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The Web of Responsibility in and for the Arctic

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Abstract *What does it mean to be responsible in and for the Arctic? This article addresses this question, noting that responsibility has become a core policy norm in different governance areas in recent decades. The article contributes to the recent debate on responsibility in global politics, arguing that one should consider not only who is responsible and what for, but also the capability foundations upon which responsibility is exercised, as well as the underlying normativity of this practice. Instead of focusing on capabilities as first principles from which responsibilities arise, this article suggests approaching responsibility as a web of relations. On the basis of this theoretical discussion the article turns to two cases of contemporary Arctic policy where we can observe responsibility 'at work'. The fields of search and rescue and sustainable development are both marked by a cooperative approach among (state and non-state) parties, whose interactions centre on a particular ethical understanding of responsibility rather than on power-oriented politics. Yet each policy field contains specific dilemmas, as Arctic governance is characterised by a web of responsibility that comprises multiple subjects in charge and/or objects for which they are responsible.*

Keywords: Arctic, Responsibility, Search and Rescue, Sustainable Development

Introduction

What are the implications of institutionalising responsibility as a central element of governance? This article argues that responsibility has become a core normative element of global politics, albeit one that gives rise to complex configurations of actors and the objects for which they are or are not responsible. In raising the issue of what it means to be responsible in and for the Arctic, the argument put forward in this article highlights the ambiguous nature of responsibility as a normative element of global governance. It makes its case with special reference to the fields of search and rescue and sustainable development. Insights from how responsibility is institutionalised in the Arctic context may also ultimately hold implications for how we view global politics. Generally speaking, responsibility has developed into a core normative concept of global politics that is continuously shaping relations between actors and the objects for or towards which they are assigned or take responsibility. This constellation of relations is sustained on the basis of existing, assumed or claimed capacities, which in turn raises fundamental questions about the normative quality of these links.

This article aims to contribute to recent theoretical debate among scholars of International Relations, which has highlighted questions about who is responsible and what for. The article critiques the notion that the most encompassing treatment of responsibility has resulted in a search for, or reification of, 'first principles'. This search takes place in two forms, although they can overlap. First, there are attempts to clearly define conditions under which particular actors, usually powerful states, assume leadership roles in global politics. Authors in this field take state capacities as given, and highlight the special role of states to take on responsibility for particular areas of global politics, such as peace-keeping or tackling climate change. A second kind of engagement with first principles focuses on legal obligations in terms of accountability. In contrast, this article draws on some of the related writings on responsibility in international political theory and legal philosophy to emphasise the usefulness of context-sensitive enquiries. It argues that capacities may matter, but they do so only within social contexts and practices. Responsibility cannot be determined in terms of first principles, but rather through the web of relations through which it comes to life, including the normative quality of the connection between subject and object of responsibility.

It is possible to observe an increase in references to responsibility across diverse governance areas (Hansen-Magnusson and Vetterlein 2018; Hansen-Magnusson, Vetterlein et al. 2018), such as economics, security or the environment, in which responsibility has become a central policy norm:¹ corporate social responsibility (CSR) shapes the way in which corporations interact with their surroundings, including a concern for the environment as well as human rights (Dashwood 2014; Karp 2014); the responsibility to protect (R2P) has triggered a much-discussed re-calibration of state sovereignty in favour of strengthened relations between the international community and citizens (Wheeler 2006; Bellamy 2011; Hehir 2011; Glanville 2014); and common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) has played a key role in climate governance negotiations subsequent to the Kyoto Protocol, as it assigns states responsibility for the sustainable use of natural resources (Brunnée and Toope 2010).

These developments were made possible over the past two decades in the wake of the so-called Brundtland Report (United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). This achieved the integration of economics and environmental

¹ Susan Park and Antje Vetterlein define policy norms "as shared expectations for all relevant actors within a community about what constitutes appropriate behaviour, which is encapsulated in [...] policy" (Park and Vetterlein 2010, 4).

concerns under the concept of sustainable development, which had been attempted since the 1972 Stockholm Conference where the rights of the individual were specified, such as the rights to adequate food, housing, safe water and family planning. On page five the Report shifted the responsibility of policy efforts to the global collective:

We live in an era in the history of nations when there is greater need than ever for co-ordinated political action and responsibility. The United Nations and its Secretary-General are faced with an enormous task and burden. Responsibly meeting humanity's goals and aspirations will require the active support of us all.

The Brundtland Report also provided a methodology to broaden and rethink the concept of security (Glanville 2014), a conundrum which had been tackled by Willy Brandt and Olof Palme in different UN reports in the 1980s, as well as by Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1992 and Gareth Evans in 1993. Following the Brundtland Report's example, sovereignty was recast in terms of responsibility for the individual rather than state rights:

The starting point is that any state has the primary responsibility to protect the individuals within it. But that is not the finishing point: where the state is unable or unwilling to meet its own responsibility, through either incapacity or ill will, a secondary responsibility to protect falls on the wider international community to step in, by whatever means is appropriate to the particular situation. (Evans 2008, 42)

Noting this empirical richness, theory is not far away in attempts at conceptual clarification and discussion. In an attempt to provide a holistic account of responsibility, this article addresses the complex yet compartmentalised approach to responsibility in theoretical discussions. The debate revolves around questions of whether collectives can and should hold responsibility (Erskine 2003), where the dividing line runs between individual and collective responsibility (Arendt 1958; Held 1970; French 1972), why it might be fruitful to distinguish different types of responsibility, such as legal, moral and political (Ainley 2011; Beardsworth 2015), or the practices through which responsibility becomes attributed to any actor in the first place (Lang Jr 1999; Frost 2004; Hoover 2012). The article argues that we can take lessons from these debates, with a view to addressing issues that will elude those who search for first principles. On the basis of this discussion, the article offers a framework that discusses the subjects and objects of responsibility, the different forms of capacity that are embedded in social relations, and the normative context of these relations. It then demonstrates the usefulness of this holistic approach through an analysis of contemporary Arctic governance.

The Arctic appears to be a prime case to focus on. The impacts of climate change are gradually becoming visible in the reducing ice coverage of the Arctic Ocean, which makes the region a prime example of Hans Jonas' argument that the changed temporal and spatial impact of human activity deriving from technological developments since the nineteenth century makes it imperative to take responsibility to positively influence the course of human development (Jonas 1984). While it will remain difficult to navigate the Arctic for decades to come, increased human activity has been one of the results of these changing environmental conditions. There is a burgeoning literature that makes various assertions regarding the motivations of states and non-state actors, usually relating to improved access to resources such as oil and gas, but also raising questions about military as well as human security (Hoogensen 2007; Hønneland 2016; Hough 2017).

As the Arctic is no *regio incognita*, instead being home to more than four million inhabitants, increased scope for human activity raises a number of questions about the nature of the interactions taking place, particularly the kinds of rules that they follow or which they create (Bloom 1999; Koivurova 2010; Humrich 2013; Wilson 2016; Knecht 2017). By raising the question of what it means to be responsible in and for the Arctic, the article focuses on two policy areas which map onto the broader global development of institutionalising responsibility that followed from the Brundtland Report, namely search and rescue and sustainable development. The focus on these rather well circumscribed areas of *Arctic* governance helps to illustrate the ambiguity that responsibility may contain in the broader, *global* context.

The remaining parts of the article are arranged as follows. The following section provides a synthesised discussion of responsibility in global politics. The section draws together different strands of contemporary debate to highlight that responsibility is at the core of contractual relations in global politics, which yield ethical, legal as well as political concerns. The section underscores the need to look into the capacities upon which responsibility is enacted as well as the normativity underpinning this practice. Who is responsible and what for are not issues that can be resolved in a straightforward manner. Rather, a multitude of potential subjects of responsibility, as well as a multitude of potential objects, force us to think about the political implications of institutionalising responsibility in global governance.

Based on this theoretical groundwork, the article then turns to discuss responsibility in the context of the Arctic. It looks at the way in which responsibility is anchored in search and rescue agreements as well as approaches to sustainable

development, highlighting both promising developments as well as the difficulties arising from the web of responsibility that has been spun in Arctic governance in recent years.

(International) Relations of Responsibility

Responsibility is a relational concept, which normatively links actors and objects. The Latin verb “spondere”, from which the noun responsibility ultimately derives, connotes both “to promise” and “to pledge”, as well as “contract to give/take in marriage”.² This contractual understanding of a relation is echoed in civil law, where responsibility is always to someone and for something (Cane 2002, 50). Responsibility therefore gives rise to contractual relations of which we can ask, first, “who is responsible?”, which we will refer to as the subject of responsibility, and second, “what object are they responsible for?”, which denotes the object of responsibility.

A number of International Relations scholars, who have undertaken the most encompassing contributions to this field, have been attempting to clarify the nature of this contractual relationship by highlighting at least one of two aspects from which they seek to conclude some kind of first principle. Both aspects can be defined as capacity, consisting of either material resources or legal arrangements on the basis of which the relations between subject and object of responsibility take shape. I discuss these types of capacity in turn, before arguing that responsibility eludes determinacy because it is entangled in a web of relations.

The material capacity of states plays a key role in accounts from a range of International Relations scholarship. In the Realist take on responsibility, the state makes constant efforts to build its capacity for survival because “a nation’s survival is its first and foremost responsibility; it cannot be compromised or put to risk” (Kissinger 1977). On this basis, authors such as Kenneth Waltz have made a case for US exceptionalism, arguing that “those of greatest capability take on special responsibilities” (Waltz 1979, 198), through which he justifies the US role in seeking a stable global order during the 1970s. More recently, liberal-constructivist research has further discussed the notion of special responsibilities as a hierarchical element of global politics, based on material power (Bukovansky, Clark et al. 2012, 7). These authors argue that special responsibilities bestow legitimacy on the status quo of global order because it

² Compare: <http://latin-dictionary.net/definition/35550/spondeo-spondere-spondi-sponsus> (accessed September 1, 2017).

represents a compromise between the formally equal responsibilities of states under international law on the one hand, in the sense that states are equally answerable for legal commitments and obligations, and, on the other hand, the observation that states are differentiated in terms of material capacity (*ibid.*, 8). While they make the case with regard to the United States, their work is characteristic of a wider range of English School-related approaches that share in common a focus on the role of capacity for taking on exceptional duties in global politics (Wight 1978). It has been argued that “great powers” bear special responsibilities for global order by virtue of a mutual bond with weaker states. Hedley Bull writes,

Great powers (...) assert the right, and are accorded the right, to play a part in determining issues that affect the peace and security of the international system as a whole. They accept the duty, and are thought by others to have the duty, of *modifying their policies in the light of the managerial responsibilities* they bear. (Bull 2002 (1977), 196)

This view is supported by work in the field of International Political Theory. For example, Toni Erskine has repeatedly made the case that states possess moral responsibility to remedy crises when conventional mechanisms for decision making fail. She draws on debates on individual versus collective responsibility in philosophy (French 1972) to make the case for so-termed coalitions of the willing to form in times of crisis and impasse in the United Nations Security Council (Erskine 2004; Erskine 2008; Erskine 2014). The argument holds that those states who can exert what David Miller has termed remedial capacity (Miller 2001) are morally compelled to find ways of coordinating their actions to relieve human suffering.

A different notion of capacity is derived from formal or legal resources. Scholarship in this field engages with formalised relations between actors, usually states, to determine *accountability* as the core feature of responsibility relations. In the field of regulatory governance, for instance, scholars are interested in defining who is responsible across a number of different levels, from policy-making all the way to implementation (Bianculli, Fernández-i-Marín et al. 2015). Others seek to remedy accountability gaps in global politics by forming new institutions or widening the remit of existing ones. In this vein, it has been suggested that the International Criminal Court may try not just violent but also nonviolent crimes against humanity (Aloyo 2013). Overall, the accountability deficit in global politics has been discussed repeatedly over the past decade (Slaughter 2004; Grant and Keohane 2005; Bovens 2007; McCorquodale 2013; Zürn 2018). In its search for a first principle regarding who is actually

responsible, this literature addresses both positive and negative responsibilities – that is, engaging in actions that would prevent or stop causing harm (Karp 2014; Wettstein 2015) – but the majority of research deals with remedial responsibility (Miller 2001) for events or actions that occurred in the past, especially who should correct particular wrongs if they were brought about through either action or inaction.

Both accounts of capacity share in common that their object of study provides them with a first principle from which to make inferences about the nature of the contractual relation between subject and object of responsibility. As I argue below, however, they both insufficiently acknowledge that responsibility is embedded in a web of socio-legal normativity that complicates these contractual relations significantly, because it means that responsibility is not simply given by virtue of resources but rather constructed in social processes. Instead of confining ourselves to discussing the role of particular forms of capacity, scholarship should engage with the multiple relations of which they are a part and the social configurations (Jackson 2006) to which they give rise.

I contend that responsibility is part of a web of relations that enables particular forms of politics through processes of inclusion and exclusion as well as by creating uncertainties and ambiguities. Rather than seeking first principles, we should accept indeterminacy and engage with a more hermeneutic project of analysing the work that responsibility does for global politics. A basic outline of such a web of responsibility is sketched in Figure 1 (below).

(Figure 1)

Normativity and the Web of Responsibility

Legal philosophers have emphasised the complexity of the subject-question through a discussion of what can be termed causal or outcome responsibility (Honoré 1999; Miller 2007). Specifically, they link responsibility to procedure and substance by highlighting that the issue of capacity is more than material capability or legal provision. International Relations scholars would be well advised to pay close attention to Miller and Honoré's arguments, which show how the material and legal aspects of capacity are socially interlinked dimensions.

This may be demonstrated through a discussion of HLA Hart's famous example of a

drunken captain who caused his boat to sink.³ Thus, while substantive capacity or the material endowment through which an actor can take responsibility for something surely matters, Miller and Honoré remind us that roles such as that of captain are also linked to ideational capacity. This second notion of capacity may refer to a legal position that is embedded in a web of normative expectations. Being a captain requires more than knowledge of navigation – the material component – it also involves a duty of care for boat and passengers. Capacity may also be a mixture of the two – for instance, regarding social expectations of what can be reasonably expected from an actor. Thus, not only does an actor require the physical means to cause an event in order to be responsible for it – which resembles the debate about agency among sociologists (Campbell 2009); judgement about the way in which the event came about is also linked to societal expectations of what was reasonable conduct, especially if some alternative event was not brought about.⁴ In this regard, the law often makes exceptions for children or deeds committed under great emotional strain. This latter example is arbitrary, though, as made plain by Honoré when he writes that “being responsible and being legally liable are partly a matter of luck” (Honoré 1999, 1).

It has recently been argued that “responsibility is more than accountability” (Vetterlein 2018), especially because not all regulations prescribe behaviour in minute detail. Rather, responsibility includes a moral dimension in which future conduct becomes the subject of negotiation. With regard to material capabilities, the argument has been made that domestic politics matter in determining how the capabilities will be put to use (Loke 2016). It is therefore not a given that capacity alone adequately indicates how responsibility will be enacted (Hoover 2012). In short, what matters are the social processes through which responsibility comes to life, which encompass the politics of excluding those who might not have the capacity to join a coalition, even though they might be willing, and related questions of who is not included in the

³ In what is probably the most widely-cited example in the literature, Hart presents a neat but oversimplified account of responsibility types: “As captain of the ship, X was responsible for the safety of his passengers and crew. But on his last voyage he got drunk every night and was responsible for the loss of the ship with all aboard. It was rumoured that he was insane, but the doctors considered that he was responsible for his actions. Throughout the voyage he behaved quite irresponsibly, and various incidents in his career showed that he was not a responsible person. He always maintained that the exceptional winter storms were responsible for the loss of the ship, but in the legal proceedings brought against him he was found criminally responsible for his negligent conduct, and in separate civil proceedings he was held legally responsible for the loss of life and property. He is still alive and he is morally responsible for the deaths of many women and children” (Hart and Gardner 2008, 211).

⁴ The example is that of a parent that does not look after playing children with due attention and therefore is responsible for an accident, even though they did not directly cause it themselves.

contractual relations.

Concerning the object of responsibility, contractual relations are also more complicated than International Relations scholars conventionally assume. While Bukovansky, Clark et al. (2012) examine special responsibilities with regard to climate change, nuclear politics and finance, recent work on businesses' corporate social responsibility and human rights questions whether the subject and object of responsibility are not linked in more complex ways. For instance, the debate about who has remedial responsibility for human rights pitches cosmopolitan accounts which hold that states are in charge (Pogge 2005) against pluralists who argue that multinational corporations, perhaps NGOs as well, possess more capability to deliver on human rights than some states with weak governance infrastructure (O'Neill 2005, 46; Karp 2014). Some scholars have argued that the formalisation of corporate social responsibility in the so-called Ruggie or Guiding Principles (Ruggie 2011) is troubling because bestowing remedial responsibility on corporations legitimises them and their actions, while they often seek to avoid public accountability (Thompson 2012; Dashwood 2014). Conventionally, multinational corporations have responsibility towards their shareholders and not the local communities in which they operate. Despite cautious optimism that corporations may not necessarily be the profit-maximising beasts that they are sometime portrayed to be, who is to say which object they prioritise?

The situation surrounding multiple objects of responsibility is similar to that regarding states. On the one hand, the development of the "responsibility to protect" puts the international community in charge of human rights if a state fails to uphold these (Welsh and Banda 2010). Humanitarian law provides the normative context in which a possible intervention should take place, emphasising that civilians must not be targeted and that the means used are proportionate. On the other hand, states have responsibility towards their own citizens, including military personnel, which is the scenario emphasised by (neo-)realists (Waltz 1959). Similar to the issue of prioritising different responsibilities faced by corporations, in this scenario the question becomes, for instance, at what height does a plane fly to accurately target military infrastructure and spare the lives of civilians, while ensuring the safety of pilots?

To summarise this discussion, we can say that responsibility refers to social and/or legal contractual relations between a subject and an object of responsibility. Speaking of responsibility or "responsibilising" an issue is a normative process: relations between subject and object of responsibility are normatively underpinned because

responsibilising attempts to define what counts as capacity in the first place, as well as how this capacity not only enables actors to take on responsibility for something, but also how holding capacity might give rise to a moral imperative to act. Capacity thus refers to more than material or legal aspects; it entails a social component as well. In its different dimensions, capacity complicates the question of who is responsible by allowing us to also raise the political question of who is not responsible – which is to say that responsibilising an issue may produce or reinforce social hierarchies, especially in the presence of multiple (potential) subjects and overlapping claims towards an object. Similarly regarding the object of responsibility, a number of possibilities exist which are also framed normatively. Actors might be responsible for different objects simultaneously, which raises questions about the basis on which decisions are made.

Policies of Responsibility in and for the Arctic

This section takes a close look at the way in which responsibility is being institutionalised in the Arctic and among the Arctic nations.⁵ Cases will be considered in terms of the subject and the object of responsibility, capacities and normativity in order to systematically approach responsibility as a web of relations.

Initially, analysing the recent search and rescue agreement, I will show that the state is the main actor in charge. It executes its responsibility based on capacity, which comprises two major elements. The first is generally referred to as “maritime domain awareness”(MDA),⁶ while the second comprises specific legal provisions. Both reinforce each other as legal agreements legitimise the building of infrastructure Responsibility is thereby institutionalised by capacity enhancing steps, yet this capacity need not exclusively be put to ‘good’ use. This is because search and rescue organisations are state institutions which are responsible for ensuring safety at sea, i.e. benefitting humanity, on the one hand, and enforcing sovereignty on the other. The section concludes by discussing this constellation of multiple objects of responsibility as a potential dilemma.

From this discussion I move on to look at sustainable development, which is enabled by the legacy of the Brundtland Report. While there are indicators which suggest that sustainable development holds emancipatory potential, we can raise

⁵ They are Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Iceland, the United States and Russia, as the so-called Arctic-5, plus Finland, Norway and Sweden, extending the circle to the Arctic-8.

⁶ MDA can be defined as “the effective understanding of anything associated with the maritime domain that could impact global security, safety, economic activity, or the environment”; see Vance and Vicente (2006).

questions about the long-term effects of Arctic policies in this context. As sustainability may be approached from different angles, the question concerns what happens when responsible actors shift their focus. Following from the conceptual discussion in the previous section, this case demonstrates the dilemma to which multiple actors and multiple responsibility objectives may lead.

Search and Rescue: Subject and Object

Search and rescue (SAR) institutions at sea are the responsibility of states. Arctic states differ in the organisational structure of their SAR organisations. The SAR Agreement identifies different so-termed “competent authorities” who administer the respective SAR agency or agencies in each country (SAR Agreement 2011, Appendix 1), such as the Minister of National Defence (Canada), the Danish Maritime Authority (Denmark), the Ministry of the Interior and the Finnish Transport Safety Agency (Finland), the Ministry of the Interior (Iceland), the Ministry of Justice and the Police (Norway), the Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation, as well as the Ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defence, Emergency, and the Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters (Russia), the Swedish Maritime Administration (Sweden) and the United States Coast Guard (USA). It is usually the coast or border guard that takes the lead in executing SAR operations (SAR Agreement 2011, Appendix II), but there are considerable differences between the countries regarding the role of this organisation (Østhagen 2016). For example, the United States Coast Guard represents one of the five branches of the country’s armed forces, not dissimilar to the role of Finnish or even Icelandic coast guards. In contrast, the Swedish Maritime Administration primarily exists to provide services to (commercial) shipping, while the Swedish Navy takes on the role of controlling and securing Swedish borders (Sjöfartsverket n.d.). Yet despite this organisational variation, it is clear that SAR competencies rest with respective states and responsibility has not been fragmented and shared with non-state parties.

However, the object of responsibility in this context is two-fold and comprises a concern for state sovereignty, on the one hand, and care for humanity on the other. This split can be explained as an institutional legacy from the founding days of organisations. The developmental trajectory of the Coast Guard in Great Britain served as a role model for other countries and explains the dual nature of what states are responsible for. Aspects of security, which relate to considerations of state sovereignty, were present from the very beginning. In 1809 the so-called “Preventive Waterguard” was formed,

which would later become HM Coast Guard. Its primary purpose was to ensure sovereignty and security, particularly by fighting smuggling during the Napoleonic War. In those days this meant fighting transnational crime – i.e. preventing the endemic smuggling of brandy into the UK and the outflow of revenues to France.⁷ Organised life-saving was a late by-product of the Coast Guard's duties.

However, other maritime actors had begun to set up different infrastructure around the same time. In contrast to the sovereignty and security-focused institutionalisation of the Coast Guard, this parallel build-up of capacity is evidence of a more humanitarian focused understanding of responsibility. For instance, Lloyds established rescue stations around the coast from 1802 onwards. Building on this infrastructure, a private initiative of philanthropists gathered by Sir William Hillary founded the National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck in 1824.⁸ It changed its name to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) in 1854. Also in 1854, the Merchant Shipping Act established formal responsibility for life saving at sea, assigning this to the Coast Guard for the first time and placing the organisation under superintendence of the Admiralty in 1856.⁹ Financial difficulties in the RNLI meant that the Board of Trade took charge of its affairs as a consequence of the Merchant Shipping Act, essentially merging RNLI and Coast Guard services under one roof. Even after the Board's subsidy ended in 1869 and the RNLI became independent and reliant on its own resources once more, the institutional cooperation continued.¹⁰

Overall, these institutional developments in the UK provided the blueprint for the way in which SAR came to be organised in other countries. The dual responsibility of safeguarding sovereignty, on the one hand, and protecting fellow human beings, often

⁷ Capacity was built through installing watchtowers along the coast. In 1822 the Waterguard was transferred from the Treasury to Customs and the name was changed to the Coast Guard. In 1828 the first guidelines were published, among which the Coast Guards were given responsibility to deal with shipwrecks and life-saving.

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=Coastguard_History (accessed June 30 2017)

⁸ An indication of Hillary's normative position can be derived from the title of his book published in 1825: "An Appeal to the British Nation on the Humanity and Policy of Forming a National Institution for the Preservation of Lives and Property from Shipwreck". Like the group of men who lobbied for the abolition of slavery in the UK around the turn of the nineteenth century, he was also a Quaker (Hochschild 2005)..

⁹ In 1923 control of the Coast Guard services was transferred to the Mercantile Marine Department of the Board of Trade (<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C729>) (accessed June 30, 2017).

¹⁰ The German Maritime Search and Rescue Service was founded in 1865 and is also still run as a charity financed through private donations, membership fees and legacies. The French Société nationale de sauvetage en mer also dates from 1865 and receives two-thirds of its income from donations. The legacy of the Dutch Royal Netherlands Sea Rescue Institution/Koninklijke Nederlandse Redding Maatschappij can be traced to origins in 1824. By comparison, the Spanish Sociedad Española de Salvamento de Náufragos modelled itself on the RNLI but was only set up in 1880.

through or with the help of private organisations, on the other, has become the hallmark of MDA. This goes to show that the material capacities of SAR are supported by a growing legal framework, which is co-constitutive of the expansion of states' abilities to control the seas.

SAR Capacity in the Arctic

SAR missions require specialised equipment and infrastructure that is land-based, such as radar and satellite stations, weather observation or GPS infrastructure, as well as sea-based, such as vessels (Wood-Donnelly 2013) – in other words, SAR is capacity-intensive. In the context of the Arctic, responsibility is institutionalised through a framework of treaties and conventions which have been devised over the course of several decades. They are part of a global attempt to create a unified governance arrangement on the seas. As the table below illustrates, SAR institutions combine questions of capacity with the dual concern of state sovereignty as well as humanitarian questions.

Table 1 – Responsibility and SAR Agreements over Time

Framework (origin)	Example	Responsibility innovation
Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) (1914; repeatedly updated until 1974)	Specify number of life-boats	Capacity building
Chicago Convention/ International Civil Aviation Organization (1944)	Provide SAR services; assist victims of (aircraft) accidents regardless of nationality	State capacity building; humanitarian concerns trump state sovereignty
Search and Rescue Convention (1979)	States to coordinate SAR efforts; grant immediate entry to territory	Softening of state sovereignty
UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (1982)	Coupling of sea and airspace	Creation of unified governance space
Arctic SAR Agreement (2011)	Arctic Coast Guard Forum (2015)	Knowledge creation through joint exercises; capacity coordination

Source: author

The first of the SAR frameworks is the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) which was adopted in 1914 (Byers 2013) after the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912. The convention was updated repeatedly during the twentieth century, and its 1974 version is still valid.¹¹ Further SAR regulations are stipulated in the so-called

¹¹ Since 1974 SOLAS can be updated and amended by tacit agreement, i.e. automatically unless reservations have been submitted by a certain number of states by a particular date. For example, SOLAS prescribes the number of life boats a ship must provide, as well as placing a requirement on each party

Chicago Convention (Convention on International Civil Aviation), which was agreed in 1944. It established the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) which is an agency of the UN. Although obviously concerned with aviation issues, the convention has an impact on the rules of SAR at sea as well. The ICAO's agreement makes responsibility for fellow human beings central when it states in Annex 12 that parties must provide assistance to survivors of (aircraft) accidents regardless of nationality, and "arrange for the establishment and provision of search-and-rescue services within their territories" on a 24-hour basis (Art 2.1.1).¹² Overall, this is a global legal institutionalisation of what was begun as a voluntary activity in the early nineteenth century by Lloyds and Sir William Hillary.

While this agreement is a step towards coupling parts of the sea and airspace within a legal regime, which was continued in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Chicago Convention also highlights how humanitarian concerns trump national sovereignty. The Convention recommends that rescue centres – and not a central authority – should coordinate directly with neighbouring states in relation to all issues necessary to allow personnel, machines and equipment from another state into its territory, regardless of visa arrangements etc. (Art. 3.1.6). Delegating this paperwork to a local agency can be interpreted as a move to emphasise the intention to provide assistance over concerns of sovereignty. This cooperative spirit was carried over almost verbatim into the 1979 SAR Convention,¹³ which demands that states coordinate their efforts (Art. 3.1.1) and that "immediate entry" is granted to a neighbouring state for SAR purposes (Art. 3.1.2), although national regulations could still bar foreign parties from entering. Parts of the SAR Convention match the Chicago Convention closely, but overall it was a significant step towards establishing a framework for missions at sea.

Despite being parties to the 1944 Chicago Convention and the 1979 SAR Convention, the Arctic states also devised their own "Agreement on Cooperation in Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic", which was signed in 2011. Given the background of existing law, it is not entirely surprising that this new

"to ensure that any necessary arrangements are made for coast watching and for the rescue of persons in distress at sea round its coasts" (cited in Byers 2013).

¹² Available from <https://de.scribd.com/document/18191224/Anexo-12-Search-and-Rescue> (accessed September 14, 2017). This agreement also covers the high seas or "areas of undetermined sovereignty" – with zones of responsibility in those latter areas being determined by regional air navigation agreements (Art. 2.1.1.1).

¹³ Available from: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%201405/volume-1405-i-23489-english.pdf> (accessed September 14, 2017).

agreement adds “nothing to the rules that are already binding on the Arctic countries” (Byers 2013), even though the Arctic Council appears very proud to communicate that this is the first legally binding agreement that was negotiated under its guidance.¹⁴ Commentators regard the agreement as a trust-building tool as it *encourages* but does not *require* the sharing of: information services and procedures, techniques, equipment and facilities; joint research and development initiatives; and joint search-and-rescue exercises (Exner-Pirot 2012; Byers 2013; Wood-Donnelly 2013). The agreement supports collaboration in mutual exercises and operations, including exchange visits between personnel (SAR Agreement 2011, Article 9.3), which has been successfully realised with the help of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum (Eckstein 2016). In particular, observers praise the pragmatic approach towards saving lives and emergency response that prevails among colleagues from different countries, even during times of geopolitical tensions (Sevunts 2018). In recent years the Coast Guard Forum has conducted operative as well as so-termed table-top exercises, i.e. simulations, to increase SAR capacity and prepare for crises (see Table 2).

Table 2 – Arctic SAR Exercises, excl. expert meetings

Time and Place	Exercise	Outcome
October 2011, Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada ¹⁵	First table-top exercise	Focus on potential air and marine accidents that could happen in the Arctic and require international cooperation and necessities
April 2016, Anchorage, Alaska ¹⁶	Northwest Passage table-top exercise	Prepare for cruise ship emergency involving 1600+ passengers; triggered by Crystal Serenity crossing of Northwest Passage; discuss response capability and awareness between the US and Canadian federal agencies
June 2016, Montreal, Canada ¹⁷	Arctic Council EPPR meeting; table-top exercise	Oil pollution and spill prevention exercise under Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic agreement (MOSPA); development of processes and communication in workshop and SAR expert group meeting
August 2016, Kotzebue, Alaska ¹⁸	“Arctic Chinook”	Testing Arctic SAR interoperability, capability and limitations on scenario with an adventure-class cruise ship of around 200 passengers and crew
September 2017, Iceland ¹⁹	“Arctic Guardian”	First ACGF operative exercise based on scenario of a missing cruise ship with 250 people on board sailing from Greenland to Iceland
March 2018, Oulu, Finland ²⁰	Swedish-Finnish Oil Spill	Exercise run under MOSPA and the Copenhagen Agreement

¹⁴ Available from: <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/our-work/agreements> (accessed 30 June, 2017).

¹⁵ Compare National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces (2011).

¹⁶ Compare article by The Maritime Executive (2016).

¹⁷ Compare Arctic Council (2016).

¹⁸ Compare Gordinier (2016).

¹⁹ Compare Arctic Coast Guard Forum (2017).

²⁰ Compare Finnish Environment Institute (2018).

	Response Exercise	
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Source: author

Figure 2 about here

The Normative Quality of SAR

Rather than treating different forms of capacity in isolation, we can attempt to explain the significance of the institutionalisation of responsibility in SAR policies through an interpretation of the web of practices (compare Figure 2). Trust between states is an attribute that purely power-oriented approaches find hard to conceptualise in global politics (Michel 2013). The understanding of responsibility with regard to SAR is rather indicative of a cooperative spirit, which develops gradually over time, and of the ability to overcome fears of ‘losing face’ when asking for help, which was the case in the context of the 2000 *Kursk* submarine disaster. It also implies the willingness to restrain oneself and contribute to a shared nomos (Lebow 2003), i.e. the laws and conventions that bind international society together. The SAR agreement is normatively embedded in a humanitarian outlook which puts the survival of individuals at its centre while reaffirming that states are the principle actors in this context (Wood-Donnelly 2013). As the Canadian Lt.-Gen. Semianiw stated in the context of the first table-top exercise under SAR in 2011,

The challenges posed by the landscape, the climate and the vast distances cannot be an excuse for not fulfilling all our SAR capabilities. But the developments in the Arctic mean that we must all work together to ensure that citizens of each of our nations who work and live in the north can expect timely responses when they are in distress. (Arctic Council 2011)

While this development was enabled by a change in the general geopolitical context that saw a reconfiguration of the principle of sovereignty during the 1990s (Glanville 2014), we need to caution against a teleological interpretation of this trajectory. Other than stating that this is a potentially positive development, there is no guarantee that responsibility for humanity will continue to trump the assertion of sovereignty. The reason for this potential shift is that the development of SAR only works based on increased MDA capacity that is spread across civilian and military agencies.²¹ Their

²¹ The different agencies responsible for SAR include the Canadian Forces and Canadian Coast Guard, the Danish Maritime Authority, the Danish Transport Authority, the Ministry of Fisheries – Faroe Islands, the

exact tasks are subject to state regulation, which means that they can change over time. While the SAR agreement provides a legal capacity to legitimately build infrastructure and encourages cross-border cooperation, the potential for dual use (Forge 2010) of this infrastructure means that its originally intended use may not be the only one. The statement made by Lt.-Gen. Semianiw in the spirit of sharing responsibility for fellow human beings stands in contrast to more recent observations that,

Coast guards uphold sovereignty through naval presence and the enforcement of national jurisdiction. Fisheries inspections, for example, are an integral part of protecting a state's sovereign rights, through the management of its own marine resources. This authority cannot be shared without the coastal state ceding some of its sovereignty. Therefore, there are some limitations to the extent of collaboration within the framework of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum. (Østhagen 2016, 4)

Further problems for cooperation arise because Russia is not a member of NATO, which means that sensitive information may not be shared freely among all members of the Forum. After all, as the US Coast Guard's Adm. Zukunft holds, "(T)he forum is not likely to take up more contentious issues, such as freedom of navigation and issues of sovereignty (...because it primarily exists) for navigational safety" (CBC News 2015). Potentially, therefore, there is a dark side to institutionalising responsibility in the Arctic, because despite the cooperative approach to pragmatic issues, it is unclear how normative differences can be bridged.

Obviously such development cannot be predicted with certainty, not least because it is difficult to foresee at this point how the use of the Arctic Ocean is going to develop – i.e. if, when, and to what extent it will be free of ice for at least some parts of the year (Keskitalo 2004; Byers 2009; Humrich and Wolf 2011; Koivurova 2011; Keil 2014). Countries may be increasingly likely to evoke the law of the sea concerning freedom of navigation (Kraska and Fahey 2017), just as the Arctic 5 states agreed to uphold international law in their joint Ilulissat Declarations in 2008 (Dodds 2008). However, this principle of maritime governance, according to which ships may pass through international straits unhindered, is contested in different parts of the world, for instance between China and the United States in the South and East China Sea (Glaser 2012),²² but also in the Arctic where the USA and Canada continue to disagree over the

Finnish Border Guard, the Icelandic Coast Guard, the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre Northern Norway (JRCC NN Bodø), the Russian Federal Air Transport Agency and Russian Federal Agency for Marine and River Transport, the Swedish Maritime Administration, and the United States Coast Guard and Department of Defense (compare Exner-Pirot 2012, endnote 8).

²² The US Department of Defense publishes a list of their freedom of navigation operations: <http://policy.defense.gov/OUSDP-Offices/FON/> (accessed August 1, 2017).

status of the Northwest Passage, i.e. whether it is an international straight (the US position) or whether it constitutes international waters (the Canadian position). Building capacity for MDA in the name of responsibility could eventually be used to restrict access to the Northern Sea Route by Russia (Kraska and Fahey 2017; Royal United Services Institute 2017). Therefore, with the view that open waters are preferable to closed ones, one might be sceptical regarding the long-term implications of this development.

To summarise, then, a holistic approach to responsibility that focuses on the social processes through which it comes to life demonstrates that capacity-building on its own does not guarantee agreement among participants on what constitutes the *nomos* (Lebow 2003). In particular, projecting power and appearing as a powerful actor is one of the key aspects of Russian Arctic politics (Piskunova 2010; Laruelle 2014). However, as militarisation and security are topics that are explicitly omitted from the agenda of the Arctic Council, the question of how militarisation could be guided to ensure that capacity is channelled towards the appropriate cause remains unaddressed. The Arctic Council brings together at least two actors, the USA and Russia, who have a history of non-cooperation. While the agreement on SAR is remarkable, their presence and future convergence on normative principles guiding responsibility at sea stands out as something that requires further discussion and investigation. As long as there is no agreement that freedom of navigation under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is a fundamental right and a *ius cogens* norm, capacity-building for the sake of taking responsibility may legitimise building the infrastructure that helps states close sea routes.

Sustainable Development

While the SAR agreement provides a way to deal with increased human activity in the Arctic in general, further cooperation based on the idea of sustainable development underpins the qualitative aspects of these activities. Members of the Arctic Council generally agree that human activity in the Arctic must follow principles of sustainable development, thereby taking responsibility for their conduct and for their relations towards other actors in the area. In the following paragraphs I argue that although sustainable development firmly anchors responsibility in the Arctic in a web of relations between states and non-state actors that specifies rights and obligations, doubts about the longevity and the overall benefits of this arrangement arise when we consider that

states need to meet diverging responsibilities simultaneously. To demonstrate the advantage of the approach taken in this article, I first show the origins of sustainable development in the Arctic and highlight institutionalisation as a legacy of the Brundtland Report, as well as the empowerment of local actors. Yet, as the second step shows, developing capacity is not an unambiguously positive issue. Web of responsibility relationships shed light not only on competing claims to competence – between states and non-state actors – but also on the diverse relations of responsibility that each actors might be entangled in (compare Figure 3). For the purpose of showing the conflicting relations of responsibility in the context of sustainable Arctic development, the article adopts a narrow approach to the concept and focuses mostly on states and non-state actors, especially indigenous people.

Figure 3 about here

Subjects and Sustainable Development and Capacities

The case of responsibility for sustainable development in the Arctic is more complicated than search and rescue. We are dealing with more actors whose legitimacy to engage with sustainability is derived from a number of capacity-enhancing sources. At the same time the object of responsibility cannot be clearly delineated either, pointing towards potential conflicts of interests or priorities.

The Arctic 8 are the primary subjects of responsibility for sustainable development, but the distinctive arrangement of the Arctic Council means that they are joined by representatives of indigenous populations from the region, the so-termed Permanent Participants. Even though the Permanent Participants have the right to active participation and consultation but no right to vote, they can effectively veto initiatives by states since the mode of decision-making in the Council is by consensus (Nord 2016, 38 and 70). This multi-stakeholder governance arrangement of power sharing places the Permanent Participants at quasi eye-level with states, and makes the Arctic Council a unique governance experiment in contemporary global politics. Permanent Participants occupy a much stronger position in the Arctic Council than the other official state and non-state observers, even though many of these are incomparably better endowed in terms of material capacity.

This bifocal arrangement of actors at the heart of the Arctic Council can be explained through the trajectory of the institution and the legal-material capacities from which it

grew, as well as the wider normative context that empowers non-state actors in international politics. On the one hand, the Brundtland Report provided some of the impetus for a global turn towards reconsidering environmental issues. In this context Finnish and Canadian initiatives, as well as changes in the geopolitical setting at the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s, were conducive to enhancing Arctic cooperation (Keskitalo 2004; Langhelle, Blindheim et al. 2008). As a precursor to the Council, emphasising what would later become the Council's environmental pillar, the Finnish government developed the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy 1991 short: AEPS) which was "highly influenced by the Brundtland Report" (Langhelle, Blindheim et al. 2008). The AEPS stated in its objectives that sustainable economic development should not have unacceptable ecological and cultural impacts. The concept of responsibility developed in the AEPS echoes the one propagated in the Brundtland Report. It states that,

Management, planning and development activities shall provide for the conservation, sustainable utilization and protection of Arctic ecosystems and natural resources for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations, including indigenous peoples. (AEPS 1991, 9–10)

Subsequently, as a result of organisational differentiation that had begun under AEPS, once the Arctic Council was officially founded following persistent Canadian initiatives (Nord 2016), cooperation focused on themes ranging from the monitoring of pollutants, the conservation of flora and fauna, the protection of the maritime environment, and cooperation mechanisms to respond to environmental emergencies. In 1998 the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) was established. Again, it took its mandate from the understanding of responsibility developed in the Brundtland Report. The Sustainable Development Action Plan became the SDWG's strategic framework. It included economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, such as the sustainable use of resources, sustainable economic activity and increasing the prosperity of Arctic communities, gender equality, enhancing well-being and the eradication of poverty among Arctic people, biodiversity conservation, and climate change impact assessment, among others (Arctic Council 2004). Most importantly, the SDWG introduced a particular "human dimension" (Nord 2016) to responsibility, prioritising health, education, employment or changes in lifestyle as opposed to business opportunities or environmental protection.

On the other hand, the Brundtland Report also empowered the role of indigenous populations in global politics. The report recognises that development policies should occur in close cooperation with local populations. Article 77 of the report states,

Those promoting policies that have an impact on the lives of an isolated, traditional people must tread a fine line between keeping them in artificial, perhaps unwanted isolation and wantonly destroying their life-styles. Hence broader measures of human resource development are essential. Health facilities must be provided to supplement and improve traditional practices; nutritional deficiencies have to be corrected, and educational institutions established. These steps should precede new projects that open up an area to economic development. Special efforts should also be made to ensure that the local community can derive the full benefit of such projects, particularly through jobs.

It is not least with regard to the principles of health and education provision, as well as the prospect of benefiting from jobs created, that the former president of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) reminded states with an interest in investing in the Arctic that their “first responsibility” lay in cooperating with the indigenous population. He stated at a conference in Berlin that,

I would like to undermine that the most important responsibility of anyone who comes to work in the Arctic or seek economic opportunities in the Arctic: your First Responsibility (sic) is to work in partnership with Inuit. (Lynge 2010)

Representatives of the indigenous populations have repeatedly asserted their position that they participate in the forum as an entity with sovereign rights, which draws its legitimacy from having lived in the area prior to the establishment of states and from the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Nord 2016). Their claim is to participate in the Council as rights holders and not just merely stakeholders (Shadian 2017). In this light, it is only consistent that they continue to insist that research should benefit their own development.²³

Objects of Responsibility and the Normative Quality of Responsibility

The coexistence of state and non-state actors in the Arctic Council is unique in global politics, and is working surprisingly well. However, it also complicates the question of who takes responsibility and what for, because the Permanent Participants share responsibility for their homelands under the Declaration with states.²⁴ In the future

²³ Arctic Frontiers conference 2018 in Tromsø, author’s observation.

²⁴ Permanent Participants do not hold sovereignty like states, but their involvement in consultation means they can exert quasi-vetoes, and their own perception is that they are sovereign rights holders rather than merely stakeholders. Their presence in the Arctic Council challenges conventional understandings of sovereignty in International Relations (compare Shadian 2017, 53).

human development aspects may diverge from what can be regarded as more narrowly conceived understandings of economic development. The set-up of the Arctic Council, with at least two groups that lay claim to sovereignty over the same space, and themes that may yield conflicting policies, such as environmental protection and sustainable development, seems conducive to heightening tensions between actors and over issues. In particular, states who bear formal powers for policy implementation may find that they are torn between competing responsibilities that they have to reconcile simultaneously.

This dilemma is illustrated by a growing body of research that addresses sustainable development in the Arctic. The lead authors of the first Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR-I) argued that “large quantities of profits and rents, arising mostly from the extraction of natural resources on a large scale, flow out of the Arctic, depriving authorities in the region or potential sources of revenue” (Einarsson and Young 2004). This situation improved to some extent over the course of the next decade. The second Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR-II) highlights a number of success stories, such as the increased use of native languages in the education system and an increased use of indigenous knowledge, increased local ownership, control and participation in resource extraction industries, innovative governance arrangements in which indigenous populations achieve self-determination and forms of self-government, and the emergence of Arctic and indigenous identities as a cultural resource, including increased marketability (Larsen and Fondahl 2014).

However, this is not to say that all is going well in terms of sustainable development. Concerns have been voiced regarding problems of emigration out of the region by young and skilled people and the continuity of poverty issues, among others. There is a growing discussion about the necessity of sustainable development as an empowering tool for people in the area, though often with perhaps an unduly narrow emphasis on preserving local and indigenous ways of life (Magga, Mathiesen et al. 2014). Nevertheless, while there is widespread consensus among all members of the Arctic Council that sustainable development should be at the centre of policy making, the SDWG’s information guide on mining highlights that

Although the overall value and benefits of significant levels of activities across the Arctic are national and perhaps global, mineral projects and effects happen largely at the community level in specific areas, frequently bringing with them long-term environmental impacts and risks. The local economy, society, culture and environment go through a transformation as new investment, jobs and activities

affect how traditional activities are pursued and passed on from generation to generation. (Sustainable Development Working Group 2011, 6)

As expressed in the quote, change seems inevitable and it is not certain which direction it will take. Local communities in the Arctic are increasingly affected for better or worse, but states also hold responsibility for communities outside the region. It is thus possible to speak of multiple objects of responsibility in the context of sustainable development in the Arctic.

One example of this is the recent climate lawsuit brought by Nature and Youth and Greenpeace against the Norwegian state. They argue that the Norwegian government is in contravention of the 2015 Paris Agreement and has violated the Norwegian constitutional right to a healthy and safe environment for current and future generations (Greenpeace 2017). Another example concerns the capacity-building projects that are being developed across the north of Scandinavia and in the Canadian Arctic. Justified in terms of state-level responsibility towards local populations, there is considerable interest in improving and building infrastructure to further integrate local knowledge and development (Bertelsen and Justinussen 2016; Nord 2016), such as high-speed internet connections (Windeyer 2016) as well as rail lines that link the Arctic Ocean to the Baltic Sea (Staalesen 2017). However, it remains to be seen who will benefit from these developments in the long-run, i.e. whether the investments will help to mitigate the problems addressed in the AHDRs, which would strengthen a normative commitment to humanitarian policies, or whether these are merely convenient arguments to reduce local scepticism towards large-scale development projects (Flyvbjerg 2001).

Both examples highlight that responsibility is embedded in a web of normative relations, yet the competing responsibility links may be mutually exclusive. The entanglement thereby raises questions about democratic and legal accountability which one could pursue in further research: who gets to participate in the decision making process? What kind of contractual relations exist between government and citizens, on the one hand, and between governments and investing companies on the other? Both states and representatives of indigenous populations have been empowered by an evolving framework of Arctic and extra-Arctic agreements and conventions to take responsibility for the particular object that is sustainable development. However, as it turns out, it is not entirely clear whose development it is that needs to be taken care of. In the case of industrial activity, for example, questions may be raised about whether

there is a particular responsibility towards the local population who would be immediately affected by air-borne pollutants, let alone oil spills, or whether a case can be made that the extracted revenues would bring benefits to the country as a whole. Similarly, one can ask whether it is present or future generations for whom subjects have responsibility.

Conclusion

Responsibility has evolved as a global policy norm in different governance strands whose common denominator is the influence of the Brundtland Report. The report managed to bridge seemingly incompatible concepts, such as environmental responsibility and economic development, while also enabling a reinterpretation of sovereignty as responsibility. In the latter case this is supposed to be protected by the international community in case a state fails in this undertaking vis-à-vis its citizens. In different forms, responsibility for security and for sustainable development have become institutionalised in the Arctic region, which sees a heightened amount of human activity as a consequence of climate change impact. When we ask the question of what it means to be responsible in and for the Arctic, we must take account of a certain degree of ambiguity – between the intention to ensure sovereignty on the one hand, and supporting humanity on the other.

Search and rescue operations have long-standing historical roots in which a strategy to ensure state sovereignty is coupled with a concern for humanity. Today this duality is visible in the dual use of MDA infrastructure, the expansion of which builds on several multilateral agreements among Arctic states (and globally). On the one hand, this strengthens a state's role by taking control over maritime territory. States thus prepare for increased economic activity following a thawing of Arctic ice and the opening of potentially accessible waterways for some part of the year. On the other hand, a potential downside might be that the building of infrastructure could be seen as militarisation because of its potential dual use (Ministry of Defence 2017). One day this might affect state relations – for example, the US are questioning the legal status of the Northwest Passage or the Northern Sea Route (aka the Northeast Passage).

The second field of enquiry in this article was sustainable development, which has a similarly institutionalised trajectory. This has been at the core of the Arctic Council's concerns since before the Council's founding, drawing significant inspiration from the

Brundtland Report. After twenty years there seems to have been some success in empowering local populations, even though the impact of climate change and other factors might still drive some people out of the region. Nevertheless, questions remain about whether responsibility is used in terms of advancing human development in the region, or whether there are other normative principles that foresee state responsibility linked to other objectives. It remains to be seen what the long-term implications of the projects will be, but as the examples of the lawsuit against the Norwegian state and potential problems of infrastructure development make plain, it is not too difficult to imagine scenarios that are not fully beneficial to human development concerns.

With a view to the broader debate about responsibility as a normative pillar in global politics, both cases underscore the value that can be derived from a holistic approach to responsibility. The article argues that it is necessary to move beyond a search for first principles that focuses on material capacity or legal provisions to determine accountability. Responsibilising an issue establishes contractual relations between subjects and objects of responsibility. It involves normative expectations regarding the existence, use and possible moral obligations of different forms of capacity, while also establishing or reinforcing hierarchies between actors participating in the process. Finally, assigning responsibility may also highlight an actor's potential conflicts of interest, and the need to discriminate between different objects of responsibility.

All of this shows that responsibility is a social product that is negotiated in a context of capabilities, but how these play out cannot be interpreted without a close look at the day-to-day practices and the relations between those involved. The question of the basis on which responsibility is taken or allocated serves to remind us that questions of who and what require some kind of grounding in issues of capability. Although Arctic Council agreements are consensual and voluntary in their implementation, SAR does not come with a particular moral guidance regarding the governance of the space it covers. The agreement legitimises the building of infrastructure, but there is no guarantee that it will not be used for purposes other than those which are currently foreseen.

In addition, there is the normative concern which addresses the quality of the link between subject and object of responsibility. The ethics underpinning policies of responsibility matter profoundly, not least because the capacity of an actor rarely comes with an inbuilt sense of direction. As the examples of MDA and sustainable development have both shown, there may be a dilemma in responsibility politics that emanates from a

pull in different directions by several responsibility linkages that have to be handled simultaneously. What can be done to disentangle this web of responsibility, though, is a matter for another article.

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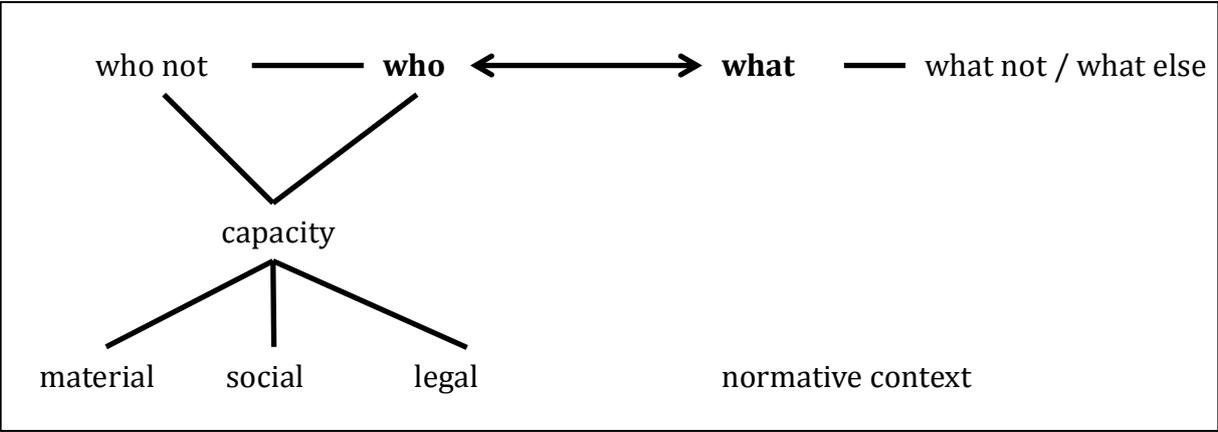


Figure 1 - Normativity and the Web of Responsibility

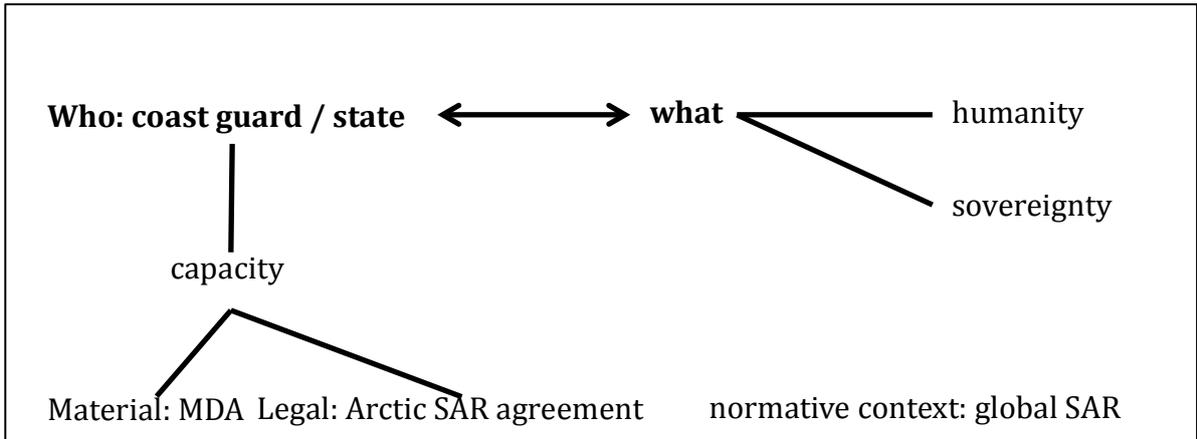


Figure 2 - The Web of Responsibility and SAR

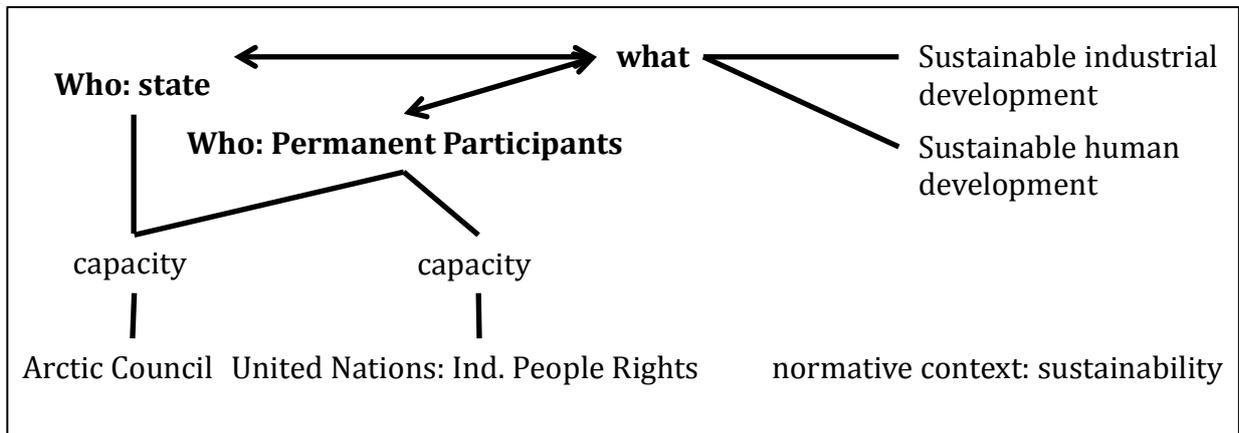


Figure 3 - The Web of Responsibility and Sustainable Development