

Territory–network interplay in the co-constitution of the Arctic and ‘to-be’ Arctic states

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This paper discusses the (re)production of state and supranational regional spaces through speech acts. Emphasis is placed especially on speech acts that ‘construct’ regions and concurrently (re)position specific states as ‘legitimized’ actors within supranational space. Relatedly, focus is directed to how such repositioning is linked to territory–network interplay in establishing and contesting power relations in supranational regional institutions. The article discusses first how the region-building process in the Arctic – and power relations within the Arctic Council – has relied on territorial legitimation in which ‘Arctic states’ are rendered as the key ‘Arctic’ actors. Then the focus is shifted to how France and Japan, states considered ‘non-Arctic’, have recently repositioned themselves in relation to the region in order to gain influence. The key conclusion of the analysis is that by engaging with the observer criteria set by the AC, ‘non-Arctic’ states are redefining themselves in relation to the region, simultaneously (re)producing the Arctic region and non-Arctic states in relation to each other. This paper also argues that in attempting to dismantle some of the territorial criteria on which the established power relations within the AC rely, these states are pursuing the reinstitutionalization of a ‘global’ Arctic with renegotiated power relations.

Keywords: territory, network, region, Arctic, legitimation, speech act, France, Japan

Introduction

France actively contributes to the leading work of the Arctic Council (AC) in the governance of the region. Building on its long-standing tradition of polar exploration and research, France has been a polar nation for the last three centuries. . . . Today, France is among the major scientific contributors for the Arctic sciences.

–Observer report (France, 2016b, p. 4)

As a maritime state that has pursued a policy of ‘open and stable seas’, Japan has recognized both the Arctic’s potential and its vulnerability to environmental changes, and has played a leading role for sustainable development in the Arctic in the international community, with foresight and policy based on science and technology that Japan has advantage (*sic*). Since the 1950s Japan has been conducting significant scientific observation and research in the Arctic.

–Observer report (Japan, 2016, p. 2).

Arctic ‘buzz’ seems to be everywhere nowadays as ever more nation states want to become part of the ‘Arctic family’. The latest new state members of the Arctic Council (AC) include Switzerland (observer member in 2017), Singapore, South Korea, India, China, Italy and Japan (observer members in 2013). There are several criteria for observers, but one of the most important and relevant criteria in terms of this paper is ‘demonstrated Arctic interests and expertise relevant to the work of the Arctic Council’ (AC, 2013). While according to the Arctic Council Observer Manual for Subsidiary Bodies (AC, 2016), ‘observers have been a valuable feature through their provision of scientific and other expertise, information and financial resources’, bringing new members into the ‘Arctic family’ raises a number of fundamental questions. For

instance, what do we ultimately mean when we talk about the Arctic? Is the Arctic a distinct region or should it be understood more as a network or ‘platform’ for cooperation? (Or is it currently transitioning from territory to network?) Further, and perhaps more importantly, what are the interests behind the transformation of the Arctic, and how is the ‘new’ Arctic being constructed? Relatedly, by which means can countries such as France or Japan (or India, Singapore, China, etc.) that lack territory within the commonly accepted territorial extent of the Arctic be regarded as ‘Arctic’, and why do they aspire to be recognized as such? While transformation of political spaces as well as territory–network interplay have recently been quite extensively studied as such (see Harrison, 2013; Morgan, 2007; Paasi & Zimmerbauer, 2016; Painter, 2008; 2010), relatively little effort has been put into explaining how state spaces become transformed through territory–network interplay that is supranational or (at least partly) extends beyond the state space. In addition, studies on Arctic politics have typically focused on the geopolitics of natural resources (e.g. Byers, 2009) and the challenges and opportunities of regional governance in the context of environmental, economic and political change (see Koivurova, 2010; Young, 2009). While increasing attention has been placed on how the legitimized Arctic states constitute and ‘perform’ their ‘Arcticness’ (Dittmer, Moisio, Ingram, & Dodds, 2011; Medby, 2018), what has not been discussed is how the Arctic and the ‘to-be’ Arctic states are co-constituted through relational and territorial ‘speech acts’.

Stemming from these observations, this article discusses state–Arctic interplay particularly in terms of how state spaces transform through supranational regionalism and in relation to supranational institutions. Concurrently, of interest is how states define and redefine the Arctic as supranational political space. This inspires us to consider the relational and territorial approaches on space not as a question of

boundedness or non-boundedness but in terms of how relationality appears and becomes manifested as relations and connectivity between and beyond spaces. We thus consider that relational space can constitute a ‘pool’, or assemblage, of interacting territories that constantly (and contextually) are reorganized to form new spatial assemblages. We also consider it is useful to link the idea of relationality not only to assemblage-thinking, but also to the concept of reinstitutionalization; there is definitely a conceptual proximity not yet widely discussed.¹ The conceptual proximity of relational spaces and assemblages deserves to be discussed more profoundly.

To this end, focus is put on the interplay of supranational and national ‘scales’ in constituting and reconstituting political spaces. We first discuss how the Arctic has become constituted as a ‘space of states’, i.e. how the Arctic has become constructed by state actors and in relation to state spaces, as well as how this relates to the constitution of supranational political space and regional institutions (e.g. the Arctic Council). Second, we discuss how ‘non-Arctic’ states become transformed relationally with and through the Arctic, and particularly through ‘speech acts’ in which the Arctic is ‘stretched’ southwards and states (re)position themselves as part of ‘arcticization’. Here, ‘arcticization’ means that, through such speech acts, states that have not traditionally been considered Arctic become reconstituted as members of the family of states (and other actors) that are very much connected to the Arctic. The aim is thus to study how the generally perceived ‘spatial imagery and imaginary’ of the Arctic region potentially change as a result of territory–network interplay and through speech acts in which the Arctic is brought to the forefront.

Stemming from this background, our research questions are as follows:

- (1) How does the Arctic become (re)constituted by states, and how are states reconstituted through their ‘engagement’ with the Arctic?

- (2) How does the territory–network interplay between states and the Arctic contribute to the understanding of both the Arctic and states as simultaneously relational *and* territorial spaces?

This paper leans on some key ideas about what Murphy (2002; 2015) labels *regimes of territorial legitimation* (RTL). This means that we approach the research questions from the constructivist angle and acknowledge that spaces become ‘territorialized’ through multiple, often contested processes (here understood as ‘speech acts’) that entail both human and nonhuman actants. This is to say that the process of (re)constituting space resonates well with the ideas of social constructionism and actor-network theory (ANT) in that ANT provides a valuable insight into the process of a region’s social construction and reproduction. Both state and supranational space are approached here as interacting, transforming and simultaneously relational and territorial assemblages that are constantly legitimized, delegitimized and relegitimized through power struggles dominated by regional ‘spokespersons’ (cf. Metzger, 2013).

As Söderbaum (2016) has noted, much research on contemporary regionalism is characterized by an empirical focus on Europe and focuses only on single cases. Partly in response to this observation, this paper utilizes a comparative approach, with France and Japan selected as cases. The selection was done on the rationale that both of these states have relatively recently adopted Arctic policies, yet they represent different ‘generations’ of observers within the AC. In addition, these states have not attained as much analytical attention as, for example, the UK in Europe (Depledge, 2013) or China in Asia (Bennett, 2015). Employing a comparative approach between European and non-European countries also helps to tease out and better contextualize the speech acts through which ‘arcticization’ occurs globally, thus bringing added value in illustrating how the territory–network interplay between the Arctic and nation states unfolds.

France attained Arctic Council observer status in 2000, Japan in 2013. The primary empirical material consists of their latest observer reports as well as their key strategies: France's National Roadmap for the Arctic (2016) and Japan's Arctic Policy document (2015). As a secondary empirical material, selected news articles and speeches by key 'Arctic spokespersons' for these states were used. The secondary data is used here to illustrate key speech acts beyond the official documents.

This paper first discusses the constructivist approach, i.e. how regions become institutionalized and reproduced through social processes and through 'legitimizing' speech acts in particular. After this, the process through which the Arctic has become institutionalized as an international political region is discussed. Attention is especially directed to the ways in which the region has become constructed as a spatial unit while simultaneously legitimizing the 'Arctic states' as the prominent regional actors. This serves as the basis for the empirical analysis, where the 'arcticizing' speech acts of Japan and France are examined. After the results of the analysis are presented, the concluding chapter of the paper discusses the relational (re)construction of territorial spaces, and discusses regions as assemblages produced through the interaction of different actors and their views of spatialities.

Framework of the study

Region-building has typically been regarded as a territorial process in which space becomes bounded and manifested through symbols and various regional institutions (Paasi, 1986). In this process, it is the regional activists and advocates who define 'their' region and draw lines of demarcations between 'us' and 'them'. This is to say that regions are social constructs that become established in collective social consciousness through a process of institutionalization. As social constructs, "regions" only exist in

relation to particular criteria. They are not “out there” waiting to be discovered; they are our (and others’) constructions’ (Allen, Massey, & Cochrane, 1998, p. 2). Through these criteria the region is distinguished as a spatial unit and comes into (or acquires a seeming state of) existence as both a non-material and material entity. Even though some regions may appear to be relatively fixed or stable entities ‘out there’, it needs to be emphasized that this stability is usually the result of active maintenance and nurturing, and that ‘regions are constantly performed as an ongoing process’ (Donaldson, 2006, p. 2076).

In constructing and reconstructing regions, it is typically the region-builders, political actors and other powerful stakeholders that determine much of the criteria that constitute the region and orchestrate the process of region-building. Concurrently, the orchestration process typically consists of setting up institutions and practices that reproduce and ‘perform’ the region. The criteria that constitute the region have typically been associated with ‘regimes of territorial legitimation’ (Murphy 2002; 2015) – and are culturally and historically determined – but nowadays are also increasingly linked to contemporary hegemonic discourses of ‘competitive regions’ and competitiveness. The ‘speech acts’ that ‘build’ (or legitimize) and reproduce regions are thus connected not only to the very ‘essence’ (or unique characteristics) of the regions, but also to their relative position in the inter-regional systems of (competitive) regions.

Regimes of territorial legitimation may include four types of ‘founding myths’ that help to clarify the circumstances surrounding the emergence of the state. According to Murphy’s (2002; 2015) typology, a state space can be legitimized 1) as a ‘home’ of a particular people, 2) as a primordial state (reincarnation of an ancient political-territorial unit), 3) as a natural unit (a territory with a discrete physical environment), or 4) as a successor to a colony. In other words, territories can be historically associated with a

distinctive ethnolinguistically or ethnoreligiously defined cultural group, or they may have a long-standing historical existence as a political-territorial construct. Related to the idea of the natural unit, legitimation may also follow a belief that the territory in question is a distinct unit in terms of its physical characteristics. These ideas lean on three often taken-for-granted assumptions about the political-territorial order: that the land is partitioned into discrete territorial units (states being the best examples), that those territorial units reflect the patterns of self-conscious communities (e.g. nations), and that each unit aspires to be juridically autonomous (Murphy, 2015).

Although founding myths are themselves social constructions (and developed for the context of state spaces), they are nevertheless important because they ‘fundamentally shape the territorial arguments advanced by states’ (Murphy, 2015, p. 7) by being ‘rooted’ in territorial arguments. This links territorial legitimation with ‘speech acts’: if territorial legitimation (of states and regions) is understood as a series of speech acts that ‘rupture a given situation in a decision to create’ (Huysmans, 2011, p. 4), it becomes evident that speech acts are both communicative and strategic actions (cf. Cooren, 2000). Speech acts thus consist of action oriented toward instilling understandings, but also toward purposive (constructive) action. The speech act (and language more generally) is not therefore simply a neutral medium for transmitting information but – importantly for this paper – also a source of construction and integration (cf. Austin, 1962). As Cooren (2000) puts it, a speech act is about ‘causing to understand’, ‘causing to accept’ and ‘causing to execute’. Through speech acts something is constructed where it did not exist before, although it needs to be underlined that such acts are typically persuasive and objects’ reactions to them can only be anticipated, not guaranteed. This means that speech acts are ‘always a move into the unexpected and unknown’ (Huysmans, 2011, p. 4), and ‘power holders’ can

only hope for a favorable result after a myriad of decisions taken by the actors. Also, structures typically have a degree of stickiness, which means that creating and executing (i.e. changing the structures) may often face friction.

Typically, region-building is a political process in which the territorial shape of the region (and the cultural-historical beliefs that it incorporates) is constructed through various speech acts to support or to contest existing power relations. However, it should be questioned whether this ‘territorial legitimation’ necessarily entails an aim of actually controlling the ‘territory’ (as is the case in Murphy’s RTL framework). This issue becomes particularly pertinent when we focus on supra-national regions, which are often (geo)political or (geo)economic projects that aim to facilitate international cooperation and trade rather than to constitute a novel ‘sovereign’ juridico-political supra-national territorial unit (although the EU might be an exception in this regard, at least to some extent). In the context of supranational regionalism, territorial legitimation is not so much about establishing ‘hard’ boundaries that would manifest in material terms ‘on the ground’, but rather about defining ‘soft’ spatial ‘platforms’ for networks to operate on. What makes these platforms spatial are the delineations of inclusion and exclusion, and the fact that they typically lean on existing boundaries – most often those of states or sub-national regions. Through these bounding processes and delineations, networks contribute to territoriality. Accordingly, instead of creating completely new boundaries (around soft spaces such as growth corridors, for instance), supranational regionalism is more often about adding new layers to existing borders (Zimmerbauer, 2011).

To deepen our understanding of territory–network interplay, it is also useful to consider how agency forms. This is an especially relevant question in Arctic cooperation, where states constitute, or aspire to constitute, the institutional core of the

network. We can approach agency in the context of this paper through a simple question: Why should certain actors that represent certain states gain inclusion in the cooperative networks while others representing other states are excluded? The answer is obvious: because the territories of the states that are legitimate to be included fall within, or at least partially overlap with, the territory of the Arctic region. It is thus the *relation* between the state-territories and the Arctic region (as a territory) that actually forms the justification for inclusion/exclusion and thus embodies the power relations established in the region-building process. As we will see, however, these relations are only partly defined by proximity and are based more in terms of connectivity. This means that the overlapping of the (subnational) territories of the states with respect to the Arctic region is context-bound and may become disconnected from the idea of proximity. Next, drawing especially from Murphy's typology, we discuss how the Arctic region has emerged as a 'spatial platform' for international cooperation. In this regard the co-constitutive construction of the 'Arctic region' vis-à-vis 'Arctic states' is of key concern and enables us to illuminate the connections between relational legitimization of territories in the constitution of supranational 'regional' political space and power relations 'within'.

The Arctic: a network with many agents and territorial legitimations?

Good historical examples of how the Arctic has been continuously (re)defined by and through states, and of how some states have in the process been constructed as 'Arctic', can be easily identified. The era of polar exploration in the 19th century and early 20th century served to tie the Arctic to state-building processes (Fogelson, 1992), while the Cold War era witnessed the definition of the Arctic as a frontier between the two competing superpowers, exemplifying clearly how the region became imagined through

state-centric discourses and was dominated by states. Starting in the early 1990s, the post–Cold War region-building process served to establish the Arctic increasingly as an international political region centered on the ‘Arctic states’: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States of America.² Even though this ‘phase’ of region-building, which began with the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) in 1991 and led to the establishment of the Arctic Council in 1996, was not the first context in which the label ‘Arctic states’ was used, it served to solidify the political boundaries of the region around those eight states that constitute the members of the Arctic Council (Keskitalo, 2007).

At the same time as the ‘Arctic states’ emerged to define the region in political terms, the Arctic region itself came to be delineated as a distinct space with specific criteria. As polar exploration has served to construct myths regarding the Arctic rather than to dismantle them, the imaginaries of ice, snow and extreme cold became the key criteria to define the region (Keskitalo, 2007). These myths were, and still are, at least partially re-enforced through scientific discourse(s) that serve to distinguish the region through various classifications. Contemporary classifications such as the 10 degrees July isotherm, spatial variation in the distribution of different species (e.g. tree-line), and most fundamentally the Arctic Circle, are widely depicted as constituting the boundaries of the region (see Nuttall, 2005). Concurrently, these divisions have served to distinguish the Arctic as a climatologically, ecologically and latitudinally distinct space, thus serving to confirm the unique nature and ‘essence’ of the region. These climatological, ecological and latitudinal boundaries have served to legitimate the Arctic as a natural unit, i.e. as a territory with a discrete physical environment (cf. Murphy, 2002).

Additionally, indigenous peoples, colonized by the ‘Arctic states’ that they also inhabit, have a focal place in popular imaginaries of the region (Martello, 2008). As they epitomize the cultural distinctiveness of the Arctic as a region (regardless of their actual variability), the inclusion of indigenous peoples organizations (IPOs) in the Arctic Council as permanent participants arguably served to increase the legitimacy of the Arctic region as a ‘home of particular people’, i.e. as associated with distinctive cultural groups (cf. Murphy, 2002). Even though the inclusion of IPOs as permanent participants in the AC has facilitated the political participation of indigenous peoples at the international level quite effectively, it also ‘determined whom the states would accept at the table and thus gave the governments even some structuring influence over the transnational organization of indigenous peoples’ (Humrich, 2017, pp. 160–161) (on contemporary state-centricity in the Arctic Council context, see also Steinberg & Dodds, 2013).

The Arctic region has thus been framed throughout its region-building process by physical-geographic, cultural-ethnic and historical-political criteria, all of which have contributed to territory–network interplay and to the territorial legitimation of the region (cf. Keskitalo, 2004). The criteria that served as the basis for such territorial legitimation, and thus the construction of ‘the region’ itself, are continuously reproduced especially through cartographic representations that exhibit ‘cartographic anxiety’ in search for regionality, to use Painter’s (2008) terminology, but also more generally in the work of the AC.

The Arctic has also been defined (and legitimized) by science. Scientific cooperation has been the common ground on which the international cooperation of the AEPS, and later the AC, was founded, in part to ease the geopolitical tensions of the Cold War (for example, see Tennberg, 1998). The practical work of the AC is based on

various working groups that are tasked with producing various assessments of the region (see Stenlund, 2002). In this regard especially of key relevance are the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), which is a working group in the AC and has produced the Arctic Climate Impact Assessments (ACIA), and the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG), which produced the Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR). It is these working groups and the assessments and reports produced by them that have served to constitute the specific criteria that the AC utilizes in defining the boundaries of the region (fig. 1). These boundaries, which draw partially on established physical-geographic, socioeconomic and administrative boundaries, have been adopted, and circulated, through the AC, thus serving to reproduce the Arctic region as a territorial entity – an entity that simultaneously serves to legitimize the prominent role of the ‘Arctic states’ as key regional actors.

[Figure 1 here]

The territorial legitimation and bounding of the Arctic has in large part been a process of legitimizing the power relations coded into the institutional structure of the AC, and of reproducing the territorial shape of the region through various practices (e.g. the AC working groups). Together, these have made it much more difficult to imagine the Arctic region without referring to the ‘Arctic states’: while the Arctic region has been, and is being, constructed as an object of (state-led) Arctic cooperation, the ‘Arctic states’ have become its main subjects. In this regard the construction of the ‘Arctic states’ as the ‘key components of the Arctic’ has relied on the criteria that served to determine the boundaries and the supposed ‘essence’ of the region: these states have ‘Arctic’ territory, they have ‘Arctic’ climate and environment, ‘Arctic’ indigenous peoples live within the states, and the people of these nation-states are ‘Arctic nations’ with long established ‘Arctic’ histories (or at least this is how they often define

themselves). This resonates well with Murphy's RTL framework, but indicates also how cultural-historic beliefs are utilized not only to legitimize the (re)establishment of 'national' territories but also to legitimize the inclusion of specific states in supranational political structures and supranational space.³ This process, in which supranational space becomes constituted by states and through their Arctic 'assets', underlines that territorial legitimation is a relational process as far as supranational regionalization is concerned.

This being said, it needs to be noted that inclusion and exclusion of subjects in the Arctic Council is not absolute but is (re)negotiated by 'members', 'permanent participants' and 'observer members'. The power structures in these negotiations are embedded in the decision-making procedures of the Council (only the Arctic states are eligible to vote on decisions), levels of participation in specific bodies of the AC, seating arrangements, circulation of documents, and turns of speech (AC, 2016). With this notion in mind, the next part of the paper examines how the dynamics between states and the Arctic region is manifested through speech acts that (re)position geographically less proximate states as linked to the Arctic. Attention is directed particularly to how 'speech' to justify one's belonging to the Arctic has led to 'acts' of co-constitutive redefining of both states and the Arctic region.

France, Japan and the Arctic

Co-constituting the Arctic and states through speech acts

As mentioned, the primary empirical material consists of the Arctic policy documents of Japan (2015) and France (2016) and their 2016 observer activity reports submitted to the Arctic Council. Japan's Arctic policy was announced by The Headquarters for

Ocean Policy, which is an inter-ministerial body directed by the Prime Minister of Japan, while the key Japanese spokespersons on Arctic issues have been the Arctic ambassadors, the first of whom was appointed in 2013. The French policy, the National Roadmap for the Arctic, is the product of inter-ministerial work as well and was published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development. Former prime minister of France Michel Rocard, who was appointed the Polar ambassador of France in 2009, was the key figure in the development of the French policy. After Rocard passed away in 2016, the Deputy Ambassador to the Polar Regions, Laurent Mayet, attained a more prominent role. As a brief overview of the empirical material, the 10 most frequently used words in the documents are listed in Table 1. The table illustrates that international cooperation and scientific research occupy a central stage in both the Japanese and the French documents.

[Table 1 here]

While the table gives an overall picture of the key themes of the documents, we start the analysis by returning to the research questions and focus on how the Arctic region is defined in relation to states, but also on how states are (re)defined in relation to the Arctic. This serves to show how the ‘speech’ used to justify one’s belonging in the Arctic becomes ‘acts’ that co-constitute the states and the Arctic relationally. The first issue that is observable in the material in this regard is that the state territories and the Arctic region are defined in relation to each another:

The Arctic is both far from France and near to it. Although it lies at the far reaches of the temperate zone where we live, it extends over an area situated between 2500km and 5000km from the French coast, which, for a maritime power like France, with the second-largest maritime area in the world, remains relatively close. From France, the Arctic Ocean therefore seems like a natural extension of

the North Atlantic, which laps at the western shores of our country. (France, 2016a, p. 4)

There are also concerns that change in the Arctic environment could increase the frequency of extreme weather events in Japan and other mid- and high-latitude states. (Japan, 2015, p. 3)

In recent years, it has become clear that the climate and weather of Japan are being influenced by changes in the Arctic environment. (Japan, 2015, p. 5)

As can be seen, connectivity is highlighted, but geographical proximity is not completely absent either. The French document draws on relative proximity when highlighting the connection between France and the Arctic through the North Atlantic. Similar connections are drawn in the Japanese policy document through the issue of climate change, illustrating the interconnectedness of the Arctic environment and climate with respect to the weather of Japan. Proximity is also highlighted in the document by referring to Japan as one of the states ‘surrounding’ the Arctic (Japan, 2015, p. 6). It is through this kind of speech of ‘connections’ and ‘proximities’ that the two territorial entities become constituted in relation to the Arctic. Further connections are illustrated through showcasing that the states have actively hosted key ‘Arctic’ events within their territories, thus emphasizing further how the Arctic is simultaneously manifested as a network in the policy documents:

In 2015, amid growing international interest over the Arctic, the Arctic Science Summit Week (ASSW), the most important international conference on Arctic research, was held in Japan. (Japan, 2015, p. 4)

In November 2008, France organised an international conference on the Arctic in Monaco as part of the French Presidency of the EU. (France, 2016a, p. 11)

The quotations illustrate how, through emphasizing connectivity instead of fixed territorial demarcations, the Arctic is being ‘stretched’ southwards, or perhaps more precisely, how the Arctic is made to ‘bulge’ toward the southern states. Yet, it can also be identified that such connections draw on narratives about how the states themselves, through explorers, scientists and the like, have been (and are) present in the Arctic region. The historical presence of state actors within the Arctic region is indicated through the narration of ‘national Arctic histories’, while the current physical presence revolves around the Svalbard area, and especially the Ny Ålesund research station:

Building on its long-standing tradition of exploration and expeditions in high latitudes, France has carved out its place as a polar nation over the last three centuries. . . . France was the first country to set up, in 1963, a scientific research base in the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard, where it shares a permanent base with Germany in the international scientific village Ny-Ålesund. (France, 2016a, p. 17)

For more than half a century, since the 1950s, Japan has carried out observations of and research on the Arctic. From a global perspective, we have maintained a high level of scientific interest in the changes of the Arctic environment. In 1991, more than 20 years ago, Japan became the first non-Arctic state to establish an observation station in the Arctic. (Japan, 2015, pp. 3–4)

Interestingly, despite all the connectivity and the stretching of space, the above statements serve to indicate that the ‘Arctic’ is simultaneously treated as a distinct physical space ‘out there’, one in which these states – through their explorers and scientists – have been, and are, present. These kinds of speech acts reproduce the

‘Arctic’ as a distinct space with a specific history in which the states have played a part, which, again, serves as an ingredient in the national ‘Arctic’ histories. When contemplated from Murphy’s RTL framework, it is possible to identify how physical-environmental (proximities/connections between territories) and cultural-historical (national ‘Arctic’ histories) linkages are utilized by the ‘non-Arctic’ states in similar fashion with the ‘Arctic states’ to define relations with the Arctic. Such forms of relational connections are also visible in speech acts that highlight how the states (i.e. actors representing the states) have been involved and present in various ‘Arctic’ networks:

Japan has been engaging in various initiatives on international scientific cooperation and international forums on the Arctic as well as bilateral discussions with AC member states. (Japan, 2016, p. 5)

France plays a major role in the various Arctic research fields and international cooperation through its numerous and various projects and its infrastructures. (France, 2016b, p. 7)

The need to justify one’s involvement with and belonging to ‘the Arctic’ serves to constitute the state as a territory and as a collective subject (actor) in relation to, and linked with, the Arctic. This ‘arcticization’ of the state, in turn, draws on and serves to constitute the Arctic both as a region (physical space) and as a network (connections with ‘non-Arctic’ states). In other words, the speech acts serve to reconfigure the Arctic as simultaneously territorial and relational space. This is to say that territorial and networked understandings of national and supranational space constitute one another in speech acts that emphasize the ‘Arcticness’ of Japan and France.

While all of the above clearly speaks to how the documents of both France and Japan (re)position those states in relation to the Arctic, concurrently reproducing the states and the Arctic region in a relational manner, the question remains whether the co-constitution of the states and the Arctic is all that this kind of speech does. In other words, are the purported arguments through which the connections and proximities are premised merely based on the belief that they serve to present these states as more ‘Arctic’? And why are such displays of ‘Arcticness’ even relevant for France and Japan? While such displays resonate to some extent with the factors through which the established Arctic states have legitimized their ‘Arcticness’, it is useful to deepen the analysis and focus on how they relate to specific sets of power relations within regional institutions. This is discussed next in the context of what is arguably the core regional institution, the Arctic Council. In this regard, it becomes possible to analyze how the speech used to justify one’s belonging in the Arctic (and the concurrent co-constitution of the states and the Arctic through such speech) can also be seen as (speech) acts that uniquely facilitate the inclusion of these states within the networks constructed around the AC. Through such a notion we can discuss territory–network interplay in (re)regionalization in more detail.

The Arctic Council and the politics of inclusion

The Arctic Council has become the key institutional platform for international Arctic cooperation, and it has come to play an increasingly important role in the governance of the region. The Council’s central role has become further strengthened by the adoption of legally binding agreements between the Arctic states under the auspices of the Council.⁴ Thus, actors interested in the alleged economic opportunities of the Arctic, and/or in the environmental threats that may directly affect them, have a lot at stake in

the decisions that the members – with the contribution of the permanent participants – negotiate within the AC. This naturally motivates a variety of actors to take part in the Council. This, we argue, is one of the main reasons why states like France and Japan are increasingly highlighting their ‘Arcticness’.

In response to this growing ‘global’ interest in the Arctic region, the members of the AC (the ‘Arctic states’) have facilitated an increasing number of actors in the work of the Council as observer members. The Arctic Council Observer Manual for Subsidiary Bodies was first adopted in 2013, and the observer category is also allowed through the Arctic Council Rules of Procedure, which sets guidelines for the ‘accreditation and review of observers’ and ‘criteria for admitting observers’. The main criteria and requirements demanded from the observers are listed in Figure 2. According to the Ottawa Declaration, the institutions that are eligible for observer status include ‘non-arctic states; inter-governmental and inter-parliamentary organizations, global and regional; and non-governmental organizations’ (AC, 1996, p. 6). The setting of specified criteria also entails a promise that fulfilment will lead to the attainment or renewal of observer status, even though such matters require a unanimous vote by the members and are thus contestable. In fact, Solli, Wilson Rowe and Yennie Lindgren (2013) have noted that Canada and Russia have been reluctant to admit new observers and that they were the key proponents of the Observer Manual. In contrast, the Nordic states and the US have adopted a more inclusionary approach on observers (Solli et al. 2013). And yet it is also evident that the permanent participants (the IPOs) do not necessarily perceive the observers as a threat. Rather, as Michael Stickman, International Chair of the Arctic Athabaskan Council, said in a statement in the 2013 Kiruna ministerial meeting:

Can we. . . talk about how best to engage non-Arctic states with Arctic interests? We should use the Arctic Council to engage non-Arctic states.

The observer criteria and the promise that their fulfilment will secure observer status form the basis for analyzing the empirical material as speech acts, or as ‘utterances performing an action’ (cf. Austin, 1962). We see ‘Arcticizing’ speech acts as action that serves not only to co-constitutively (re)produce the states and the Arctic region, but also to exemplify that the observer criteria have been met. This, we shall argue, is crucial in the reproduction of the Arctic Council itself.

[Figure 2 here]

The way the observer criteria reproduce the established power dynamics built into the Arctic Council, and attached to the Arctic region, is self-evident. By accepting and supporting the objectives of the Ottawa Declaration, the observers acknowledge the power relations between members, permanent participants and the observers. By recognizing the Arctic states’ sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction, together with the ‘extensive legal framework’, the observers recognize the dominant role of the Arctic states and international law within the region:

By virtue of their sovereignty and their jurisdiction over large areas of the Arctic Ocean, the five Arctic coastal States (the United States, Canada, Denmark, Norway and Russia) are on the front line in the face of these challenges. (France, 2016a, p.

4)

Additionally, the observer criteria render the above-discussed relational co-constitution of the states and the region somewhat mandatory in order for state-actors to gain inclusion. This becomes evident in how the ‘Arctic interests’ and ‘Arctic expertise’

(criterion 6.f.) are presented throughout the empirical material. First, it is evident that emphasizing proximities and connections between (i.e. the co-constitution of) the states and the Arctic region underlines that these states have a clear interest in the Arctic. Second, as already pointed out, this co-constitution entails the narration of national Arctic histories, which ultimately reproduces the Arctic as a region (territory) whose history is dominated by state-interventions. However, this also has repercussions for how the states become reimagined and reconstituted. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the importance of the history of engagement in polar research in the national identity narrative of France for example, it is nonetheless evident that highlighting this narrative in the Arctic policy document and observer activity report has more to do with the state's international (re)positioning than with internal 'nation-building'. Thus, the narration of national Arctic histories can be seen as a speech act that favorably (re)positions the applicant states in order to fulfill the observer criteria. To do this in practice, the states need to show that they have a longstanding historical interest in the region, which has naturally created Arctic expertise (criterion 6.f.).

These kinds of factors emphasize the ability of the states to contribute to the work of the Arctic Council by virtue of serving the supposed interests of the region (criteria 6.a. and 6.f.). The way in which these abilities are utilized to justify inclusion is brought out in a straightforward manner:

In 2015, the GOJ [Government of Japan] launched a research project in an unprecedented scale, the 'Arctic Challenge for Sustainability (ArCS)'. The ArCS project, a national flagship project, with a budget of 760 million yen, about 6.5 million dollars, for FY 2016, for strengthening scientific research on the Arctic, represents our absolute commitment to addressing Arctic issues. It should be noted

that one of the main purposes of this project is to make a solid contribution to activities of the AC. (Japan, 2016, p. 1)

France's scientific activities relating to the Arctic strengthen its legitimacy in dealing with Arctic affairs and are an essential condition for the renewal of its observer status in the Arctic Council. (France, 2016a, p. 19)

In like manner, the Arctic Council rules of procedure state that

Observers are requested to submit to the Chairmanship not later than 120 days before a Ministerial meeting, up to date information about relevant activities and their contributions to the work of the Arctic Council should they wish to continue as an observer to the Council. (AC, 2013, p. 13)

Documents such as the Observer Manual and Rules of Procedure translate the aims of the 'Arctic states' into the criteria for inclusion, and the review reports and strategy documents of the 'non-Arctic' states in turn translate these criteria into speech acts that aim to secure and sustain political inclusion. As, for example, Metzger (2013) has argued, the stabilization of a regionalization process as the institutionalization of the region relies to a large extent on the ability of the 'proposition for regionalization' (i.e. a specific understanding of what the region is) to 'stick' and 'travel', meaning that the expansion and multiplication of actors that (re)produce the region through their practices is pivotal. This applies also in reproducing 'regional' power relations that rely on a specific 'proposition for regionalization'. It is as much a process of enrolling new actors in actual networks (i.e. the AC working groups) as it is a process of creating 'networks of meaning' regarding the region. As discussed by John Allen in his summarization of the notion of networked power:

networks are sets of associations put together by actors who are able to enrol, translate and channel others into networks of meaning in such a way that they extend and reproduce themselves through space and time. . . . The key to the success of this kind of arrangement, it would seem, is the ability to ‘hook up’ others to the process of circulation, to draw upon organizational resources to negotiate and persuade other actors to pursue certain goals. (2009, p. 204)

The established members of the AC have been successful in persuading other actors to embrace the goals defined by the members through the observer criteria and the observer category. This illustrates how the ‘proposition for regionalization’ around which the AC itself is built has ‘traveled’ and ‘stuck’: first, through explicit arguments made by the ‘non-Arctic’ states in the documents that position the states as part of the ‘Arctic family’, and second, through the AC accepting the ‘non-Arctic’ states into its structures, which contributes to the institutionalization process of the region around the formal institutional platform of the AC. However, as speech acts are bidirectional, this – as will be discussed next – is not the whole picture.

From politics of inclusion to politics of transformation

‘Non-Arctic’ states cultivate the AC’s criteria in order to stabilize their position in the ‘Arctic network of states’. However, they simultaneously also attempt to challenge the rules of engagement and power relations within the network: the situation represents a process of creating a novel ‘state of exception’ and a rupture in the established political regime. This is done essentially by highlighting the inability of the members of the AC (but also the five Arctic Ocean coastal states) to comprehensively address ‘Arctic’ issues by themselves. In this light, foregrounding the scientific efforts to ‘work toward a comprehensive understanding of the environmental changes in the Arctic and their

effect on the rest of the globe' in Japan's Arctic policy document (2015, p. 7), can be viewed as a speech act aimed at solidifying a new object of cooperation: a 'global Arctic' (a framing that has lately attained much prominence, see Bennett, 2015). We argue that such 'global Arctic' language is a speech act designed to facilitate the engagement of the 'non-Arctic' states even further, potentially leading to a new kind of political assemblage in which the prevailing power relations are transformed. Such language was deployed, for example, by the French Deputy Ambassador to the Polar Regions, Laurent Mayet, in a speech at the 2016 Arctic Circle conference in Iceland:

As access to the Arctic Ocean increases year after year, it reveals a connection between the North Pacific and the North Atlantic, opening up opportunities and challenges that could concern the international community. The nature and the scale of the issue and the challenges in the Arctic call for a high level of international cooperation between the states that are directly and indirectly concerned.

Similar speech acts can also be found in Japan's policy document, as, for instance, one course of action in the implementation of the policy is defined as follows:

Amid growing concern over the impact of environmental changes in the Arctic on the environment of the Earth as a whole, including global warming and climate change, actively convey the findings of its scientific observations and research, and work toward examining the possibility of enabling a new agenda based on wide-ranging international cooperation. (Japan, 2015, p. 8)

These kinds of speech acts not only demonstrate that the ‘non-Arctic’ states have a legitimate interest in the Arctic to fulfil the AC observer criteria, but also generate justification for the increased involvement of these states. In other words, the increasing interconnections between ‘Arctic’ and ‘non-Arctic’ processes and actors are used by ‘non-Arctic’ states to create pressure for the transformation of the power relationships within the supranational Arctic political space. They do this mainly by emphasizing that Arctic issues are not ‘territorial’ issues to be dealt with merely by the established ‘Arctic’ states but global issues that necessitate changes in current political configurations and spatial assemblages (see also Koivurova, 2010).

However, this is not fundamentally about eradication of the territorial approach in which the Arctic Circle constitutes the key criterion according to which states can be labelled as ‘Arctic’. Neither does it mean, at least for now, that the ‘non-Arctic’ states are about to establish novel cooperative platforms in which they are fully accepted as ‘Arctic states’. Instead, it is the territorial legitimization of the specific power relations within the established regional institutions – especially between the members and observers in the AC – that is brought under question through the speech acts. As an example of this, in the French policy document one recommendation for action is to

Relay to the Arctic partners the joint request of the 12 observer states in the Arctic Council for greater participation, both in terms of access to certain working groups on strategic matters and in terms of the format of the processes for preparing and adopting decisions. (France, 2016a, p. 58)

Japan’s Arctic ambassador Kazuko Shiraishi offered a similar perspective in an interview with *The Diplomat* in March 2017:

As an observer, I cannot say yet if they should include new members. What I am saying now is that the Arctic Council should consider more active involvement of Arctic observers in the council in some way which allows observers a chance to express opinions and make presentations and formulate a framework for binding agreements. (Hammond, 2017)

While it is still too early to say whether these speech acts will succeed or not, some indications of increasing facilitation of observers' interests can be discerned. For example, during the US chairmanship of the AC (2015–2017) two 'special observer sessions' were arranged in conjunction with the Senior Arctic Official (SAO) meetings, while select observers were invited to present statements in conjunction with the SAO meetings (AC, 2017, 92). These are, of course, small concessions, but nevertheless they serve to show how the increased involvement that the observers seek to obtain by highlighting the 'global' aspect of Arctic issues and the 'connections' between these states and the Arctic may materialize in practice.

Towards a reinstitutionalization of the Arctic?

The analysis of the empirical material leads to a somewhat paradoxical notion: 'non-Arctic' states, through their policies (i.e. speech acts), simultaneously adhere to the 'rules of the game' set out by the AC (further legitimizing the position of the 'Arctic states') but also undermine and try to transform them. What this means for the 'Arctic region' is that the region as a distinct territorial space is being reproduced but simultaneously 'stretched' (or 'expanded') and reconstituted as well. Together, this illustrates well how political dynamics transform understandings of regions, and how the manipulation of understandings of regions contributes to political power play.

Perhaps what we are now witnessing in the Arctic is an intermediate phase ‘in between’ more solid, or singular, articulations of the region’s territorial (or more precisely spatial) and institutional shapes – a transition the results of which are yet to be determined.

The aspirations of the ‘non-Arctic’ states to transform the conception of Arctic space indicates that rupturing at least some of the criteria of territorial legitimation of the current power relations within the AC has become a key strategy of the ‘non-Arctic’ states to enhance their political role. The political dynamics tied to the process of regionalization and regional transformation could thus be outlined as the following consecutive (but overlapping, gradual and contested) stages: territorial legitimation -> delegitimation of the territorial criteria -> reinstitutionalization. In other words, it seems that power relations in ‘regional’ assemblages can be altered through dismantling some of the territorial basis and legitimations upon which they were built. As a result, this can serve as a stepping stone to reinstitutionalizing a new ‘global’ Arctic. In this reinstitutionalization process, the Arctic region is transformed into more relational, networked space. In that process, territoriality will presumably not disappear but will be complemented and at times challenged by more relational views and approaches. This is to say that the Arctic region can also be regarded as ‘soft space’ (cf. Allmendinger, Haughton, Knieling, & Othengrafen, 2015), much due to the fact that it stretches southwards to ‘non-Arctic’ states and its boundaries seem to be constantly negotiable. On the other hand, the Arctic remains a bounded space too, and at times its (institutional and spatial) boundaries, formed by nation-states, can be relatively hard.

Conclusions

Constituting political space is increasingly about facilitating networks of interaction.

Yet, as a region-building process, it leans on territorial legitimation. This underlines the

importance of interplay between territory and network (network <-> territory) in the process. Concurrently, territorial grounds for network-building serve to frame the criteria for inclusion/exclusion in these networks, hence contributing to how the actors in these 'territorial networks' are legitimized. The region-building process of the Arctic is illustrative of such dynamics: the Arctic has been constructed largely as a 'space of states' while simultaneously specific states have become constructed as 'Arctic'. The concurrent reproduction of these categories can be seen to produce a two-fold, or co-constitutive territory effect (Arctic region <-> Arctic states). In this, it is not merely a question of establishing boundaries for the region that 'overlap' with state territories, but also of introducing cultural-historic and physical geographic attributes that tie the region and the states together in a spatially and temporally co-constitutive manner (cf. Murphy, 2002; 2015).

The degree to which construction of a region around specifically defined 'regional' actors and power relations leads to the institutionalization of the region, i.e. to the establishment of the region as a more or less taken-for-granted entity, depends on whether a whole range of other actors can be enrolled to reproduce the region and the power relations 'coded' into it (Metzger, 2013). This notion provided an opening for our empirical analysis of how state actors previously excluded from a 'territorial network' attempt to gain inclusion; how the established 'regional' actors respond to and feed into such attempts; and how the inclusion-seeking actors serve to reproduce and potentially transform the region vis-à-vis (their) states through speech acts of inclusion. In our case the inclusion-seeking actors produce speech acts that position the(ir) states in relation to the Arctic region, thereby (re)producing the states and the region as territories *and* networks simultaneously, and *in relation* to each other. Additionally, by strongly emphasizing scientific cooperation – and by adhering to the criteria set for the observers

by the AC in general – novel actors have been successful in joining the networks constructed around the AC (especially the AC working groups). Through the observer category, and the requirements of the observers, the AC has opened the door for new actors to contribute to the Council's work, in which the questions of inclusion/exclusion between the members and observers, i.e. 'Arctic boundaries', are renegotiated.

It is not only the co-constitution of the Arctic region and states through speech acts that serves to indicate how territories and territorial legitimizations are produced in relation to one another. It is also the co-constitution of the (networked) processes through which different territories (and territorialities) are constructed and (de/re)legitimized that matter. In those processes, the actors seek to obtain power to transform the territorial criteria in order to reconfigure the spatial assemblages and thereby spark a reinstitutionalization of the region around criteria more favorable for them. The pivotal role of the dynamic interplay between territories and networks, discussed here through the context of the Arctic region, the Arctic Council and the states of France and Japan, serves as a call for further scrutiny of the interconnections between territorial and relational manifestations of sub-national, national and supranational spaces in the construction, reproduction and contestation of spatialities in political organization and cooperation. Accordingly, perhaps we should not be so concerned whether regions *are* territorial (bounded) or relational (unbounded) spaces, but instead should direct our attention to the tensions between different spatial imaginaries that are seemingly mobilized by a variety of actors to 'define' the region, and to how such tensions reflect the ultimately contested political nature of regions and our understanding(s) of them.

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Notes

1. We use the term assemblage to denote how (political) space is continuously and processually (re)constituted through the interplay of different spatialities.

Assemblage thinking, in other words, enables us to look at how territorial and relational conceptions of regions vis-à-vis states are produced, reproduced, contested and potentially transformed in political action, and especially in speech acts that seek to spatially anchor or contest specific power relations.

Assemblage thinking thus helps us to focus on the relational co-constitution of different territories, *but also* on how territorial and relational articulations of (state/regional) space themselves ‘interact’ in the constitution and transformation of political space(s).

2. The Ottawa Declaration, the founding document of the AC, declares that in addition to the Arctic States: ‘the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Saami Council and the Association of Indigenous Minorities in the Far North, Siberia, [and] the Far East of the Russian Federation are Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council. Permanent participation is equally open to other Arctic organizations of indigenous peoples with majority Arctic indigenous constituency, representing: a single indigenous people resident in more than one Arctic State; or more than one Arctic indigenous people resident in a single Arctic State. Observer status in the Arctic Council is open to: Non-Arctic states;

inter-governmental and inter-parliamentary organizations, global and regional; and non-governmental organizations' (Arctic Council, 1996, pp. 5–6).

3. Even though, for example in Canada, 'Arctic' identity has been mobilized in political rhetoric to support more 'national' territorial projects and security policy arguments (see, for example, Dodds, 2011).
4. These agreements are Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic (signed 2011); Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (signed 2013); and Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation (signed 2017).

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Arctic boundaries



Figure 1. Map of 'Arctic boundaries' as defined by the Arctic Council. Source: Dallmann (2015).

CRITERIA FOR ADMITTING OBSERVERS

6. In the determination of the general suitability of an applicant for Observer status the Arctic Council will, *inter alia*, take into account the extent to which the applicant:

a. accepts and supports the objectives of the Arctic Council defined in the Ottawa declaration;

b. recognizes Arctic States' sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the Arctic;

c. recognizes that an extensive legal framework applies to the Arctic Ocean including, notably, the Law of the Sea, and that this framework provides a solid foundation for responsible management of this ocean;

d. respects the values, interests, culture and traditions of Arctic indigenous peoples and other Arctic inhabitants;

e. has demonstrated a political willingness as well as financial ability to contribute to the work of the Permanent Participants and other Arctic indigenous peoples;

f. has demonstrated their Arctic interests and expertise relevant to the work of the Arctic Council;

and

g. has demonstrated a concrete interest and ability to support the work of the Arctic Council, including through partnerships with member states and Permanent Participants bringing Arctic concerns to global decision-making bodies.

Figure 2. The Arctic Council's criteria for admitting observer members. Source: Arctic Council (2013, p. 14).

Table 1. Ten most frequently used words in the documents.

Japan			France		
Word	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Word	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
Arctic	186	5,46	Arctic	529	5,63
Japan	85	2,50	France	150	1,60
International	61	1,79	International	83	0,88
Research	57	1,67	Scientific	82	0,87
States	35	1,03	Council	80	0,85
Scientific	34	1,00	Research	76	0,81
Sea	31	0,91	Ocean	73	0,78
Environment	29	0,85	States	72	0,77
Cooperation	23	0,68	French	71	0,76
Global	23	0,68	Polar	66	0,70