

**Securing anticipatory geographies: Finland's Arctic strategy and the geopolitics of international competitiveness**

Vesa Väättänen

Geography Research Unit, University of Oulu, Finland

Address: P.O.Box 3000 FI-90014 University of Oulu, Finland

Email: vesa.vaatanen@oulu.fi

Phone number: +358294488021

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## **Securing anticipatory geographies: Finland's Arctic strategy and the geopolitics of international competitiveness**

### **Abstract:**

This paper presents an analysis of Finland's Arctic strategy, providing a perspective on contemporary 'Arctic geopolitics' outside the dominant emphasis on the territorial politics of the Arctic Ocean coastal states. Concurrently, this serves as an empirical framework for interpreting the contextual de- and re-territorialising manifestations of geopolitical state strategies that are increasingly about securing competitive advantages, rather than exerting or extending territorial control over resources. By deploying the notion of anticipatory geographies this paper shows that Finland's Arctic strategy documents have produced two intertwined promotional visions that are predicated on the discourses of international competitiveness and which relate Finland to the Arctic region. These are 1) Finland as a key provider of solutions to problems in Arctic development and 2) Finland as an attractive territorial node in 'Arctic flows'. These anticipatory geographies are facilitated in practice through the political consolidation of 'Arctic' markets for Finnish exports and through infrastructure projects purportedly enhancing the position of Finland within various 'economic flows'. Together, these notions illuminate the geopolitical dimension of attempts to secure competitive advantages and how this relates to the processes of state spatial transformation through de- and re-territorialisation, especially beyond the recently much emphasised context of city-regionalism.

**Keywords:** Anticipatory geographies, geopolitics, de- and re-territorialisation, Arctic, Finland

For the Finnish economy, the Arctic region represents a growth market close to home where Finland enjoys a natural edge to be active and succeed. It is an area where Finland's geographical, cultural and competence-based advantages come to the fore.

–Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region (PMO 2013, 8)

Finland wants to grow and improve its competitiveness through Arctic activities with due respect for the Arctic environment. A high-quality digital and physical infrastructure will provide the opportunities for the growth of business in the Arctic region. In addition, it will improve the region's vitality, link the Arctic region to Europe, Asia and the global centres of economic growth, and increase investment in Finland. –Action Plan for the update of the Arctic Strategy (PMO 2017, 6)

## **1. Introduction**

The Arctic has emerged during the past decade or so as a region defined by the future(s) that are anticipated to be unfolding within it (Arbo et al. 2013; Dodds 2013). Concurrently, it has been rendered as a space of and for geopolitics (Dittmer et al. 2011). This has been particularly evident in how our increasing knowledge of climate change and its effects on environmental and economic conditions in the Arctic have inspired the Arctic Ocean coastal states (Norway, Russia, Denmark/Greenland, Canada and the United States) to engage in territorial politics regarding the Arctic Ocean and its seabed. In particular the potential for oil and gas development, together with the prospects for opening shipping lanes due to the melting sea ice have acted as the main drivers of the coastal states' strategic efforts, and the heated academic and public discussions regarding them (see Bruun and Medby 2014). While attention has also been paid to the efforts of 'non-Arctic' states to position themselves in relation to the region in attempts to gain political and economic leverage

regarding the profitable ‘Arctic futures’ expected to unfold there (see, for example, Bennett 2015), the strategic approaches that the other ‘Arctic states’ (Finland, Sweden and Iceland) have taken with respect to the putative economic opportunity of the Arctic have evaded most of the scholarly debate (although, see Dodds and Ingimundarson 2012).

By focusing on Finland’s Arctic strategy documents (PMO 2010; 2013; 2016; 2017) this paper seeks to address this gap and investigate ‘Arctic geopolitics’ beyond the territorial politics of the Arctic Ocean coastal states. In other words, the focus on Finland enables an analysis of the strategic efforts of an ‘Arctic state’ that has no aspiration to extend its territorial control within the region but still has a keen interest in the economic opportunity seen to be opening up in the Arctic.

Furthermore, the focus on Finland provides an opportunity to better contextualise the rationalities attached to the perceived economic opportunity of the Arctic. Finland is a state that has undergone rapid transformation from an agricultural society towards a ‘knowledge-based’ society in the course of the 20th century. Concurrently, its foreign policy has been profoundly shaped by its relations with neighbouring Russia, but also by the changes in the more general geopolitical conditions induced, for instance, by the end of the Cold War, and the accession of Finland to the EU in 1995. Finnish state space has also been subjected to numerous transformations. During the past few decades the key issue in this respect has been the tension between spatial Keynesianism that highlights national territorial cohesion, and the heightened political and economic relevance of core cities and city regions (Ahlqvist and Moisio 2014; Moisio and Paasi 2013b).

When considered with such a background, the context of Finland and the focus on the state’s Arctic strategy also enables their reflection with regard to the ‘geopolitics of changing state spaces’, and the manifestations and key drivers of such geopolitics (Moisio and Paasi 2013a). In this regard the focus on ‘Arctic geopolitics’ is detached from the issue of territorial control over resources or shipping lanes and placed on the issue of competitive advantages and the geopolitical dimension of attempts to consolidate them. Rather than seeking to denote a division between ‘geopolitics’ and

‘geoeconomics’, the attention given to the geopolitical dimension of attempts to secure competitive advantages – which is here termed geopolitics of international competitiveness – serves to indicate how the (geo)economic and the (geo)political come together in contemporary state strategies. The focus on Finland’s Arctic strategy is especially relevant in this sense, as it provides a perspective on such geopolitics beyond the recent emphasis on cities and city-regionalism, which has illustrated how ‘the discourses of territorial competition and competitiveness instrumentalise the city as the pivotal site of inter-spatial competition in the age of knowledge-intensive capitalism’ (Moiso 2018b, 122; see also Jonas 2013; Jonas and Moisio 2018).

While globalisation of the Arctic and the making of a ‘new’ Arctic have themselves been much discussed issues recently (Evengård, Larsen and Paasche 2015; Heininen and Southcott 2010), they have not been extensively approached from the perspective of the transformation of state spatiality. Here, rather than taking ‘globalisation’ as an environmentally or economically determined process in which the Arctic becomes increasingly subsumed by ‘global’ flows, the attention paid to the geopolitical dimension of attempts to secure competitive advantages enables a perspective on the strategic constitution of ‘globalisation’. Globalisation itself is understood here as the co-constitutive process of de- and re-territorialisation, which manifests itself as state spatial transformation, but can also be seen as constituting the underlying spatiality of contemporary capitalism (Brenner 1999; 2004).

To *contextually* investigate how, and why, such strategic efforts are employed that contribute to the process of de- and re-territorialisation, the notion of anticipatory geographies is utilised. The notion itself was first developed by Matthew Sparke (1998) to render visible how re-territorialisation in the form of cross-border regionalism was introduced as part of a range of attempts to generate competitive advantages in a purportedly de-territorialised ‘global’ economy. Here it is deployed to analyse the discursive dimension through which the Arctic region is being re-imagined, and re-constituted, as an economic space in Finland’s Arctic strategy documents, encompassing how

Finland is positioned in relation to such a re-imagined Arctic, and how these geographical visions relate to the discourses of international competitiveness. Based on these notions the key research questions of this paper are:

- 1) How the discourses of international competitiveness become manifested in the ways Finland is positioned in relation to the Arctic region through anticipatory geographies?
- 2) How the de- and re-territorialisation processes are constituted through strategic efforts that are aimed at securing such anticipatory visions and the associated competitive advantages?

To begin answering these questions, the paper proceeds by next outlining in more detail how the division between geopolitics and geoeconomics can be overcome by focusing on the geopolitics of international competitiveness. After this, a brief discussion is presented on how the Arctic region has emerged as a context for anticipatory geographies. In the following sections the context of Finland is introduced in more detail, the anticipatory geographies produced in Finland's Arctic strategy documents are revealed, and their basis in the discourses of international competitiveness is assessed. Subsequently, the analysis is tied to the issue of de- and re-territorialisation by focusing on how the anticipatory visions, and the associated competitive advantages, are facilitated in practice; thus contributing to the process of 'globalisation' in and of the Arctic concurrently inducing the spatial transformation of the Finnish state. The concluding section discusses the key insights that the analysis provides regarding the geopolitics of international competitiveness, which highlights the interconnections between anticipatory geographies, discourses of competitiveness and state spatial transformation.

## **2. Beyond the geopolitics/geoeconomics divide: geopolitics of international competitiveness**

Geoeconomics is a term that has attracted attention in scholarly debates during the past few decades, especially in the fields of political geography and IR. While some contrast it to geopolitics

by attaching it to the emergence of economic logic and means as the drivers of inter-state rivalry and conflict (Luttwak 1990; Vihma 2018), others (drawing on critical geopolitics) have stressed that geopolitics and geoeconomics should be treated as names for two intertwined geostrategic discourses that frame the world in distinct ways, thus justifying specific interventions in it (Domosh 2013; Essex 2013; Sparke 2007). In parallel with such approaches, scholars have also highlighted the ways in which neoliberal economic calculation — in which different strategic courses of action are evaluated through market-oriented rationality — as a form of geoeconomics potentially transcends the relevance of (state) territory, territoriality and geopolitical governmentality (Cowen and Smith 2009; Moisio and Paasi 2013b). For example, Cowen and Smith (2009, 42) have stressed that

Where geopolitics can be understood as a means of acquiring territory towards a goal of accumulating wealth, geoeconomics reverses the procedure, aiming directly at the accumulation of wealth through market control. The acquisition or control of territory is not at all irrelevant but is a tactical option rather than a strategic necessity.

While the assertion of Cowen and Smith indicates that geoeconomics in this sense transcends the connection between territorial control and accumulation of wealth, thus denoting a ‘de-territorialisation’ of geopolitics under neoliberalism, other scholars have highlighted the sustained relevance of territory for the accumulation of wealth in the form of re-territorialisation. In contrasting his view with the state-centric geoeconomics of Edward Luttwak, Matthew Sparke (1998; 2000; 2002) developed a formulation of geoeconomics through his research on cross-border regions. He argued that

It is the promotional positioning of specific regions within global flows for which the label of geoeconomics seems so well suited. It is useful in that it gets at the way in which a more or less geopolitical phenomena (of imagining territory as a mode of political intervention and governance) is closely articulated with a whole series of

economic imperatives, ideas and ideologies ... Geoeconomics, in other words, is useful as a term insofar as it allows us to name an array of quotidian assumptions and practices that emerge out of the context of free trade and the resulting force of borderless economic flows. (Sparke 1998, 69–70)

Through this argument Sparke developed the notion of anticipatory geographies of geoeconomics through which such promotional positioning of regions, and the driving assumptions behind it, could be approached. It appears that to him it was precisely the nexus between the de-territorialising effects of continental free trade agreements (coupled with the borderless world thesis of writers such as Kenichi Ohmae), and the re-territorialising effects of promotional positioning of cross-border regions, that exemplified the distinctive multifacetedness and context dependent manifestations of the process of neoliberal globalisation. The key value of this strand of Sparke's work for the current paper is that it directs the focus of 'geoeconomics' to the *economic discourses* that highlight competitiveness and positionality in 'global networks' and manifest in practice contributing to the process of re-territorialisation vis-à-vis state spatial transformation, rather than interpreting geoeconomics as an inter-state phenomenon in which territorial states 'externalise' their influence through economic means.

Even though this early work of Sparke relies on historical periodisation between 'geopolitics' and 'geoeconomics', it is evident that 'geoeconomics' thus defined is not a transition into a 'post-geopolitical' world. Instead, it denotes the emergence of new modes of seeking positionality in changing geopolitical-economic conditions in which the relevance of various 'economic flows' is accentuated. Similar argument is put forward by Moisio (2018a, 28), who directs the focus to states and contends that more attention should be placed on the

ways in which the state seeks to re-territorialise and nationalise relational spaces of contemporary capitalism and at the same time de-territorialise and internationalise itself through increasingly spatially selective strategies in order to be connected to all



sorts of ‘global networks’ of money, talent, innovations and ideas. A geopolitical analysis of this back-and-forth movement between de- and re-territorialisation may provide insights on how the territorial and the relational come together in the contemporary world politics and how states are spatially transformed within such a process.

In addition to cross-border regionalism, these issues have been discussed recently especially with regard to the emergence of sub-national and city-regions as key geopolitical manifestations of contemporary capitalism (Brenner 1999; 2004; Harrison 2007; Jonas 2013; Jonas and Moisio 2018; Moisio 2018b; Sparke 1998; 2000; 2002). In this regard especially the discourse of regional competitiveness (see Bristow 2005) has provided the imperative for state actors to support the emergence of such regional polities, presumably at the expense of cohesive state territoriality. These developments have been based on theories of economic geography and are especially linked to the work of Michael Porter, which has contributed to the understanding of locational attributes within such regional territories as the perceived generators of competitive advantages, both in terms of output competitiveness and territorial attractiveness, and as the basis for national economic success (see Moisio 2018b). The key role for the state, in this regard, is that it has become the promotor of competitiveness especially through spatial policies, through the consolidation of ‘entrepreneurial’ citizen subjectivities, and through various subsidies and funding schemes that support the output competitiveness of companies and concurrently help to attract capital investment to the state territory (e.g. Jessop 2002).

To look beyond the already much discussed contexts of sub-national, cross-border and city-regions as the main re-territorialisations of ‘global’ economic flows, it is suggested here that the discourses of international competitiveness provide a useful analytical entry point to discuss other instances in which the de- and re-territorialising dynamics are promoted through specific state strategies that more clearly incorporate a foreign policy dimension. Such *geopolitics of international*

*competitiveness* can be rendered analytically visible by focusing primarily on the following three key phenomena that are predicated on the interest of the state to position itself favourably within the relational spaces of contemporary capitalism by attracting capital investment, and by securing competitive advantages for the ‘nationally embedded’ capital.

First, the rendering of international competitiveness as a key governmental problem has entailed the attainment of an ‘entrepreneurial’ role for state actors. This has become especially evident in the transformation of ‘statesmanship’ into ‘salesmanship’ (Fougner 2006, 180), and in how the selling and branding of ‘national’ exports in international or global product and service markets (e.g. ‘country of origin’ branding), and the promotion of state territory as an attractive investment environment have become integral parts of state strategies. In this regard a clear parallel can be drawn between such territorial branding activities and Sparke’s (1998) notion of anticipatory geographies, which can be utilised to illustrate the contextual geographical imaginations feeding into, and produced through, such promotional practices. Still, it is necessary to note that as these visions are anticipatory – depicting a state of affairs yet to be realised – they need to be worked towards, which, in turn, opens up an analytical space for interpreting the political and spatial implications that this work entails.

This leads into the second point, which is that the political implications of attempts to secure the competitive advantages envisioned and promoted through anticipatory geographies can be brought to the central stage of analysis. When it comes to the notion of international competitiveness as the output competitiveness of exports, such a focus enables the foregrounding of the political processes at play in attempts to secure access for ‘national’ products/services to the markets in which they are promoted – and, as we will see, in attempts to constitute new markets – rather than presuming the existence of an already existing ubiquitous ‘global’ market as a ‘space of competition’ (Brenner 2000). Concurrently, a clear focus can be placed on the processes through which the territorial attractiveness of the state is promoted in relation to specific, contextual, anticipatory geographical

visions, as well as how issues such as the development of infrastructure that exceed national territories to realise these visions is promoted through measures in and through various political spaces that transcend the domestic/foreign policy divide.

Thirdly, it opens up the possibility of analysing how all of this contributes to state spatiality. When the actions taken by state actors to support the output competitiveness of ‘national’ export-oriented production/services are taken into account, the consolidation of the ‘knowledge-based economy’ has placed various specific innovation promotion policies at centre stage (Jessop 2002, 126–128; Mazzucato 2013). Such promotional policies have contributed to the spatial transformation of the state such as, for instance, when increasing shares of state funding have been channelled in a spatially selective manner towards key (university) cities as the purported clusters of innovation and economic growth (Moisio 2018b). However, it can be argued that the state’s role and its spatial transformation do not stop here. Attention should be placed on how attempts to gain access to markets, and to constitute new markets for exports through various (geo)political measures also contribute to the re-territorialisation of the state on a supranational ‘scale’. This can be seen as indicative of competitiveness-driven geopolitics in contrast to attempts by ‘hegemonic’ actors such as the EU or the US to externalise their economic space and influence through macro-regional integration programmes (cf. Smith 2002; 2015; Sum 2002). Further, by tying such dynamics of supranational re-territorialisation to the promotional anticipatory geographical visions, the contextual drivers of these moves can be better illuminated. This is in contrast to the identified general tendency of state actors to open up national economies to facilitate the interests of ‘home-based multinationals’ and to attract inward investment (Jessop 2002, 126). The spatial implications of the promotion of the state’s territorial attractiveness can also be analysed through a similar logic. This can be done by highlighting the processes through which the facilitation of specific promotional geographical visions contributes to various practices through which attempts are made

to channel different anticipated economic flows to and through the state territory, while simultaneously impacting on state spatiality (e.g. through de-territorialisation).

Through these elements the geopolitics of international competitiveness can be seen as a concept with which to highlight the highly contextual geographical imaginations, political measures and spatial implications incorporated in attempts by state actors to boost economic growth in accordance with the imperatives emanating from the discourses of international competitiveness. Significantly, such an approach serves to highlight how foreign policy and the international and supranational spheres become implicitly implicated in these attempts without resorting to a view of 'geoeconomics' as the exercise of power by territorial states upon others through economic means.

### **3. A 'changing' Arctic: a region for anticipatory geographies**

Earth's climate is changing, with the global temperature now rising at a rate unprecedented in the experience of modern human society. These climate changes, including increases in ultraviolet radiation, are being experienced particularly intensely in the Arctic. (ACIA 2005, iii)

The above quotation is from the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) – an assessment produced under the auspices of the Arctic Council (AC). The assessment is often considered as the key document through which the Arctic came to be defined as a 'changing' region (see, for example, Steinberg, Tasch and Gerhardt 2015). The effects of such a re-framing of the Arctic have been substantial. Before we turn to what these effects have been, it is crucial to trace the developments that led to the assessment. The Arctic region itself has been rendered a distinct space over many centuries. After being constituted as a space of exploration in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and being considered a military frontier throughout the Cold War, the turn of the 1990s witnessed an initiative for international environmental and scientific cooperation in the Arctic to

ease the geopolitical tensions of the past decades (Keskitalo 2004). Multilateral cooperation between the eight ‘Arctic states’ thus emerged as a key determinant regarding the region as a political space first, through the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) in 1991, which was followed by the establishment of the AC in 1996 (Heininen and Nicol 2007). By the adoption of ‘the Arctic’ as a regional framework for such cooperation, Arctic regionalism was premised on the regionalisation process in which the northern part of the planet was gradually constructed as a distinct space with specific boundaries. These boundaries are constituted in particular by various scientific classifications, such as the 10 degree Celsius July isotherm, the tree line and perhaps most prominently, by that of the Arctic Circle itself (see, Keskitalo 2004).

Political cooperation served to establish various ‘regional’ cooperative networks, especially different working groups that constituted the AC’s practical work. As these working groups began producing knowledge concerning the Arctic region, they concurrently started to produce, or ‘perform’ the region through their practices (cf. Donaldson 2006). This became especially evident through various assessments that made the Arctic region as a territory ‘legible’ and thus amenable to specific kinds of political intervention and policymaking. The ACIA (2005) is a part of this work, but its main effect was not the production of the Arctic region as a territorially framed focus for environmental cooperation, but, rather, the establishment of a new keyword regarding the Arctic, namely ‘change’.

While, for example, Keskitalo and Nuttall (2015, 185) have emphasised that ‘the “new Arctic” is not “new” with regard to globalisation’, the contemporary image of the Arctic as a ‘changing’ region has still been central in generating projections of the potential opening up of new shipping lanes. Furthermore, assessments regarding the region’s natural resource potential, such as the U.S. Geological Survey’s widely cited 2008 estimation regarding the Arctic’s massive oil and gas reserves have inspired actors to re-position themselves in relation to the region. This has been especially manifested in the state-building projects of the Arctic Ocean coastal states that base their

strategic efforts in a ‘changing Arctic’ on territorial politics (Dittmer et al. 2011). However, it is argued here that ‘change’ in and of the Arctic is not only inspiring actors to re-position their states discursively in relation to the region to support territorial politics, but to identify and promote competitive advantages through the production of ‘anticipatory geographies’ (Sparke 1998). Such anticipatory geographies do not emanate from questions such as ‘who owns the Arctic’ (Byers 2009) and neither are they based on claims that ‘the Arctic is ours’ (see, Steinberg 2010), but instead position a state favourably with respect to the Arctic as an imagined economic space.

#### **4. Positioning Finland: geopolitics of international competitiveness in a ‘changing’ Arctic**

##### ***4.1. Transforming political economy and the geopolitical context of Finland***

To provide a background for the analysis of Finland’s Arctic strategy, some key developments of the geopolitical context of Finland and the state’s political economy need to be discussed briefly. Historically, the geopolitical position of Finland has been marked by its location between Sweden and Russia. After several centuries of Swedish rule, Finland became an autonomous part of the Russian empire in 1809. It declared independence in 1917, but fought two wars against the Soviet Union during World War II, ultimately losing one tenth of its territory. The experiences of the period under Russian rule, together with those of World War II became constituent parts of the Finnish national identity narrative, which essentially and especially relied on constituting Russia as ‘the Other’ (Paasi 1996).

The Cold War period in Finnish foreign policy has often been interpreted through the concept of Finlandisation, which depicted how the state’s room for manoeuvre in formulating an independent foreign policy was seriously circumscribed by Soviet influence (see Moisio 2008). Towards the end of the Cold War, the restrictions imposed by the Soviet ‘threat’ were gradually removed, and Finnish foreign policy started to become more clearly focused towards Europe and European

integration. The turn of the 1990s is also a period during which Finland became increasingly active in various multilateral cooperative political bodies. In relation to the Arctic context, the Barents Euro-Arctic region is a relevant example, as is the AEPS, which itself was a Finnish initiative, and can be seen as an attempt by Finnish state actors to find increasing room for manoeuvre in foreign policy, especially in relation to Russia (Keskitalo 2004).

The course of the 20th century also witnessed fundamental changes in the political economy of Finland. The period from World War II to the 1980s and 1990s witnessed the rapid industrialisation of the country, while the traditional sectors, such as forestry, still provided employment for the population and revenues for the state. This was also a period when the Finnish welfare state was assembled and created, and the state took a key role in promoting national territorial cohesion and equality through its spatial policies (Moisio and Leppänen 2007). However, from the 1980s onwards, and especially after the economic crises of the early 1990s, Finnish governments have increasingly attuned their policies with respect to the issue of international competitiveness.

This has been evidentially visible in the increasing emphasis put on research and technology, a major factor that dovetailed the more general transformation of Finnish industry from low value-added production towards production in the higher levels of the value chain vis-à-vis the more general transformation of Finland into a 'knowledge-based society'. The state assumed an active role in fostering such an economic transition. As an indication of this, Moisio and Leppänen (2007, 77) have noted that as early as the 1980s in state budgets in Finland the 'importance of research in promoting the competitiveness of domestic production' was highlighted. Echoing this observation, Kantola and Kananen (2013, 818) have identified that in Finland 'public spending on science and technology is seen as self-evidently useful for improving the competitiveness of the country.' These developments have been accompanied by the heightened relevance of, and emphasis on, core city-regions in the spatial policies of the Finnish state. Even though they have paralleled, rather than

replaced, the emphasis on national territorial equality and cohesion, it has become evident that in Finland

city-regions are understood as units of competition for talent and direct foreign investments crucial to generating growth; ‘competitiveness’ is increasingly conceived as the attractiveness of the spatial unit in question. As a result of the operation of such political rationality, the dispersed spatial structure is articulated as being an obstacle to the state seeking to associate itself with global flows of capital and talent (Ahlqvist and Moisio 2014, 46; see also Moisio 2012).

Finland is an example of a state in which discourses of international competitiveness have attained a dominant role. These discourses especially manifest themselves in the heightened emphasis on attractiveness, effectiveness and innovation capability (Ahlqvist and Moisio 2014, 31). In the Finnish context, international competitiveness has thus arguably been ‘constituted both as a (if not the) central objective in relation to which more or less all state policies should be considered, and as a (if not the) central means to the resolution of more or less all other problems that the state is confronted with’ (Fougner 2006, 165). This has arguably become even more evident after the 2008 financial crisis and the following economic downturn in Finland, which led Finnish governments to seek new pathways to generate growth. Coincidentally or not, this is also the same time period when Finland’s Arctic strategy was first developed.

#### ***4.2. Finland’s Arctic strategy***

It is by understanding the political economic developments that have unfolded in Finland, together with the wider geopolitical context of the state, that the Arctic strategy documents and their content can be best contextualised. The first Finnish Arctic strategy document was published in 2010, and the strategy has been updated in 2013 and 2016–17. The key contributor to the strategy documents has been an Arctic Working Group appointed by the Prime Minister’s Office. The composition of



the Working Group has varied, but it has been characteristically inter-ministerial: for instance, the 2010 document was drafted by a group of people that incorporated representatives from ten ministries. The inter-ministerial composition of the Working Group indicates that the content of the strategy is reflective of the more general discourses at play in the Finnish state administration, rather than being illustrative of the standpoint of a single ministry.

The reading strategy applied in the empirical analysis of the strategy documents is based on the above discussed observation that the discourses of international competitiveness have attained a dominant status in Finnish policy circles. Emphasis is especially placed on how such discourses manifest themselves in the documents: how they direct what meaning is attached to the Arctic region, i.e. how the ‘changing’ Arctic is seen and articulated in the documents; how Finland is positioned in relation to the ‘changing’ Arctic through anticipatory geographical visions; and on what kinds of strategic courses of action are formulated based on such anticipatory geographies. This analysis is then reflected on how these strategic courses of action (potentially) affect state spatiality through the process of de- and re-territorialisation.

#### ***4.3. Anticipatory vision one: ‘Finland as a key provider of solutions to problems in Arctic development’***

Global competition is of great interest and concern to business and industry. In the Arctic region, it will mean both major growth opportunities and extremely intense international competition. (PMO 2013, 26)

The Arctic Region has considerable economic potential that can be of benefit to Finland. The increase in maritime traffic in the Arctic Ocean and exploitation of

natural resources in the region are an opportunity for Finnish expertise. (PMO 2010, 8)

The above quotations illustrate that the vision of the Arctic as a region holding vast economic potential has been embraced in Finland, but it is being simultaneously envisioned as a highly competitive economic sphere. To begin grasping how Finland is positioned in relation to the Arctic envisioned in such terms, ‘Finnish expertise’, as highlighted above, provides a useful entry point. While relying on a vision of the expected economic opening up of the Arctic, this ‘Finnish expertise’ is projected as expertise that relates to the specific understandings of the Arctic region as northern and environmentally distinct, extreme and fragile:

The extreme conditions prevailing in the Arctic region – ice cover, the Arctic cold and strong winds – impose a number of additional challenges to operations. Finland has extensive experience in operating in the cold areas in northern latitudes, which offers companies excellent possibilities for seizing the new business opportunities opening up in the Arctic. (PMO 2013, 26)

By drawing from the characteristics attached to the Arctic region and positioning Finland (as a territorial entity) with respect to them it is claimed that ‘Finland’ possesses specific ‘Arctic’ expertise due to the territorial proximity and similarities between the region and the state. Second, it is projected that Finnish expertise enables the realisation of the supposed interests of the region through claims that:

Finland’s competitive edge lies in environment-friendly solutions and the ability to carry on business operations with due regard to the limitations imposed by the natural environment. (PMO 2013, 26)

This relates to the third aspect, which draws from the framing of the Arctic as a region ‘undergoing a major transition’, and casts Finland as possessing ‘the top-level expertise and the know-how it

takes to understand, adapt to and even make use of this transition' (PMO 2013, 17). Such a visioning stresses and highlights the claim that it is 'Finnish expertise' that helps to overcome the challenges and the potential (environmental) threats posed by climate change and increasing economic activity in the Arctic.

The promotional anticipatory geography that is being constructed on the idea of 'Finnish expertise' is summed up in the latest Arctic strategy update in the vision being presented, namely that 'Finland's goal is to be a leading actor in the international Arctic policy AND a key provider of solutions to problems in Arctic development.' Interestingly, the distinct conditions, fragile environment and challenges posed by climate change are articulated as the 'problems in Arctic development' to which 'Finland' can provide 'solutions' through its 'Arctic expertise'. The production of such an anticipatory geography also entails identification of more specific opportunities for specific sectors of the Finnish economy. In fact, in the 2013 strategy document 32 different 'Areas of Finnish Arctic expertise' were identified that incorporated sectors from offshore industry and shipping to information technology and innovation-driven development (PMO 2013, 27). In this light, the anticipatory geography is part of a strategy to identify a market suitable for Finnish exports, and to identify competitive advantages for Finnish exports in such markets. In other words, the anticipatory geography is premised on the notion of export competitiveness, which has been especially relevant in Finland (see, Kantola and Kananen 2013). The rendering of the Arctic region as an export market is also explicitly pointed out in the strategy, as illustrated by the opening quotation of the paper

The promotion of export competitiveness can be seen as a reflection of the entrepreneurial role that state actors assume in attempts to promote economic growth by enhancing the output competitiveness of 'national' production through the allocation of public resources (cf. Mazzucato 2013). It can be argued that the production of the anticipatory geography of Finland as the provider of solutions to problems in Arctic development is not only a way to market Finnish exports through

‘country of origin’ branding, but also lays the framework through which the promotion of specific ‘competitive advantages’ is engaged in practice. In other words, it is through the production of the anticipatory geography, that the ‘economic potential’ of the Arctic is transformed into a form that is amenable for policy interventions. This takes place by rendering the Arctic region as a specific kind of a territorially framed market, or a ‘space of competition’ (Brenner 2000) in which specific competitive advantages can be attained. The policy interventions mobilised to build such competitive advantages are based on the contemporary imaginary of the ‘knowledge-based economy’, in which issues such as innovation, education and research have become focal determinants of competitiveness (see Sum and Jessop 2013):

The development of know-how and technologies applicable to Arctic circumstances in the global operating environment highlights the importance of institutes of higher education. In addition to market shares and capitals, competition is increasingly often based on skilled labour and research resources. The supply of new information and skills, and their diverse utilization, will lay the foundation for success in the future as well. (PMO 2010, 22)

These efforts were in practice manifested by the implementation of the 2013 Arctic strategy, especially through the Arctic Seas programme of the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (TEKES) and the Arctic Academy Programme (ARKTIKO) of the Academy of Finland. The Arctic Seas programme is based on the premise that it enables ‘Finnish’ companies to develop their competitive advantages through the innovation funding provided by the state. The budget for the programme for 2014–2018 has been 100 million Euros and is co-funded by TEKES and private companies (TEKES 2014). The Arctic Academy Programme has been in operation for the same time period. It is the first academy programme specifically addressing the Arctic. Most importantly, the programme had a targeted call for projects regarding ‘Sustainable economy and infrastructure in Arctic conditions’ that provided 4 million € of funding for research that arguably supports the claim

that it is knowledge produced in Finland and the ‘Finnish expertise’ based on this knowledge that enables the ‘sustainable’ utilisation of the region’s economic opportunities. In this light the promotion of ‘Arctic expertise’ through funding schemes can be seen as a continuation of the emphasis placed on research, science and technology and reflects the longstanding priority of Finnish governments to support the competitiveness of ‘national’ exports.

#### ***4.4. Anticipatory vision two: Finland as an attractive territorial node in ‘Arctic flows’***

As noted above, in parallel with the idea of competitiveness as the competitiveness of exports, the notion of territorial attractiveness has gained an increasingly prominent foothold in the policy making circles in Finland. Even though it is often state actors that implement various policies intended to support international competitiveness as territorial attractiveness, the nation-state as a territorial framework and object of such policies has (at least partially) been recently pushed into the background in favour of ‘smaller scale’ territorial units (e.g. Brenner 2000). This is precisely because the extensive territorial vision of the state ‘as a whole’ does not sit well with the ideas of economy of scale, knowledge transfer and ‘creativity’ or ‘nodal’ physical infrastructure development that build on the idea of locational efficiency and are seen to provide the competitive edge in attracting various flows. Still, it is evident in the empirical material that the discourse of territorial attractiveness informs how Finland (as a territory) is repositioned within ‘global flows’ by positioning the state ‘as a whole’ in relation to the Arctic region.

A key determinant in the re-framing of the Arctic as a ‘changing’ region has been the projection of climate change as a ‘flow enabler’, especially through the opening up of shipping lanes. This vision is often portrayed in maps purportedly serving to describe these opening corridors of transportation (Figure 1), while actually serving to present the Arctic as an anticipated ‘space of flows’.

[Figure 1 here]

By building on this widely circulated vision of the Arctic as a space of flows, an anticipatory geography of Finland as a territorial node within such flows is produced that draws from the discourse of international competitiveness as territorial attractiveness:

Transport corridors that connect the Arctic regions with Europe and constitute a natural part of the international transport network will be created, strengthening Finland's competitiveness in the global economy. (PMO 2017, 6)

In addition to flows of transported raw materials or refined goods, a vision based on flows of information in the form of telecommunications is also brought to the fore:

Exploiting northern connections greatly improves Finland's competitive position as a site for information-intensive industry as the connections can be built in the direction of the North-East Passage linking Europe and Asia. (PMO 2013, 37)

Finland will be developed into a node of telecommunications between Europe and Asia, attracting telecommunications and software investment to Finland. (PMO 2017, 6)

While the positioning of Finland as a 'transport corridor' and 'node of telecommunications' point to how flows of commerce and information are being attracted to Finland through its Arctic positioning, these are accompanied by (and a part of) more general attempts to create an 'attractive investment landscape' for globally footloose capital, but also for idealised consumers, namely tourists:

Consequently, efforts should be made to market the Finnish operating environment to global corporations while underlining Finland's logistically ideal geographic location. (PMO 2013, 30)

The changing of seasons, untouched wilderness, cultural contrast and other unique features offer great potential for expanding tourism in northern Finland. (PMO 2013, 34)

The above quotations show that flows of transportation, telecommunications, capital investment (and corporations) and consumers (tourists) are being tempted to be attracted to Finland by positioning the state (as a territory) in relation to the Arctic region (as a space of flows). It is thus not a dominant 'rescaled' vision of city-regions or other sub-national spaces as attractive territories that is highlighted in this context, but the state itself is being re-positioned as an 'attractive' territory in relation to 'global flows' through its geographical positioning with the re-imagined Arctic region. Taken together the attempts to promote Finland's export competitiveness through 'Arctic expertise', and to re-position Finland in relation to 'global flows' through the Arctic region illustrate how key ideas that relate to discourses of international competitiveness are built into the existing strategy. Importantly, they draw from such discourses that have themselves already become widely implicated in state policies in Finland, but serve to re-contextualise them through the anticipatory geographies. These geographies rely on the repositioning of the Arctic as an economic frontier ready to be opened up by climate change, a crucial concept which creates a pivotal role for the region in terms of global investment and trade (cf. Sidaway and Pryke 2000). It is the anticipation of the economic opportunity brought forward by climate change that is rendering climate change itself an issue of anticipation. This, again, naturalises the transformation induced by climate change as a transition into an economically 'globalised' Arctic simultaneously downplaying other projections regarding the region's future (cf. Smith 2002). In other words, the anticipatory geographies subjugate other 'Arctic imaginaries', such as those of the Arctic as a 'nature reserve'

and as an ‘indigenous homeland’, to the one that positions the region as an economic frontier (cf. Steinberg, Tasch and Gerhardt 2015).

#### ***4.5. De- and re-territorialising effects of the political facilitation of the anticipatory geographies***

In the strategy documents it becomes evident that the practical measures designed to facilitate the realisation of the above discussed anticipatory geographical visions entail significant spatial implications for the state. These practical measures, in turn, depend to a large extent on political cooperation. The processes of de- and re-territorialisation are most vividly implicated in the documents in the emphasis placed on promoting regional ‘Arctic’ regulation and free trade, and in the drive towards the development of cross-border infrastructures. If we first consider Arctic regulation, its relevance is explicitly stated in the strategy documents, as exemplified by the following quotation:

Assume an active role in the development of international legislation and regulations concerning the exploitation and development of the Arctic regions through the EU and bilateral agreements and international treaties (e.g. IMO). (PMO 2013, 51)

The promotion of international ‘Arctic’ legislation and regulation is relevant here, because it serves to consolidate the market for which the export competitiveness of Finland is formulated in the form of ‘Finnish Arctic expertise’. This is the case, for example, in terms of oil drilling, where the emerging forms of regulation serve to validate the forms of ‘expertise’ that enable ‘Finland’ to be recognised as the provider of solutions to problems in Arctic development:

In the energy business, risk assessment and risk prevention are of primary importance. Oil drilling in the Arctic, in particular, involves a number of risks. The Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic creates opportunities for utilising Finnish oil recovery know-how. Additionally, multilateral



Arctic projects allow Finland to promote the export of Finnish environmental expertise. (PMO 2013, 10)

The highlighting of the agreement, which was negotiated under the auspices of the AC, indicates that the AC has emerged as a key cooperative platform in the political facilitation of the anticipatory visions. This also becomes evident in the current programme of the Finnish chairmanship of the AC (2017–2019). For instance, the programme states that

Finland strives to increase the cooperation between the Arctic Council and the Arctic Economic Council to support the goal of facilitating business-to-business activities and responsible economic development. Common areas of interest include capacity building, risk management, connectivity, cold-climate technologies and services, maritime transport, energy, bioeconomy, tourism, housing and mining. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2017, 5)

These ‘common areas of interest’ clearly resonate with the ‘areas of Finnish Arctic expertise’ which have been identified and brought forward in the strategy documents. In fact, the Senior Arctic Official of Finland, René Söderman, said in an interview in 2017, that one of the three key objectives of Finland in the AC is to ‘increase awareness of Finnish Arctic expertise’ (Chairmanship of the Arctic Council... 2017). This exemplifies the utility of the AC (and the Arctic Economic Council, which is a regional forum for private sector actors) even more clearly as a medium through which to raise specific issue areas to the central stage in regional cooperation. This, in turn, serves as a key ingredient in securing specific economic goals attached to these issues. These goals are pursued straightforwardly by promoting ‘Finnish expertise’ within the Council, but also through the development of regulation that validates such expertise.

As the promotion of regulation and legislation through multilateral and bilateral forums serves to transform the Arctic into a regulated economic space, this is dovetailed by attempts to ‘remove

barriers to international trade' (PMO 2013, 51), which, of course, consequently serves to facilitate the 'Arctic' markets, and access for Finnish companies into such markets. The promotion of pan-Arctic regulation and legislation, which effectively serves to cast supranational territoriality upon the Arctic, and especially Arctic sea areas, is thus a focal precondition for the facilitation of the anticipatory geographies in practice. Consequently, such efforts not only play a de-territorialising role in enabling international trade and a re-territorialising role in establishing supranational 'regional' forms of territorial regulation and legislation, but also serve to institutionalise the version of 'Arctic economy' that has been imaginatively constructed through Finland's Arctic strategies. This is an 'Arctic economy' where Finland's exports enjoy a competitive advantage and in which 'Arctic flows' pour securely into Finland. Political cooperation and Arctic regionalism, especially in the AC and other international fora (e.g. the International Maritime Organisation), become the key channels through which such matters are consolidated, thus signalling the transformation of Arctic regionalism from a post-Cold War mode driven by concerns over territorial security into one driven by economic concerns. The attainment of such a rationality was illustratively put in the 2013 strategy document: 'The security and stability of the Arctic region is crucial to efforts to develop the Arctic economy' (PMO 2013, 40).

Additionally, infrastructure development that serves as the basis for realising the vision of Finland as a territorial node in 'Arctic flows' also drives the de- and re-territorialisation processes. The issue of infrastructural development has been especially brought to the fore in the debate regarding the development of a railway link from Finland to the Arctic Ocean coast, and with respect to a new data-cable between Europe and Asia via Finland. With regard to the proposed railway line, the Barents Euro-Arctic Region has provided a cooperative political platform for actors from Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia to produce cross-border visions of infrastructure networks (e.g. Joint Barents Transport Plan 2013; see also Zimmerbauer 2014), while bi-lateral cross-border cooperation, especially between Finnish and Norwegian authorities, has also intensified (e.g. Arctic

Ocean Railway Report 2018). Such cross-border infrastructure projects serve to de-territorialise the state by subjecting it to the interpenetration of various ‘flows’, while being constitutive of attempts to re-territorialise these flows to the state territory.

These de- and re-territorialisation processes become apparent at the interface of the state and the region, simultaneously serving to nationalise the relational spaces of contemporary capitalism (especially by anchoring some ‘flows’ to Finland) and to internationalise the state (especially through subjecting the state territory to the interpenetration of ‘global flows’ and through the promotion of supranational regulation and legislation) (cf. Moisio 2018a, 28). These processes have emerged as effects of the tools through which to realise the purported promise of economic growth and competitive advantage projected through the anticipatory geographies. It is thus imperative for actors in Finland to draw from and, indeed, push through such initiatives (e.g. regulation and infrastructure) that promote the processes of de- and re-territorialisation – globalisation and state spatial transformation – for the anticipatory geographies to become a reality. In this sense the practical facilitation of the anticipatory visions help to bring about the reality of a ‘globalising Arctic’ that they anticipate.

## **5. Conclusions**

By looking beyond the territorial politics of the Arctic Ocean coastal states, this paper has sought to discuss ‘Arctic geopolitics’ from the perspective of an ‘Arctic state’ that has no aspiration to extend its territorial control over natural resources or shipping lanes in the region, but still has a keen interest in benefiting from the projected economic opportunity of the Arctic. This has been analysed through Finland’s Arctic strategy documents with the focus on the anticipatory geographies produced in those documents and the practical facilitation of these anticipatory visions. The analysis shows that these anticipatory geographies are based on discourses of international competitiveness

and especially on the notions of export competitiveness and territorial attractiveness. The analysis further illustrates that it is the practical facilitation of the anticipatory geographies, and the associated competitive advantages, that serves to promote the processes of de- and re-territorialisation, which is ‘globalisation’ in and of ‘the Arctic’ and which concurrently manifests as the spatial transformation of the Finnish state. Together, these notions show how the imperatives emanating from the discourses of international competitiveness lead into state spatial transformation in the search for competitive advantages through what is here termed geopolitics of international competitiveness.

In this regard, the allocation of state funding for research and innovation activities in support of export competitiveness to some extent reinforces the state’s recent emphasis on key cities as the ‘economic engines’ of Finland, because the companies and universities to which the funding is channelled are often located in them. Still, the analysis shows that multiple measures deployed in support of generating a market favourable for such exports – and their geographically specified competitive advantages – also serve to re-territorialise the state on a supranational ‘scale’ through ‘Arctic’ regulation and legislation. In this sense, supranational regionalism becomes a political tool for the advancement of the state’s economic interests, and, in the case presented in this paper, a tool for the development of a regulatory regime that validates the ‘competitive advantages’ envisioned and promoted for national exports. In a similar sense, these cooperative political structures are also utilised to advance bilateral and multilateral projects related to infrastructure development, which plays a key part in the facilitation of a smooth transnational stream of various ‘economic flows’. As has been argued in this paper this is a key political dimension of the practical facilitation of an anticipatory vision in which Finland is projected as an attractive territorial node within such flows. These are some of the issues upon which the concept of geopolitics of international competitiveness can help shed light.

The geopolitics of international competitiveness can thus be seen as a process that unfolds through a number of political spaces, and through cooperative multilateral and bilateral relations that are mobilised to secure the competitive advantages projected through the anticipatory visions that relate Finland to the Arctic region. In unveiling these issues this paper has sought to bring to the fore the intricate connection between the discursive re-positioning of different spatial entities (e.g. Finland and the Arctic region) in relation to one another through anticipatory geographies, and the geopolitical practices that are premised on these anticipatory visions and which serve to spatially transform the state. As we have seen here, attention paid to these connections in specific empirical contexts can provide novel insights and further elaborate recent work that has been focused on transcending the division between geopolitics and geoeconomics by highlighting the geopolitical dimension of contemporary capitalism through the focus on state strategies and spatiality (e.g. Moisio 2018b).

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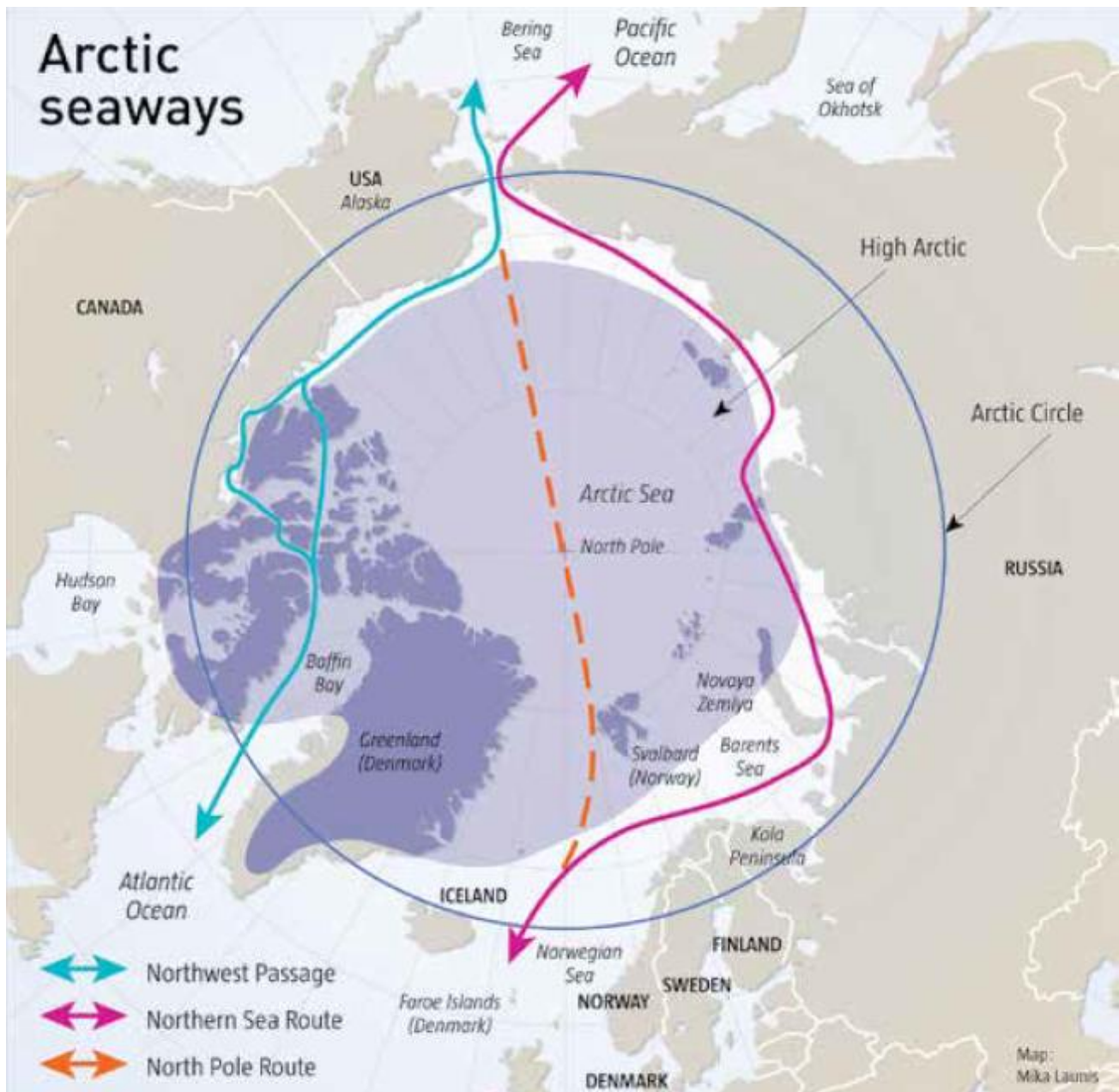


Figure 1. Anticipated shipping lanes and the Arctic as a space of flows as defined in Finland's Arctic strategy document. (PMO 2013, 29) Source: Mika Launis