

The future of governance in the Arctic

Abstract: The presentation will examine - also through the personal experiences by the author - how the Arctic international governance scene has evolved and where it is heading now when the region is about to transform radically due to climate change. The international co-operation between the eight Arctic states and the region's indigenous peoples commenced already in 1991 with the Arctic environmental protection strategy, which was in 1996 merged to the Arctic Council. The co-operation was typical for a region that was perceived as inaccessible inhospitable Arctic desert with not many problematic issues to deal with. This underfunded, underinstitutionalised soft-law inter-governmental co-operation had to respond to serious challenges only when two events took place almost simultaneously: Russians planted their flag underneath the North Pole in Lomonosov ridge in August 2007, causing a vast media uproar and criticism that the Russia and the other Arctic states were scrambling over who gets to occupy most of the Arctic Ocean's sea bed. A month later, scientists discovered that gradually melting Arctic Ocean sea ice had reached its historical low. These events triggered a series of responses from various established and non-established policy actors, who also started to legalise their arguments over how the Arctic should be governed. The presentation will study these responses and examine what is the current state of Arctic international governance and how it will likely look in near and in mid term.