier development	129
The differences in international and domestic development of the Arctic in Canada	133
Generalized Arctic description	137
The Arctic in Greenland, Alaska and Russia: partial coherence with Canadian discourse	140
The difference between Canada and the Nordic states	145
Reactions to Arctic discourse in the Nordic countries	147
Critique of applications of the “frontier” concept to northern Europe	150
The conflicts in identity politicization	151
Conclusion	154

<i>Contents</i>	<i>vii</i>
<b>Chapter 7 Arctic Discourse Dominance</b>	<b>157</b>
The Canadian role in Arctic discourse	159
Discourse characteristics and the role of indigenous actors	162
The role of research in Arctic discourse	165
Canadian discourse dominance	167
The gains for other actors	173
Arctic conflicts as results of framing: implications of the study	175
The problem of description and representation	178
The study of regions	180
<b>Notes</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>257</b>
<b>Index</b>	<b>267</b>



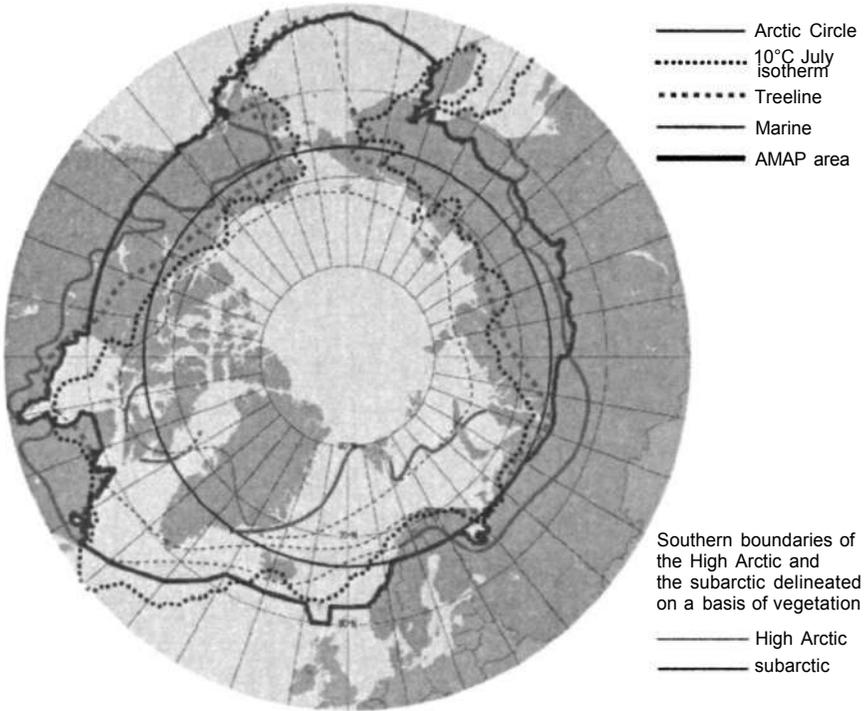


Figure 1. The Arctic as defined by temperature (the 10° July isotherm), marine boundary, treeline, and sun height (the Arctic Circle). The boundary of the AMAP assessment area is also indicated, as are delineations of the High Arctic and subarctic. Source: Reproduced from AMAP 2002:4.

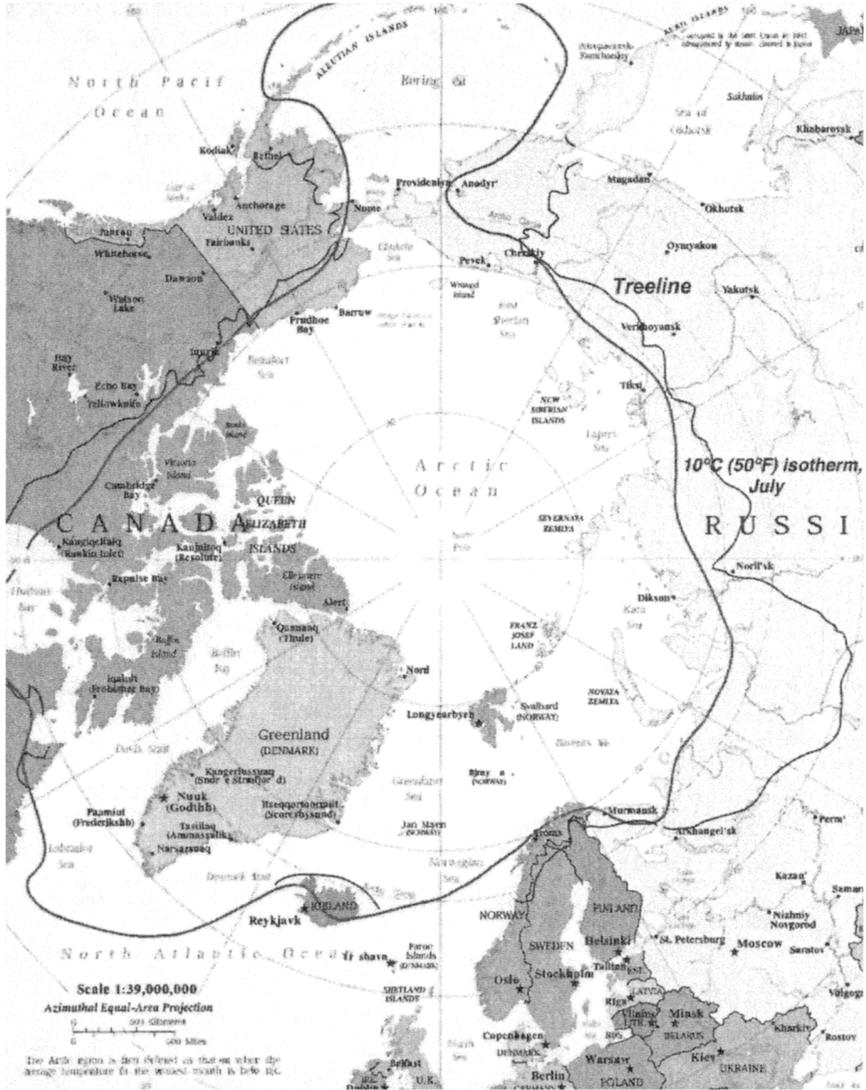


Figure 2. Political map of the circumpolar Arctic, also indicating temperature and treeline delineations of the Arctic, the Arctic Circle and 60° northern latitude. Source: Reproduced courtesy of Arctic Climatology Project 2000.

# List of Main Abbreviations and Glossary

- AC** The Arctic Council. Also known as the “Canadian Initiative,” the Council was set up in 1996. In effect, it includes and integrates the AEPS under a somewhat broader umbrella, as it includes a sustainable development initiative in addition to the AEPS environmental protection approach.
- AEPS** Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy. Also known as the “Finnish Initiative” or the “Rovaniemi process,” the AEPS was set up in 1991 as an environmental protection initiative signed by representatives of the eight Arctic states. The AEPS includes four programs, the AMAP, CAFF, EPPR and PAME, which are overseen by respective working groups and in some cases secretariats. In 1996 (or, formally, by a ministerial meeting in 1997), the AEPS was subsumed under the Arctic Council.
- AMAP** Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program. One of the four programs under the AEPS. Perhaps the main program, the AMAP has among other things produced reports on the Arctic environment (AMAP 1997, 1998). When the AEPS was subsumed under the Arctic Council, AMAP became a working group under the Council.
- Arctic Eight** The eight states which signed the AEPS and the Arctic Council declarations, and thereby are the main actors in these. The states are the USA, Canada, Russia, Denmark-Greenland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland.
- CAFF** Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna. CAFF is one of the four programs under the AEPS. When the AEPS was subsumed under the Arctic Council, CAFF became a working group under the Arctic Council.
- CARC** Canadian Arctic Resources Committee. Describing itself as a citizens’ organization incorporated under federal law in Canada, CARC has through its journal *Northern Perspectives* published parts of the Canadian debate on an AEPS and Arctic Council, such as early proposals for an Arctic Council. It has given prominent coverage to ICC-related authors.
- EPPR** Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response. One of the four programs under the AEPS, set up in order to deal with oil spills, among other things. When the AEPS was subsumed under the Arctic Council, EPPR became a working group under the Council.

- IASC** International Arctic Science Committee. Arctic cooperation has been discussed since the 1960s as a counterpart to Antarctic cooperation. The IASC was formally set up in 1990 following discussions that had begun in the mid 1980s. It is significant as a cooperative body for Arctic research and also in establishing the definition of “the Arctic” that was incorporated in AEPS and Arctic Council organization.
- ICC** Inuit Circumpolar Conference. This non-governmental organization, established in 1977, is a cooperation organ for Inuit (Eskimo) in Canada, Greenland, Alaska, and, since 1989, also Russia. It is highly significant as a political body in Arctic cooperation.
- IPO** Indigenous Peoples Organizations in the AEPS/Arctic Council processes. They are also often designated as Permanent Participants (PPs) in the processes. In the context discussed in this book, the relevant IPO organisations are the ICC, the Saami Council and RAIPON (the association of Russian minority peoples).
- IPS** Indigenous Peoples Secretariat. The Indigenous Peoples Secretariat was set up under the AEPS in 1993 to facilitate Indigenous Peoples Organization (IPO) participation in AEPS / Arctic Council processes.
- IWS** The International Whaling Commission is the main international body that governs the hunting of whales.
- MMPA** Marine Mammal Protection Act. The MMPA is domestic legislation of the USA, in force since 1972, that allows the US to set up embargoes against states that breach any agreements the US has signed, for example by hunting whales. The MMPA in effect prohibits whaling (beyond IWC allowances) among US trade partners.
- NF** The Northern Forum is an organization of subregional governments over a broader area than the Arctic, including parts of Japan, China, and Mongolia.
- NGO** Non-governmental organization.
- PAME** Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment. One of the four working groups of the AEPS. When the AEPS was subsumed under the Arctic Council, PAME became a working group under the Council.
- PP** Permanent Participants is a term used for Indigenous Peoples Organizations in the AEPS / Arctic Council process. In the context discussed in this book, the relevant organisations are the ICC, the Saami Council and RAIPON (the association of Russian minority peoples).
- SAO (SAAO)** Senior Arctic Official (earlier called Senior Arctic Affairs Official). A state civil servant who undertakes day-to-day work (such as organization and decision-making in meetings below ministerial level) in the AEPS and Arctic Council.
- SCAR** Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research. Established 1958, it has been one major model discussed in the establishment of Arctic research cooperation.

- SD** Sustainable Development. Popularized by the 1987 Brundtland Commission and a main theme of a 1992 UN conference (UNCED), sustainable development is the principle of “seeking to meet the need of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” It thus integrates the principles of environmental protection and development. Following UNCED, sustainable development became a main organizing principle for Arctic work in the AEPS and Arctic Council.
- TFSDU** Task Force on Sustainable Development and Utilization. The TFSDU was set up as a task force under the AEPS in 1993. Centering on sustainable development, it was the first body beyond the main environmental protection initiative of the AEPS. It was later formed into a working group on a par with the programs under the AEPS.
- UoA** University of the Arctic. An international circumpolar university developed in relation to the Arctic Council.
- UNCED** United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. UNCED was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and focused on the concept of sustainable development.
- WWF** World Wide Fund for Nature / World Wildlife Fund. The WWF has been an observer under the AEPS / Arctic Council since the inception of these processes. The WWF also publishes the *WWF Arctic Bulletin*, a newsletter on Arctic environmental cooperation.



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# Region-building in “The Arctic”

It is not difficult to read an element of romanticism in the notion of area studies as a vocation. In the most banal terms, we say that one is drawn to study Japan or Thailand because one is in love with ‘it,’ whatever that ‘it’ might be at different moments in one’s life. And it is here in the realm of the romantic that sentiment and mystification become difficult to tell apart. Having fallen in love with the foreign, learning its language and reconstructing its history, one might then begin with some justification to consider oneself to be an authority who can speak for the place and its people to those at home (Rafael 1999, para. 19).

The quotation above accurately captures some of the main issues addressed in this work. Area studies are often undertaken by outsiders, those fascinated with and romanticizing a region. How can those in area studies then represent the region in a way that is recognizable and relevant to its inhabitants and their everyday life? This problem is an acute one for researchers examining any political development within area studies, and perhaps especially for those investigating the Arctic.

Historically, and in Arctic studies, the Arctic has largely been conceived of as a polar region—the High Arctic where polar bears roam. Perhaps even more so, it has been conceived of as something apart from this world, an area for exploration and exploitation through which one may gain fame and fortune back home. One does not stay in the Arctic: one uses it for something, or ignores it. In short, it is for most people a romanticized and imagined area, not a naturalized place of everyday life. The northern areas of Canada, Alaska, Russia and Greenland, which for the most part are climatically Arctic and have traditionally been considered Arctic by their respective states, have, for example, largely been seen in this light. The largely indigenous population of these areas has long been ignored in favor of a focus on “the Arctic” as an uninhabited, romanticized land of outside adventurers and ice.

However, especially since the late 1970s and early 1980s, following the environmental and indigenous movements and increased international organization, political cooperation has significantly expanded the geographical area connoted by “the Arctic.” In recent cooperation, this area is seen as covering not only the areas climatically and historically considered Arctic but large parts of the mainland Nordic countries as well. For example, this extended geographical delineation is applied by the Canadian-initiated Arctic Council, which covers cooperation between eight states (Canada, USA, Russia, and the five Nordic countries<sup>1</sup>) and the area extending from the Pole to at least the Arctic Circle and at most 60° north latitude. This is an area of significant diversity and larger in size than any previous delineation of “the Arctic.” As such, it includes boreal forest areas and a population of close to four million people, who, to a large extent, live in town-sized settlements (AMAP 1998:142–179); in the most extensive assessments, it encompasses fifteen percent of the world’s land and a population of as many as ten million people (cf. Young 2000).<sup>2</sup>

In region-building processes in political organization and especially in the Arctic Council, such a broadly delineated Arctic is nevertheless portrayed as a *region*, with many common needs and characteristics and considerable similarities between populations.

The principal question that this work addresses is how such a regionbuilding process has come into existence and presently defines the “Arctic.” This includes not only how the geographical delineation has been made, but which characteristics and identity are seen as “Arctic” in order to construct a region out of the wide-ranging area. The core topics for analysis are the following: (1) How has Arctic discourse developed and the region been delineated for policy purposes? (2) How is the discourse of the region framed in the focal international fora? (3) How has this discourse and delineation become prominent? and (4) How does it accommodate the variety of participating actors (i.e., non-state actors as well as states) and other descriptions of the areas?<sup>3</sup>

This study takes the concept of *region-building* (cf. Neumann 1999, 1996, 1992) as its starting point: it assumes that identity developments do not simply happen but require effort and a systematic selection of features that are advocated as being genuine to a region. The work draws upon an understanding of region-building as a discourse, in which different actors are seen as connected through their involvement with certain concepts and in certain areas and in which the actors’ knowledge or understandings cannot be assumed to be objective or apolitical. The work is interested in making apparent the particular selection of features and actors into Arctic discourse and then asking how the discourse thus described relates to understandings of the areas in other than “Arctic” literature and development.

As the Arctic in this development has been extended beyond its climatical and historical delineations, it will be referred to in this work as “the Arctic”: it is not a given and unproblematic entity, but one that has been discussed

into being, and is largely contested. The Arctic is thus here not seen as a unit, but as a focus for deconstruction and investigation. To highlight this constructedness, the term Arctic is bracketed as “Arctic.”<sup>4</sup> The focal point is also squarely placed on the establishment of an *Arctic* international circumpolar region, which means that the work will not take up different meanings given to “north” as such, to which discussions of for instance other broader organization might have been relevant; rather, it proceeds from the definitions of “the Arctic” with special emphasis on the current political conception of the term. The study thus centers on developments that are seen as indicating contemporary ways of speaking about and constructing “the Arctic” as a recognizable field within policy and academia as well as on certain operational definitions of what the region and issues are and whom these issues and developments concern.

In this, the focus of discussion is the Arctic Council and Council-related conceptions of the Arctic. This has to do, firstly, with the importance imputed to the Council in developing “the Arctic” as a region: it “has become a symbol of the emergence of the Arctic as a distinct region in the international society” (Young 2000, ch. 4, recommendation 2, para. 2). In short, the Arctic Council is the focal point of current Arctic discourse. The Arctic Council has defined the currently prominent conception of an eight-state Arctic which, in that it also determines the land areas, can be considered “Arctic.” The Arctic Council is also the parent organization of the largest systematic work undertaken on the circumpolar level (i.e. the AMAP 1997,1998), which is gaining prominence globally (e.g., UNEP 1997). Additionally, the Council has spurred further organization on basis of “the Arctic,” such as the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, the University of the Arctic, and the Indigenous Peoples’ Secretariat (cf. Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region 2002; Huebert 1998:144; ch. 5).

In the work, the main argument is the following. The circumpolar Arctic has emerged as a policy-relevant region, indeed as a “region” at all, over the last 20–30 years as a result of multiple factors. One principal factor in the development of the “Arctic” region has been the changing world context, which can be generally described as one of globalization. As advances in communication technology make possible instantaneous communication over a geographically wider scale than ever before, organization and coalition-building takes place on a larger scale, and the world of actors to which the individual needs to relate is extended. The geographical conception of the region is likewise extended to large multinational areas, as states are pressured to cooperate on wide-ranging issues and to extend their own foreign policy scope. For “the Arctic,” the end of the Cold War in particular yielded the possibility to organize on a circumpolar basis and beyond traditional security concerns into the eight-state region discussed here. With this development, “the Arctic” has been used by certain actors, in consideration of their particularly vulnerable situations, to, amongst other things, strengthen their foreign policy roles in a changing environment.

The two main state actors in circumpolar Arctic discourse have been Canada and Finland, the initiators of the Arctic Council and the AEPS respectively, and a comparative focus will initially be placed on these two states. What this comparison most clearly shows, however, is how well established and wide-ranging the Canadian discourse on “the Arctic” is. For Finland, the development of an “Arctic” region-building initiative was largely a result of the state’s relation to the USSR/Russia, and a direct response to Gorbachev’s 1987 Murmansk initiative for increased openness in Arctic and northern areas. Finland thus established an unprecedented focus on the Arctic when it seized the opportunity to re-define its foreign policy, which had long been constrained by its relation to its superpower neighbor. For Canada, on the other hand, the motivation for Arctic cooperation was well established: Arctic “northernness” had long been a factor whereby the state had defined itself, especially in sovereignty conflicts with the US but also domestically, and the Arctic was an area where Canada possessed a well-developed discourse and organization.

In comparing the roles of actors involved in Arctic discourse, the work finds that the Canadian state context has been extensive in that it came to organize already parts of the AEPS and has defined Arctic discourse both in setting the issue foci and utilizing the domestic conception of an “Arctic.” The main argument of the work is that Canadian discourse dominance in a conceptualization of the “Arctic” that includes also social factors has largely determined the foci of discourse on the circumpolar “Arctic” internationally. In this relation, major actors beyond the Canadian state have included an indigenous non-governmental organization that is well established within Canada and researchers who deal with traditional Arctic conceptions in which Canada has played a large part. The view of the “Arctic” forwarded among these groups is, however, one largely related to frontier conceptions. These are prominent especially in the Canadian view of its Arctic areas, but prevalent also in Alaska, Greenland and Russia: states with a frontier conception applied to areas that have historically and climatically been seen as “Arctic.” This is revealed especially in the discussion of Canadian discourse on “the Arctic” (in ch. 6) that compares this view to that in other states.

On the basis of this comparison, and the study of present Arctic discourse, the work concludes that the frontier conception of the Arctic is not part of the dominant understanding within all state areas, for some neither have the climatically arctic conditions that could have retained the areas as frontiers, nor have they developed directly in keeping with a frontier conception. While Arctic Canada is characterized by large, recently modernized land areas where indigenous peoples were until recently in the majority, the Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian north as well as Iceland are defined by significantly different dynamics, i.e., more mixed and integrated populations, less easily definable ethnicities, and areas which have been modernized earlier and are culturally more integrated into the national and international framework. The main argument is thus that there are significant differences across the eight-state

“Arctic,” and that these are not brought out through the focus on Canadian descriptions and the major role that Canada plays in Arctic cooperation internationally; these differences can serve to explain the conflicts in cooperation. The representation, both directly political and narrative, of areas and peoples is thus inherently one question taken up in this work.

The book is organized as follows: This first chapter describes the main arguments, theories and methods used in the work. The second chapter presents the historical view of “the Arctic” as an area of exploration and conflict and the early organizational developments in the 1970s that started to make a discourse of the Arctic as a region possible. Chapters 3 and 4 then take up the development of the Arctic Council out of the rather limited environmentally-focused initiative the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), and the internal contradictions and conflicts that were faced in extending this initiative into sustainable development and a more integrated view of the area as an environmental-social region. The main differences and main discourse on the Arctic are then also seen as played out in the Council-related establishment on the basis of this new “region” of the University of the Arctic as a mechanism for organizing regional knowledge and education (ch. 5). This chapter especially shows the conflicts in Arctic discourse which manifest when the discourse is questioned. The discourse on “the Arctic” is subsequently traced in historical perspective in chapter 6 to provide an understanding of the “Arctic” label and how conceptions vary in the areas seen as “Arctic” in Council developments. The chapter thus examines the different national backgrounds and issues in viewing the Arctic with the aim of explaining the different issues and contexts subsumed under “the Arctic” in different states, some of which have not previously regarded their northern mainlands as primarily Arctic. In the final chapter (chapter 7), the mechanisms through which an Arctic region has been developed and the foci of its discourse are then discussed and criticized.

On the whole, the study argues that the content and unitary conception of a region can be understood through a focus on the interlinkage between power and knowledge, i.e., in the way the discourse of the Arctic has evolved in certain state and knowledge contexts.

The remainder of the present chapter describes the theoretical and methodological basis of the study: the concepts of region-building and discourse analysis as well as the historical perspective associated with the study. It outlines the constructed nature of region-building and how discourse is to be seen not only as language but as framing in that it deals with selecting the paradigmatic in a situation and, thereby, with creating identity. In the region-building approach, there is no clear delineation between epistemological and political actors: rather, the actors in region-building consist of those with authoritative narrative power. This is something that places a special focus on the role of representation in creating discourse.

## REGION-BUILDING AS A RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

In the development of large-scale international regions, globalization has been an important force. Globalization is often seen as entailing new ways and a new scale and awareness with which individuals and groups relate to the world, beyond existing categories of nation and state (cf. Robertson 1992). It results from and emerges through the unification of markets, increased networking of political institutions, and the creation of transnational cultural spaces through new communication technology. While these processes of extended trade, contact and travel have emerged increasingly over time (in some interpretations, over hundreds of years), the last fifty years or so represent a major increase in the orientation to a larger world.

Yet many accounts of globalization identify not only these increasing, broad networks and a changing world-view but also the emergence of local, fragmentary, regional entities (Halliday 2000, Gamble and Payne 1996a, Amoores *et al.* 2000). While globalization does create the need for interaction on a larger scale than regional activities, it may be politically more viable to construct institutions for cooperation at the regional (rather than global) level, where there exists some commonality of culture, history, social systems and values, and political and security interests. The development of interaction may also take place on this scale in response to those effects of globalization felt most directly within particular regions and by earlier suppressed groups (Hurrell 1995, Gamble and Payne 1996b). This search for new forms of interaction has increased especially in the international turbulence following the end of the Cold War and under the impact of internationalization. In an effort to understand the nature of these multifaceted processes, regional developments have often been dichotomized as “regionalism” (assumed to proceed “top-down,” driven by national elites) or “regionalization” (seen as a “bottom-up” expression of previously subdued identity and cultural similarity; see e.g. Hurrell 1995, Käkönen and Lähteenmäki 1995). Regionalization is thus seen as a process advanced by civil society and through the emergence of cooperation inside the region, while regionalism is seen as a state-led development that does not necessarily reflect understandings in the designated region. These two concepts imply that one should be able to clearly assign regional cooperation to either of these two categories.

The view taken here, however, is that these categorizations obscure the way in which the development of a “regional entity” takes place. The way a region will develop is not a given but a selection made on specific historical and political grounds and dependent on which actors are able to access and involve themselves in initiatives; actors may include, for instance, *both* civil society and states, but only the specific sections of these that are able to involve themselves with the regional discourse. That a region is developed at all is also not a given, but a result of effort and the expenditure of political capital among the different actors.

To illustrate this partial, fragmented and constructed nature of the processes, the concept of region-building has been developed (cf. Neumann 1999, 1996, 1992).<sup>5</sup> Rather than viewing regions as either top-down or bottom-up developments of any assumed “emerging” kind, region-building sees these as actively formed through region-building processes that demand effort and are undertaken among the actors who are situated to influence descriptions. The region-building approach does not assume that areas naturally form a region in the absence of continuous efforts to construct it as such. Instead, the focus is placed on the process by which region formation proceeds. The approach is thus able to question phenomena that regionalism and regionalization treat as givens and whose construction they in fact thereby support (Neumann 1992, 1999).

Region-building thus focuses on the constructed, not given, nature of regions as well as of nations; the way people and geography are imagined together as forming a unit or defined by certain characteristics; and the role of knowledge in this construction. These foci will be described below.

Firstly, drawing upon work on nation-building and imagined communities, the region-building approach suggests that insights to be found in the literature on nation-building hold true also for regions (Neumann 1992, 1999). Nation-building takes place as a political process of defining and redefining an area as a nation, which it describes as possessing distinct cultural and other traits. The nation is thereby imagined as a community to which its citizens should display belonging and solidarity despite the fact that no citizen will ever meet all fellow community members (Anderson 1996). To create and distribute this view of the nation, nationalism requires narratives, “stories” of the spatial unit, that create a feeling of belonging. These stories are created in policy and by other authorized knowledge-producing actors, and conveyed through, among other means, the media and the education system. The production of knowledge to constitute and legitimize the national identity is thus a main part of the process of building an imagined community (Paasi 2000). This applies equally to region-building, where the assemblage and structuring of knowledge on a regional basis is a crucial step in talking the region into being.

Region-building in the meaning used here is thus not a singular process on one level, but a process largely undertaken by those placed so as to be able to influence conceptualizations. As Applegate argues, a region cannot be predefined but rather is a set of practices that are constituted *through* the process of definition (Applegate 1999). It is created in and through discourse, rather than being a given unit that “simply” reflects essential traits of regions and peoples. As Paasi notes, “[t]he institutionalization of regions thus refers to the process through which various territorial units are produced and manifest themselves in various social and cultural practices” (Paasi 1996:33), in a process that comes to describe regional identity. This institutionalization usually includes several factors, which pertain to territorial imagination (Paasi 1996:33–35), all of which are prevalent in the imagination and development

of the “Arctic” as presented here. These are: (1) the selection of the area and shape of the region through definition and development of practices; (2) the building of a symbolic shape for the region; (3) the development of institutions of administration, government and education that support and reinforce the region as a category and identity to refer to, and; (4) the establishment more broadly in the media and popularly among those who come into contact with this framework of area definition, symbols and institutions within political and administrative structures. The region thus comes to be further reproduced by people inside and outside of direct region-building developments. This largely takes place through eventual involvement with the symbols of the region, through which descriptive content is conveyed. Symbols are here:

‘keywords’ in the dominating story of a territorially based community. The most important symbol is doubtless the name of the territorial unit or region, which usually ‘gathers’ together its historical development, its important events, episodes and memories and joins the personal histories of its inhabitants to this collective heritage. Names of regions and other localities conform to the most classic definitions of symbolism (Paasi 1996:34–35).

The basic understanding is that symbols not only reflect but mold (Rotunda 1986). A region, in the perspective taken here, is thus not a natural or given, but becomes a question of identity politics, where the identity of imagined communities of peoples and regions is continuously reshaped through discourse (Hønneland 1998). Identity becomes a relation, not a possession, and is dependent on descriptive strategies.

This development of an area-based identity then, secondly, lays the ground for how people and geography are imagined together in region-building. In nation-building or region-building processes, the social imagination of peoples and areas is interrelated as “the exercise of power over people necessarily involves the creation of geographies” (Johnston 1986:364, quoted in Paasi 1996:21; cf. Neumann 1999). Here, nationalism, like region-building, has a homogenizing effect and makes the created identity a yardstick. It assumes the identities created through discourse to be identical with the actual—and individually differing—experiences and situations within the designated area (Paasi 2000, Heffernan 1998). This occurs despite the fact that this created identity often essentializes, i.e. assumes peoples and areas to be definable by certain inherent traits. People in the areas in question are thereby affected by the fact that region/nation-building not only provides for but *demand*s their self-description and relation to others by reference to this created identity. Relations to this description then create new delineations and lines of conflict among actors (Neumann 1999). As it problematizes the relationship between proclaimed identity and multifaceted reality, the region-building approach is also gaining increasing application

in regional as well as area studies, where otherwise the dangers of analyzing the “distinctive practices of placeness” are “legion: sentimentalism, essentialism, the Heideggerian trap of vitalizing the relation between place and being” (Applegate 1999, para. 36).

Thirdly, then, rather than assuming that people will be describable through the terms used in region-building, with the risk of romanticizing and assuming identity to be directly related to place, a region-building approach sees regions as expressions of a continuous struggle over symbolic capital such as the description of space and representation in different social fields. The actors that form region-building can be found in not only state but also non-state and research bodies, and potentially include any power-holding actor and organization involved in the production of spatial conceptions inside as well as outside regions. As Paasi puts it, regions are

not so much historical and cultural entities as products of regionalization policies. They exist at first perhaps in the namings, strategic definitions and proclamations of politicians, foreign policy experts and researchers (Paasi 2000:8–9; cf. Neumann 1999).

Formed through processes of region-building by these actors, regions may become crucial instruments in shaping political actions on multiple levels, including the state. This implies that a region-building approach does not recognize the state as the primary or only actor but emphasizes that all actors that are placed to affect the meaning associated with space and representation may influence discourse and the way descriptions, definitions and thus practices are formed.

These then are the main points of a specific region-building orientation. Yet all of these points are applications to regional development of broader conceptions within studies of nations as imagined communities. They are drawn from broader social science notions of the world as constructed, notably Foucault’s discourse analysis approach and method. This approach is integral to the development of an understanding of region-building. As Neumann suggests, “[I]nstead of postulating a given set of interests, the region-building approach investigates interests where they are formulated, i.e. in discourse” (Neumann 1992:64).<sup>6</sup>

## REGION-BUILDING AS DISCOURSE

As a social constructivist approach, region-building views regions not as given but constituted through discourse. In the understanding here, discourse is the way in which speaking about things (and the selection of the things that can be spoken about) is structured to make certain things relevant and to obscure others. For present purposes, a discourse (such as that of the Arctic at one point in time) can be seen as “constituted by all that was said in all statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it,

traced its developments, indicated its various correlations, judged it, and possibly gave it speech by articulating its name, discourses that were taken as its own" (Foucault 1974:32). This field of legitimate expression and practice is always delimited by what it takes in and what it leaves out, as not everything can be said. The expression of anything at all entails making a selection, and it is this selection that Foucault problematizes. This method of analyzing discourse (archaeology) examines the historically and culturally given rules that determine which discourse and understandings are produced and how this takes place. Knowledge is therefore produced through a system of rules that determines its form at the time. Indeed, the parts are only made relevant by the field that identifies and selects them (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, Lindgren 1988).<sup>7</sup>

Foucault describes his archaeological approach thus: "The question which I ask is not about codes but about events: the law of the *existence* of statements, that which rendered them possible—they and none other in their place: the conditions of their singular emergence; their correlation with other previous or simultaneous events, discursive or otherwise" (Foucault 1991:59). Here, we should "seek the immediate reason for what were said not in the said, nor in the men that said them, but in the system of discursivity" (Foucault 1974:129); what the groups concerned see as knowledge "is that of which one can speak in a discursive practice" (ibid: 182). This includes seeking to define the delimitations of the sayable for a given period and society: what it is possible to discuss and what everyone recognizes or disagrees with, among which individuals, groups or classes, and how these legitimize their practices historically, as well as how "struggle for control of discourses [is] conducted between classes, nations, linguistic, cultural or ethnic collectivities" (Foucault 1991:60). One would thus look for the delimiting features of discourse: what is taken up as well as what is silenced. These "silences" or cracks in discourse, as conceptions which are perhaps mentioned but not included, or on the basis of which discourse is criticized for example by external groups, serve an important role in indicating the limits of discourse.

Because of this selecting role of discourse, the ability to speak in a manner and on a topic recognized in discourse is also always a delimited ability: "the property of discourse—in the sense of the right to speak, ability to understand, licit and immediate access to the corpus of already formulated statements, and the capacity to invest this discourse in decisions, institutions, or practices—is in fact confined...to a particular group of individuals" (Foucault 1974:68) and may in fact be the place for a "phantasmatic representation, an element of symbolization" (ibid.). That is, by enforcing one particular understanding of, for instance, a region, the actors who are further enabled are those who conform to and can speak on this understanding. In contrast, actors who do not embrace the relevant perspective will experience difficulty in becoming included as political actors. "The political" is therefore constituted through discourse.

This understanding of discourse is thus not simply a matter of "language"

or a study of “language” (cf. George 1994). Rather, discourse analysis is the study of the connection of language (what can be said) to what is obscured as a result of this naturalization of a manner and assumption of speaking (Ackleson 2000:6, Waeber 1996:6). Rather than being about language, it is about the structure of delimitation and how this is established.<sup>8</sup> Here, the very selection of vocabularies summarizes information and suppresses that which is inconvenient in relation to established discourse (Green 1987). Thus, to understand the “argumentative meaning” of a statement or a discourse,

one should not examine merely the words, the expressions, but also examine the positions which are being criticized, or against which a justification is being mounted. Without knowing these counter-positions, the argumentative meaning will be lost (Shotter 1992:91).

This position of seeking the structure of delimitation, what is included and what is silenced, has gained broad currency in social constructivism largely through the impact of Foucault’s work. It is not restricted to Foucault, however, although he is perhaps one of the authors who has developed it most strongly. For example the concept of framing has been utilized in policy studies as one main means by which policy-making takes place (Rein and Schön 1993:145ff, Schön and Rein 1994).

To forestall potential misunderstandings of what this work seeks to illustrate, the concept of framing will be introduced to show in which sense (not only language) discourse is understood to operate here. Framing indicates the way in which symbols and key elements that guide and constrain Arctic discourse may subsequently be defined. The following sections will also outline some points relevant to domination of discourse, which have been structured around the concept of hegemony, and instances in which the overarching selectivity and discourse domination some authors impute to that concept are relevant for this work.

## THE OPERATIONS OF DISCOURSE: FRAMING AND HEGEMONY

Framing is in Rein and Schön’s use of the term, a “way of selecting, organizing, interpreting, and making sense of a complex reality to provide guideposts for knowing, argumentation, analyzing, persuading, and acting” (Rein and Schön 1993:146). An understanding of social reality can only be created through framing; to at all make sense of complex, information-rich situations demands selectivity and organization, which is what “framing” means. The frames that shape policies are usually assumed, tacit, and we argue *from* our tacit frames, which might not have been questioned (such as the “Arctic” as an area to be viewed predominantly in environmental terms), *to* our explicit policy positions (such as the “Arctic” as “vulnerable”). This is how policy

problems are constructed: through frames that integrate facts, theories, and interests, and determine what is relevant and what is not (Schön and Rein 1994). These “[f]rames are not free-floating but are grounded in the institutions that sponsor them, and policy controversies are disputes among institutional actors who sponsor conflicting frames” (ibid.: 29).

Frames are thus self-referential, but not self-interpretive, and become limited to certain actors, who explain their relevance through them. Only when a policy terrain (such as the “Arctic”) has been named does the name seem natural, but only to those who have had a part in creating it or are schooled in its discourse (Rein and Schön 1993:151). Framing thus creates policy objects—it has an impact on practices. Here, the policy story, the policy frame, is constructed from a value/feeling coherency, and the facts are assembled to bring out this value.<sup>9</sup> Into which sort of coherency “framing” facts are assembled may depend on the situation itself, or actors’ past experiences and understanding (Tammi and Eisto 1993:111). “Framing is guided by the way in which the decision problem is initially presented and faced as well as by the norms, habits, and expectations of the decision maker” (Tversky and Kahneman 1987:73, quoted in Tammi and Eisto 1993:104); that is, it may be a result of experience or socialization, for example.

This *selectivity* of discourse, understood as corresponding to what is targeted through the concept of framing (not only language but manifesting itself and observable in language), is what makes possible, even necessary, both the discussion of dominating, hegemonic, discourses, and the means by which discourse exercises governing power. The concept of discourse selectivity itself invites discussion of the degree to which discourse allows for other expressions and thereby for ways of arguing for or against different actions, or at all conceptually understanding or valuing practices. This is an issue Foucault disposes of by emphasizing the omnipresence of power, a perspective criticized by some authors (cf. e.g. Smart 1989, Poster 1987, Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983 for a discussion). To explicitly emphasize the extent to which discourse acts determining, others have instead attempted to apply the concept of “hegemonic discourse” to designate “a lived system of meanings and values, not simply an ideology, a sense of reality beyond which it is, for most people, difficult to move, a lived dominance and subordination, internalized” (Williams 1977:108–115, quoted in Thompson 1999, para. 1).<sup>10</sup> As the concept of hegemony has been developed within a different context than the Foucauldian, however, it is difficult to fully reconcile it with the Foucauldian framework (cf. Smart 1989, Poster 1987, Gibson 1999, Beere 2000). The concept can be used to note, with Beere, that it is arguable that, at the level of common sense, hegemony is often achieved in a community or social framework. Common-sense understandings often contribute the first conceptualization or attraction of focus that prompts a search for knowledge. What is understood on this basis may become problematized, but the underlying perspective is often retained. Despite the fractures and contradictions within common-sense

ideologies, even the notion of “common sense” implies a degree of unity in ideas similar to that which the term “hegemony” does, even if those ideas are lived rather than necessarily problematized and analyzed (Beere 2000:50). Such dominant hegemonic elements will exist in any conceptualizations, but especially those which are naturalized and assumed rather than reflected upon.<sup>11</sup> Beere (2000:50) notes: “Just as subjectivity is made possible by the fact that meaning can never be fully referential, what makes hegemony possible is the open and incomplete character of the social.” Thus, as the social is not fully transparent or the same to all actors, the basis for shared discourse is often derived from commonsensical factors. This is due to the lack of exact fixity of social signifiers (e.g., the “Arctic”). Discourse is here strongly constrained by its historicity, communities of interpretation, form of discussion, organization and understanding: “no social practice or set of relations floats free of the determinate effects of the concrete relations in which they have been located” (Hall 1996b: 45, quoted in Beere 2000:50–51). In this,

[t]he contingent, non-logical nature of articulated groupings of different elements and social forces does not mean that all relations and connections are entirely arbitrary and equally possible; on the contrary...there are ‘lines of tendential force’ that effectively privilege the articulation of particular elements under particular historical and material circumstances, and may present powerful barriers to alternative possibilities Similarly...the taking up of subject positions within discourse is not arbitrary, or simply a matter of making a conscious choice between a range of equally possible and available subjectivities; rather, ‘lines of tendential force,’ created by discursively produced desires and by the particular material circumstances in which people are located, shape the articulation of individual identities (Beere 2000:51).

This particularity and special character of discourse as that which must be referred to for recognition is thus limited and defined by access to the discourse in terms of participation in it and the legitimacy of certain concerns or perspectives in a given issue area. Accordingly, no discourse is equally accessible to all actors, as those wishing to affect it must have descriptive power and the ability to communicate within the discourse and, in addition, be placed so that they can access and be listened to within an organization or the discourse.

In practice, then, a discourse may be defined so narrowly or focus on such specific criteria that only those actors that relate most closely to discourse core or hegemonic design are able to express themselves. Stokke has discussed the domestic *hegemonic situation* as “marked by a highly regulated domestic decision-making arena where access criteria are strict” (Stokke 1998:138). These access criteria include openness to direct participation in the decision-making processes and the selection of perspectives seen as legitimate in the given issue area. Although Stokke discusses the domestic in particular, he