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Political geographies of the 'changing' Arctic: perspectives on the interface between politics and the region as a process

Vesa Väätänen

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Contents

Abstract

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Keywords: Arctic region, political geography, regional theory, Finland, France, Japan, Alaska

This thesis discusses the political geographies of the 'changing' Arctic from the perspective of regional theory. Concurrently it explores the contributions that empirical research on these geographies can provide for regional theory and political geographical research. The starting point of this thesis is the often heated discussion that has revolved around the Arctic region during the past few decades. This discussion has been exacerbated by the increasingly taken-for-granted image of the Arctic as a 'changing' region, which has arguably acted as the key propeller in driving an increasing number of actors to articulate their interests regarding the region. Building on regional theory, it is argued that rather than taking this understanding of the Arctic as a 'changing' region as a representation of a region that is 'out there', we should instead focus on how knowledge production and the associated political discussion themselves serve to produce and perform the region as 'changing'. This enables a perspective on the process of the Arctic region as effected through the production of regional knowledge, and how this knowledge itself acts as a key driver for the plethora of policies and strategies that various actors have recently developed in relation to the region. Examining these policies and strategies together makes it possible to explore how the Arctic region is performed through them, and why this is politically relevant.

The research articles incorporated into this thesis approach the political geographies of the 'changing' Arctic through case studies of the Arctic policies and strategies of the selected states of Finland, France, Japan, and the sub-national state of Alaska. The selection was made on the basis that the policies and strategies of these states have not received sufficient attention in political geographic research on the Arctic. At the same time the case of Finland provides a perspective on the strategy of an 'Arctic state' beyond the prevailing emphasis on the territorial politics of the Arctic Ocean coastal states; the case of France and Japan provides an opportunity to approach the policies of 'non-Arctic states' and how they relate to the institutional dynamics of the Arctic Council; and the case of Alaska brings to light the 'sub-national' dimension of Arctic politics. The individual cases act as an empirical base for an analysis regarding how and why different institutional actors have attached their interest to the Arctic region and how and why they contribute to the process of the region through these policies and strategies. Simultaneously, of crucial concern is how these states are positioned as spatio-political entities in relation to the Arctic region.

The empirical case studies that constitute this thesis illustrate how geographical knowledge feeds into political agency, and how this political agency itself serves to

perform the region further. By this emphasis, the cases elucidate the key argument of this thesis regarding regional theory, which is that we should treat regions as continuously performed processes and, consequently, focus on why various actors contribute to them in specific ways. Concurrently, by building on this argument, the case studies provide empirically grounded contributions to political geographic research. The case of Finland illustrates how the Arctic region figures into attempts to secure competitive advantages, and what repercussions the political facilitation of these advantages may have regarding state spatiality. The case of France and Japan shows how geography contributes to inclusions and exclusions in supranational institutions, and to the ways in which such institutions are established and challenged. Finally, the case of Alaska accentuates how a supranational region feeds into contestation over power relations between sub-national and national governments.

A key aim of this thesis is thus to foreground the political and spatial implications of regional geographical knowledge as it becomes incorporated into the agency of various actors. In the empirical context of the Arctic region, this entails a corollary call for increasing reflexivity on the part of researchers but especially policy makers regarding the production of 'regional' knowledge and its utilization in political practice. Through this reflexivity, we could bring into question the purported inevitability of 'Arctic change' and perhaps envision alternative futures for the region that do not rely on its perceived economic 'opening'.

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List of original articles

Article I[i]	Väätänen, V. (2019). Securing anticipatory geographies: Finland's Arctic strategy and the geopolitics of international competitiveness. *Geopolitics*, DOI: 10.1080/14650045.2019.1580267
Article II[ii]	Väätänen, V. & K. Zimmerbauer (2019). Territory–network interplay in the co-constitution of the Arctic and 'to-be' Arctic states. *Territory, Politics, Governance*, DOI: 10.1080/21622671.2018.1559759
Article III[iii]	Väätänen, V. (2019). Investigating the particularities of regionalization: Contested state–federal relations and the politics of Alaska's Arctic Policy. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 101: 3, 171–201.

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This thesis is the pinnacle of my academic career so far. I think the beginnings of this project can be traced to the course Regional politics, policy and development: Advanced themes held by Sami Moisio many years ago here in Oulu, where I chose to do a seminar presentation on the Barents region. That led me to do my master's thesis on the geoeconomization and politics of scale in the Barents region, after which the wider Arctic region seemed like an obvious choice to do my PhD thesis on. What the future holds for me is, of course, not yet knowable, but it think it's safe to assume that my past choices also have an impact on my future path as a researcher.

When I look back on my development as a researcher, it is apparent that it has not happened in a vacuum. Instead, the people around me, and the Geography Research Unit at the University of Oulu as an intellectual environment, have had an unquestionable impact on how I think and how I do my research. I would like to extend my gratitude to those colleagues at the unit who have directly or indirectly contributed to my research. Thanks especially to Kaj Zimmerbauer, who has been the principal supervisor of my thesis for the past years, and to Sami Moisio, who held that position for a brief period of time at the beginning of this project. Thanks also to Anssi Paasi who has been the second supervisor of my thesis and who has provided me with insightful feedback throughout the project. I would also like to thank Jarkko Saarinen, Jarmo Rusanen, Eeva-Kaisa Prokkola, Toni Ahlqvist and Heikki Sirviö who have supported me in different ways as colleagues, co-teachers and/or bosses. In addition to colleagues here in Oulu, I am grateful to Klaus Dodds for agreeing to act as my opponent, and to Phil Steinberg and Mia Bennett for their excellent feedback and comments as the pre-examiners of my thesis.

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Vesa Väätänen

1 Introduction

Why write a thesis on the Arctic region? What makes the Arctic so 'special' that I have decided to take it up as the empirical focus of my research? To be sure, I would not have engaged in this project if I had never heard about the Arctic, but neither would I if I were unable to ask the specific questions about the Arctic and the political geographies of the Arctic region upon which I have constructed my research. This is a relatively obvious point, but it prompts one to think about regions in a specific way – a way that is the key premise of this thesis. This way of thinking tries to understand the connection between the continuous production of a region and regional knowledge, as well as the agency predicated on it through which the region, in turn, is further performed[1] and potentially transformed. Accordingly, it is precisely because the Arctic has been made known to me especially through the media and research publications in various academic fields that I have engaged in this research project, through which I too also perform the Arctic region. In other words, the key foundation of this thesis is that the various articulations of the Arctic are not mere representations of a region that is 'out there', but the region's existence as a more or less coherent entity depends precisely on these acts of articulation and their circulation. Importantly, this affords us with a way to approach the processual nature of regions.

Through my research, mine thus becomes one of the seemingly endless array of voices that are circulating the notion of the Arctic region throughout the world.[2] The relevant question in this sense becomes, why am I contributing to the *process* of the Arctic region? Why do I perform the Arctic region in a specific way, or, for that matter, why does anyone, whether a scientist, activist, state representative or journalist, make specific claims regarding what the Arctic region is as a part of their activities, and what practical political difference does it make? In other words, how can we theorize the agency that contributes to the continuously unfolding process of the (Arctic) region? One can also turn this the other way around and ask how performing the Arctic region contributes to this agency itself, and to the implicit or explicit goals that it seeks to realize. In this respect, it can be argued that I perform the Arctic region because the political discussion on the Arctic enables me to ask the questions that I seek to answer through my research, and thereby, allows me to contribute to the academic field of human geography. It is thus my positionality, and the academic subject position that I perform through my research, that bears a significant effect on how and why I perform the Arctic region. In other

[1] The term *performed* could be substituted here with the terms *produced* or *enacted*, but, as is later discussed, since I approach regions through a performative definition (Latour 2005), I use the term *performed*. Performed thus refers here to the active 'doing' in the continuous social construction of regions: in order to stay in existence, regions need to be talked about, written about and drawn on/up instead of merely thought about. It is through this active doing that regions may also transform.

[2] Of course, this circulation becomes more widespread and easier in the form of written text, and the material infrastructure through which the texts themselves circulate.

words, my academic subject position structures my agency. Concurrently, and to reflect on the societal relevance of my research, I perform the Arctic in a specific way in order to encourage a certain reflexiveness on the part of those who take the Arctic as a taken-for-granted object of policy or framework of research. In this sense, the political aim of my research is to influence how the Arctic region is performed by others. This is the key foundation of this thesis, which also informs the treatment of the empirical cases upon which the thesis is constructed.

To put the above in another way, the thesis here is that we should see regions as continuously performed processes, and by that means, focus on *why* various actors contribute to them in specific ways. Additionally, my key argument is that by asking the question why, we can begin to approach how regions feed into different political dynamics, which can contribute to existing research in political geography. Put simply, this means that my interest is in the speech, texts and representations that perform the region, and the key aim here is to explore the interconnections between regionalization and politics, and how they constitute one another. Regionalization, as understood here, denotes not merely the emergence of geographically differentiated 'regional patterns' of social life or the political reorganization of governance into regional units, but also the processual 'becoming' of regions through a multiplicity of speech acts – spoken or written – and representations that bring the region into existence. In this sense, my aim is to build on the work in 'new regional geography' (see Gilbert 1988) that has highlighted the spatio-temporal structuration of 'regional' practices (see Gregory 1982; Pred 1984; Thrift 1983) and the institutionalization of regions (Paasi 1986).

However, as a notable departure from many of the approaches in the 'new regional geography', which focus on the spatio-temporal structuration of interaction in a specific regional setting, this thesis places emphasis on language and representations, and how these can be used to approach the region as a process. In this sense, social structure can be approached not as something that conditions our day-to-day material practices, as suggested by structurationist approaches (e.g. Thrift 1983), but as something that conditions how we conceive regions, and how we speak, write and represent them, that is, how we perform them. This thesis thus draws on more recent research that has highlighted the performative nature of regions and has brought to the fore the multiplicity of actors and modes of agency involved in (re)producing them (Donaldson 2006; Metzger 2013; Paasi 2010). By focusing the attention on specific actors, and on their role in performing the region through speech, texts and representations, this thesis seeks to contribute to our understanding regarding the particularities of regionalization processes, and to elucidate how attention to these particularities can further elaborate our understanding of regionalization processes as 'wholes'. In this sense, I also wish to shift the emphasis away from the process of (de)institutionalization and singularization, which has been a key focus of theory and empirical research that has embraced the conceptualization of regions as social constructs and as processes (MacLeod and Jones 2001; Metzger 2013; Paasi 1986, 1991; Zimmerbauer *et al.* 2017).

The focus here is hence not only on a historical analysis of the emergence and solidification of regions into collective socio-spatial consciousness, but on an analysis regarding how attention to the historical emergence, solidification and transformation of regions and our conceptions of them can explicate how and why they are performed in the present by specific actors, and why this is politically relevant. Fundamentally, in this sense, this thesis is an attempt to shed further light on how regions are both the outcomes and resources of (social) action (Paasi 2002). This is done by looking beyond the already much discussed instances of 'insurgent' regionalism in which a specific understanding of a region both motivates political action and is mobilized by regional activists as a representational 'tool' to contest power relations (e.g. Jones & MacLeod 2004), and beyond deliberate region-building in which actors negotiate the spatial shape and supposed essence of the region (e.g. Metzger 2013). While acknowledging that regions are often performed through insurgent politics, but also through very mundane instances and practices, the focus here is placed on the vast, yet underexplored, 'middle ground' between insurgent regionalism and the 'everyday' (cf. Paasi 2010). Through these points it is possible to shift attention simultaneously to how a certain region came to be 'on the lips' of almost everybody and precisely on why it is 'on the lips' of certain actors. Expansion of the number of actors involved in performing a region is thus one of the key points of interest here, which is an issue that has not gained sufficient attention in the existing literature.

The approach adopted here thus denies that regions, as more or less coherent entities, exist independently of our knowledge of them, and instead places emphasis on how the knowledge of regions induces the action through which this knowledge, and the region it purports to describe, are reproduced and potentially transformed. This is not to deny the materiality of social relations or the physical environment but to acknowledge that they by themselves do not constitute regions, although they can become the key criteria in relation to which we believe regions exist (Allen *et al.* 1998). In other words, even though our knowledge of regions is derived from the world 'out there', this knowledge should not be taken as a representation of an independently existing regional reality but should, instead, be treated as constitutive of the region as a social construct (cf. Agnew 1999). This appreciation of the constitutive, rather than representative nature of regional knowledge, in turn, enables insights into the practical political functions that regions and our knowledge of them have. This means that while my focal interest is in speech, texts and representations that perform the region, I wish to reflect on them with respect to the more concrete manifestations that regions have, for instance, in shaping power relations, inclusions and exclusions, governance practices and policies. Importantly, this emphasis resonates with the work in political geography that has sought to bring to the fore the (geo)political implications of geographical knowledge and the spatial repercussions that the application of such knowledge may entail (Dalby 1991; Dodds & Sidaway 1994; Ó Tuathail & Agnew 1992; Sparke 2007). This thesis, for its part, seeks to combine these aspects of political geography with regional theory.

Additionally, and to highlight the political geographic aspect of my research, a key contention of the thesis is that attention should be shifted not only to how and why actors contribute to the process of the region by performing it, but also to how and why they (re)position themselves in relation to the region. This is an especially relevant issue when we think about supranational regions and actors representing and acting in the name of different spatio-political entities, such as states. Accordingly, states, like regions, are not coherent actors in their own right but become continuously constituted as such through policies and strategies drafted on their behalf (e.g. Bialasiewicz *et al.* 2007; Kuus 2009). This allows asking questions such as, how do state and regional spaces become co-constituted in the process of regionalization, how does this relate to power relations, what compels actors to (re)position 'their' spatial entities in relation to a region, and how does this relate to regional transformation? Regional transformation, in turn, can refer to transformation in the ways a specific region is understood and known, that is, what its supposed essence and territorial (spatial) shape are taken to be, but can also denote the ways in which these transforming understandings of a region become implicated in governance or policy-making practices that may have very tangible effects 'within' the region the existence of which they presuppose. These tangible effects are arguably one of the key reasons why political interest is placed on a region in the first place, which can provide us with an opening for an analysis on the interconnections between regionalization and politics.

While the past few decades have witnessed the emergence of a relational conceptualization of regions/places, when it comes to 'regional' politics the bulk of the attention within geography has been on sub-national regions. In this regard, the territorial imaginary of regions has been increasingly called into question, and the material and social interconnections and relations that serve to constitute them, that is, their material and social realities, underscored (Allen *et al.* 1998; Amin 2002; Massey 1994). Concurrently, it has been highlighted that in such a configuration regional politics are not merely about territory and territorial control, as it has been claimed that there is no regional territory to rule over (Amin 2004); instead, regional politics needs to be understood as an interplay between an 'assemblage' of actors that are 'lodged within' the region (Allen & Cochrane 2007). By building on this work, and the wider scholarship that has debated the territorial and relational aspects of the spatiality of regions, my key concern in this thesis is to focus on how territorial and relational conceptions of a region become key political issues in tandem with the criteria that are utilized to define the region. Thus, rather than make ontological claims regarding the spatiality of regions based on some empirically observable social or material processes identified in research, emphasis is placed on how and why the actors themselves utilize these conceptions in their political practice (cf. Harrison 2013; Prytherch 2010). This allows an appreciation of the political utility of different spatial conceptions of regions and of the repercussions that the tensions and complementarities between these conceptions may have.

When contrasted with sub-national regions, supranational entities represent a less well understood context in which to study regions and regional politics from the perspective of regional theory; they have also been absent from most of the discussion on the interconnections between relational and territorial spatial conceptions and politics. While studies focusing on cross-border regions have shown the discursive constitution of the de- and re-territorializing effects of contemporary regionalism (e.g. Popescu 2008; Sparke 1998), 'larger scale' supranational regions that comprise (parts of) multiple state territories have often been analyzed from the perspective of geopolitics or geoeconomics and through the interconnections between these spatial logics of power (cf. Cowen & Smith 2009). In this regard especially the European Union and the wider processes of 'Europeanization' have garnered much attention (Jones 2006; Moisio *et al.* 2013; Smith 2002, 2015), as have the geopolitical/geoeconomic practices of the United States and the institutions built around the 'Washington consensus' through which the globalization/regionalization dynamics have been promoted in the interests of 'western' capital (Sum 2002). In this thesis, focus is shifted beyond these dynamics in order to investigate how the process of regionalization – the social construction and transformation of a supranational region – contributes to the politics through which the region is performed and through which national and sub-national states are positioned in relation to the region. By approaching these issues through the perspective of specific actors, I argue that novel perspectives can be gained on the interconnections between geopolitics and geoeconomics, and their connection to state spatiality; on power relations within supranational regional organizations; and on the spatial politics of sub-national political actors. Through the empirical choices made for this research, I will discuss how the supranational Arctic region, through its transformation, can be seen to contribute to these dynamics.

To empirically investigate these issues, the research incorporated into this thesis focuses on analyzing the Arctic strategies and policies of the selected states of Finland, France, Japan and the sub-national state of Alaska. The selection of these states in the research is based on the relatively marginal attention they have received in recent discussions on Arctic politics and political geographies of the Arctic region but is also more profoundly linked to the ways in which they exemplify differently positioned institutional actors which have made the Arctic region a focus of their policies and strategy-making. The case of Finland illustrates the key drivers and manifestations of the strategic efforts of an 'Arctic state' (a state with territory north of the Arctic Circle) beyond the prevailing emphasis on the territorial politics of the Arctic Ocean coastal states (Canada, Russia, the United States, Denmark/Greenland and Norway). Analysis of the Arctic policies of France and Japan, in turn, provides insights into the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in Arctic political structures, and into the geographical basis upon which these dynamics rely and through which they are brought into question. The case of Alaska's Arctic policy provides a further opportunity to investigate how the political relations between the state and the federal government have been re-contextualized in relation to the Arctic region, and how this

illustrates the role of a supranational region in the spatial politics of sub-national actors. The goal of this synopsis is to weave these perspectives together both theoretically and empirically by bringing to the fore how the selected actors perform the Arctic region; by reflecting on the different reasons why they do it; and by interrogating how this agency is influenced by the process of the Arctic region to which it also contributes.

On a more general note, this thesis is thus an effort to understand how what would appear to be partly disassociated dynamics and relations, as exemplified by the selected case studies, contribute to the collective regional 'buzz' that has been so evident in the Arctic context, especially during the past decade or so (see Bruun & Medby 2014; Dittmer *et al.* 2011; Steinberg *et al.* 2015). My objective is thus to provide an insight into the political geographies of the 'changing' Arctic from the perspective of regional theory, and in turn, to discuss what contribution to regional theory and political geography research on the political geographies of the 'changing' Arctic can provide.

2 Research objectives and the structure of the thesis

To de-construct the 'Arctic buzz' through the perspective of the selected actors, and to contribute to the theoretical discussion on regions and regional politics, the key research objectives of this thesis are to investigate:

1. How can attention to the Arctic strategies and policies of the selected states of Finland, France, Japan and Alaska contribute to our theoretical understanding of the interconnections between politics and regions as processes?

2. What additional insights can be gained by interrogating how the region and both national and sub-national states are co-constituted and co-performed through specific modes of (political) action?

Through the first objective, and by building on existing work, this research seeks to contribute to our understanding of regions as processes. This is further linked to the notion that we should understand 'regional' politics through such a conceptualization of regions. This objective stems from an observed lack of emphasis on individual actors and how they contribute to the wider processes of regionalization. By conceptualizing the region as a process through a performative definition, which highlights that the condition of the region's existence is that it is performed continuously (Latour 2005), an approach is developed which enables emphasis to be placed on specific actors and how they become involved in performing the region without obfuscating the structural conditions of this agency. Through the second objective of the research, emphasis is placed on how the Arctic region and the selected states as spatio-political entities become co-constituted in the process of regionalization, and especially via specific instances of (political) action, which are exemplified by different regional policies and strategies that are integral parts of the process itself. This allows the co-constitutive relationship between states and the region to be tied to the issue of the power relations and politics that serve to solidify or transform these power relations. Through their empirical focus on the Arctic region, and the more detailed empirical contexts of Finland, France, Japan and Alaska and their respective Arctic policies and strategies, the research objectives enable a more nuanced discussion on politics and its spatial dimensions. It is through these general objectives, and the emphasis on specific institutional actors, that the individual articles of which this thesis consists provide more precise insights into the politics inherent in regionalization processes, and into how certain understandings and conceptions of a region contribute to and are shaped by different forms of political action (see Table 1).

Table 1. Overview of the research articles.

Article title	I Securing anticipatory geographies: Finland's Arctic strategy and the geopolitics of international competitiveness	II Territory–network interplay in the co-constitution of the Arctic and 'to-be' Arctic states	III Investigating the particularities of regionalization: contested state–federal relations and the politics of Alaska's Arctic Policy
Key conceptual issues	Anticipatory geographies as a conceptual tool to analyze how and why a state is (re)positioned in relation to a supranational region; and geopolitics of international competitiveness as a concept with which to discuss how these anticipatory visions are attempted to be secured	Territorial legitimation as a way to understand region-building and power relations in regional institutions; and observer criteria as an inroad to analyze how actors seeking observer status produce speech acts that co-constitute 'their' states and the region	The relationship between regionalization and power relations between a sub-national and national government; spatial politics (i.e. network building) and its contribution to the regionalization process
Research questions	Ia. How the discourses of international competitiveness become manifested in the ways Finland is positioned in relation to the Arctic region through anticipatory geographies? Ib. How the de- and re-territorialization processes are constituted through strategic efforts that are aimed at securing such anticipatory visions and the associated competitive advantages?	IIa. How does the Arctic become (re) constituted by states, and how are states reconstituted through their 'engagement' with the Arctic? IIb. 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?	IIIa. How have state–federal state relations been re-contextualized in relation to the Arctic region through the Alaska Arctic Policy? IIIb. What could be achieved through such a policy in terms of state–federal state relations?
Theoretical framework	Interconnections between geopolitics and geoeconomics and their relationship to state spatial transformation; geopolitics of international competitiveness	Territorial and relational space; legitimation and the co-constitution of supranational and state spaces in the context of supranational regional institutions	Spatial politics of 'sub-national' actors and its connection to the process of regionalization
Research material	Strategy documents	Policy documents, observer reports and complementary material such as speeches	Interviews and policy documents
Key results in terms of the thesis	'Arctic change' interpreted through the discourses of international competitiveness; Finland positioned in relation to the Arctic through anticipatory geographies; political facilitation of anticipatory geographies induces state spatial transformation	The Arctic is performed, and France and Japan are positioned in relation to the Arctic, to fulfill the Arctic Council observer criteria; relational conception of the Arctic as a means to transform the power relations between members and observers	Federal Arctic policies prompted the generation of Alaska's Arctic policy; Arctic is performed as a space of people that are in need of economic development in order to transform federal Arctic policies; Alaska is positioned as 'America's Arctic' to gain legitimate authority to transform federal policies

Together, the three articles and their respective research questions provide insights into how regionalization processes unfold, how the region is transformed within such processes, and how specific actors (re)articulate their interests regarding the (transforming) region. Additionally, the articles show how and why the selected institutional actors position themselves (meaning the spatial entities they represent and on behalf of which they speak) in relation to the region, and how this agency contributes to the process of the region itself. Together the articles thus provide answers to the general research questions by exploring the relationship between regionalization and politics and how the region and the selected states as spatial entities are co-constituted through specific modes of (political) action. Further, the articles interrogate some of the analytical opportunities that the investigation into this relationship between politics and the region as a process opens up, and how they can contribute to work in political geography.

In order to discuss these issues, this synopsis is divided into seven distinct sections. In the next section (section 3) I outline and develop a meta-theoretical framework that draws together the distinct approaches, theoretical perspectives and research questions introduced in the individual articles. The section proceeds first through a discussion on the conceptualization of regions (section 3.1), which is followed by a conceptualization of regional politics (section 3.2). Section 3.3 draws on existing work that treats regions as processes and provides a way to situate analyses of regional politics in relation to regionalization processes. Section 4 moves into the empirical context of my research and introduces – by applying the theoretical and conceptual vocabulary discussed in section 3 – central elements in the process of the Arctic's regionalization and transformation, by which it has relatively recently become defined and accepted as a 'changing' region. This provides crucial background for the treatment of the empirical results of the research, which are presented in section 6. Section 6 is preceded by an introduction to the research design (section 5), which focuses on the selection of the empirical cases, and the material and methods of the research. The summary of the empirical findings and key contributions of the individual articles in section 6 is followed by a concluding discussion (section 7) in which the results and contributions of the individual articles are brought together. The concluding section also traces the central argument of this thesis and explores why it is important to treat regions as continuously performed processes, and by that means, focus on why specific actors contribute to them. Further consideration is also given to how the Arctic as a specific spatial context conditions politics that address it, which also acts as a basis for discussion on the potential openings for further research that this thesis opens.

3 The theoretical and conceptual framework

3.1 Regions and their conceptualization

3.1.1 What do we study when we study regions?

What are regions? While for any 'lay' commentator this would be a relatively easy question to answer, within the academic field of human geography the question has sparked endless debate. This debate, especially during the past decade or two, has epitomized what Martin Jones (2017) refers to as the 'new new regional geography' and has focused particularly on whether regions should be conceptualized as territorial or relational spaces, or perhaps as territorial *and* relational spaces (Allen & Cochrane 2007; Allen *et al.* 1998; Amin 2004; Entrikin 2011; Jonas 2011; Varro & Lagendijk 2013). In this section, and as a theoretical base for the thesis in general, I follow the lead of existing work and emphasize that rather than seeing regions merely as passive backdrops for unfolding worldly events or as geographical (spatial) entities constituted through specific 'animating principles' or criteria through which we as scholars label 'regions' and construct them as territorial and/or relational spaces through our research, an analytically more useful way to conceptualize regions is available through a performative definition. In other words, I wish to place focus upon region as a category of practice rather than of analysis (cf. Moore 2008). This entails that my attention is on seeking to take into account how regions, and knowledge of regions, in part constitute (political) agency, which, in turn, and continuously, constitutes 'the region'. Based on this conceptualization, the attention turns from attempts to excavate certain underlying social processes that produce geographical differentiation according to which scholars label regions, to the 'lay' commentators and other actors of multiple socio-spatial positions and how they 'construct' and perform regions in their activities. This perspective is then tied to the discussion on regions as processes in an attempt to understand how regional transformation through the knowledge produced about the region feeds political agency, which, in turn, and by performing the region, potentially pushes the transformation further. Importantly, the role and relevance of specific actors is brought to the foreground – an issue that has not been a key focus in work on the processual nature of regions as social constructs.

To highlight the approach that I wish to bring forward, it is therefore useful to distinguish it first from research that takes regions for granted as mere backdrops for the phenomena under study. Within this framework, the region is taken "as a given (statistical, administrative) unit that provides a spatial frame for the phenomena or processes that are to be scrutinized or compared" (Paasi 2010: 2297; see also Murphy 1991). This treatment of regions can be seen, for example, in terms of research evaluating the persistence of territorial attachment in the 'age of globalization', where regions constitute variables for quantitative analysis (e.g. Antonsich & Holland 2014). The second key strand of

scholarship in relation to which I wish to contrast my approach is research that produces regions as specific kinds of spaces through the utilization of different criteria in defining and identifying regions. In this regard it is possible to distinguish between approaches that identify some central 'animating principle' that produces geographical differentiation and thus 'regions' as territorial entities (Painter 2008) and approaches that through a specific conceptual lens and empirical commitments designate regions as relational spaces.

While the self-proclaimed task of traditional regional geography of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was to identify, and thus construct regions, whether natural or cultural (see Hartshorne 1939), contemporary accounts of regions have, in a similar vein, ended up constructing them, notwithstanding their different disciplinary, theoretical and methodological premises. A useful starting point is to examine the ideas emanating from economics and economic geography. The identification of functional regions based on specific criteria, such as labor markets or commuting areas, can be seen as clear indications of attempts to identify regions through research. This functional approach also resonates with the more elaborate quantitative modellings of geography as 'spatial science' which sought a 'scientific' approach to predict human behavior, which could then act as the basis for informed policies (e.g. Haggett 1965). However, it is also possible to situate this strand alongside approaches that contributed to what has been labeled 'new regionalism', which later evolved into the contemporary phenomenon of 'city-regionalism' (see Harrison 2007).

The economic underpinnings of 'new regionalism', which prevailed especially during the 1990s, was linked to research that recast the (sub-national) region as the key territorial site producing the necessary environment for the promotion of economic growth. In this regard, especially the work of Michael Porter (e.g. 1990) on the competitive advantage of nations/regions served to propel the emergence of the discourse of territorial competitiveness as especially applicable to the 'scale' of sub-national regions into a hegemonic status (see Bristow 2005). With the help of research identifying local territorial attributes, such as knowledge transfer and inter-firm learning, together with the attention on agglomeration economies and local institutional conditions as the cornerstones for economic success (see Scott 1998; Storper 1997), this body of work served to identify sub-national regions as significant territorial economic sites (Lagendijk 2001). Concurrently, it cast a spatially fetishized image of regions as actors in their own right doing things like competing or learning (for a discussion, see Paasi & Metzger 2017). Put shortly, the work that generated the 'new regionalism' as an economically determined process was premised on identifying certain territorial, often functional attributes which were seen to contribute to economic growth. The key animating principles in the constitution of regions as territorial economic sites were thus the economic imperatives emanating especially from the so-called 'knowledge-based economy' (see Sum & Jessop 2013).

Through this work, the region experienced its 'resurgence' not only as an economic site, but also as a policy object (Lagendijk 2001). In other words, the region was identified not only as a key economic site, but also as the key territorial 'tool' for governance and thus

target of regional development policies. Concurrently, because of the political aspect of its role as a platform for democratic forms of government, the region was also seen as a key medium through which national states could manage regionalist tendencies within their territories (Keating 1998). While the new regionalism had a specific national territorial focus in that it saw the sub-national region as an appropriate scale through which economic development could be pursued for the benefit of the state territory, city-regionalism has more or less abandoned this national territorial emphasis. Instead, by building on similar economic and functional factors as the new regionalism, city-regionalism treats the core cities and their surrounding areas as national economic engines, which also entails pressure on national governments to abandon policies that seek national territorial cohesion (Harrison 2008).

Concurrently, especially scholars working in the Marxist tradition of political economy took a critical stance on the ascent of 'new regionalism' and 'city-regionalism'. One of the key departure points for the critical evaluations of 'new regionalism' was indeed to "caution against over-extending theories of agglomeration and 'proximity' to be a full-blown explanation of local-regional competitive advantage" (MacLeod 2001: 813; see also Lovering 1999). Put simply, and echoing the political economic approaches of the previous decades (e.g. Massey 1979; Smith 1984), this meant that researchers were encouraged to look 'beyond' the region to uncover explanations regarding their 'resurgence' as key political-economic entities. In this respect, the state in particular became a key focus of analysis, and its role in enabling 'post-Fordist' modes of capital accumulation through its strategic and spatial selectivity emphasized (Jones 1997). Still, it could be argued that by this move the 'internal' territorial criteria through which regions were defined were replaced by an overarching principle that animated their constitution. For instance, the work of Neil Brenner (1999, 2000,2004) on the re-scaling of the state locates the tendency of national states to re-scale political authority 'downwards' to sub-national units and 'upwards' to supranational entities in the de- and re-territorialization dynamics of post-Fordist capitalism (see also Harvey 1989). Here the key animating principle in the constitution of regions (both sub- and supranational) is thus the spatiality of capitalism, which the state facilitates through its re-scaling of the spaces of governance (see also the work of Swyngedouw [2004] on 'glocalization').

When compared to the accounts that produce the region as a significant territorial economic site due to its perceived ability to provide the appropriate conditions for improved productivity, 'innovation' and competitiveness, the approaches that draw on political economy reflect on these developments from a critical perspective, while still identifying a core set of 'forces' that produce regions as territorial entities. The region, in this perspective, is thus fundamentally an administrative and regulatory territorial unit, and reflects the moment of re-territorialization in the spatial reconfiguration of 'globalizing' capitalism (Brenner 1999). Based on these examples it is easy to agree with Painter (2008) that totalizing accounts regarding what constitutes regions exercise exclusion by forwarding some criteria, or 'central animating principle' according to which

geographical differentiation is argued to take place, while backgrounding others. In other words, it seems that especially the scholars who have approached regions as territorial entities have postulated regional boundedness based on the criteria deployed in defining what constitutes 'regions' and 'animates' that process.

With this in mind, it is easy to understand the emergence of the relational conceptualization of regions that brought into question the notion of regions/places as bounded entities. The relational standpoint witnessed the conceptualization of regions as open constructs, in which they are seen as "a construction in space-time: a product of a particular combination and articulation of social relationships stretched over space" (Allen *et al.* 1998: 143). This scholarship is exemplified by Doreen Massey's (1994) invocation of the notion of a 'global sense of place'. As Massey elaborates:

> *"Instead then, of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, or a region or even a continent."* (1994: 154)

The relational understanding of regions thus spotlights the material environment and social relations 'within' the region itself, which are constituted through processes and interconnections between the region and the 'outside world'. This does not mean a clear-cut distinction between different scales such as the local and the global per se but illustrates how the global is always folded into the local and simultaneously produced 'locally' (Amin 2002; Latour 2005; Marston *et al.* 2005; Massey 2004). This has led Ash Amin to argue in his discussion of the spatialities of globalization that contemporary globalization "might simply signal the rise of new spatio-temporalities affecting what goes on in places" (2002: 392). The relational conceptualization of regions thus denies the notion of regions as somehow bounded entities in which various regional 'characteristics' can be explained by processes and relations internal to them (which is, in essence, also the key claim made by researchers working in political economy, see Massey 1979). This notwithstanding, it still takes as a starting point that there are empirically observable characteristics that can be attributed to the region, even though these characteristics are constituted 'on a far larger scale' than the region itself. For Allen *et al.* (1998), this meant that as regions exist only in relation to particular criteria, researchers effectively 'construct' the regions they study by the application of such criteria. The application of specific social and economic criteria and the analysis of the geographies of the phenomena defined by these criteria led Allen *et al.* (1998) to argue that the region they studied (the South East of England) was a discontinuous but unbounded region in the sense that through the criteria that they selected in defining the region, some parts of the official region ended up not being a part of it at all while some areas outside it, in fact, were. By this, they did not imply that regional boundaries do not exist but that "they should never be taken unquestionably as adequate definitions [of regions]" (Allen *et al.* 1998: 137).

In addition to conceptual and empirical studies seeking to consolidate regions as territorial or relational spaces, more recent work has drawn attention to how territorial and relational spaces should not be viewed as mutually exclusive but as complementary. These approaches have especially been developed by scholars in response to the relational conceptualization of regions in order to highlight the continuing relevance of territories and boundaries, even while acknowledging the spatiality of mobility and flows (Harrison 2013; Jones 2009; MacLeod & Jones 2007; Paasi 2009; Paasi & Zimmerbauer 2016; Zimmerbauer 2014). For instance, Kevin Morgan highlights that political space is bounded and porous:

> *"bounded because politicians are held to account through the territorially defined ballot box. . . . [and] porous because people have multiple identities and they are becoming ever more mobile, spawning communities of relational connectivity that transcend territorial boundaries."* (2007: 1248)

Here it is worthwhile to stop and consider what is bounded and what is not. Evidently, Morgan's key argument is that boundedness is an actual feature of political spatiality because electoral districts are territorially defined. Concurrently, it seems that relationality becomes manifest in the identities of people, but also in their mobility. This fluidity between boundedness and non-boundedness based on the chosen issues of analytical interest or based on the empirical criteria utilized to investigate the spatiality of regions has led MacLeod and Jones to argue that

> *"the degree to which one interprets cities or regions as territorial and scalar or topological and networked really ought to remain an open question: a matter to be resolved ex post and empirically rather than a priori and theoretically."* (2007: 1186)

By this statement MacLeod and Jones thus highlight the role of the researcher in making conclusions regarding the spatiality of regions via the empirical phenomena being studied.

It thus can be argued that even though the approaches that designate regionality do so from different theoretical standpoints and by utilizing different spatial vocabularies, key in both territorial and relational conceptualizations of regions – and indeed in many accounts that highlight the territorial *and* relational spatiality of regions – is the identification of specific criteria in relation to which regions exist and/or some sets of relations or forces that animate their constitution through the production of geographical differentiation. It is, then, by studying this geographical differentiation and/or the phenomenon defined by the selected criteria that specific conceptual approaches on regions are developed and claims regarding their spatiality made. Although within these perspectives regions "are not treated fundamentally as frameworks for study, but are instead seen as an integral part of that which is being studied" (Murphy 1991: 28), such as the spatiality of capitalism, a more crucial question is whether we can find a way to approach regions in such a way that researchers do not adopt the position of a dictator in defining regions when we wish to focus on them in our analyses.

To be sure, in terms of research, one has always to make some ontological assumptions regarding 'the nature' of the phenomena being studied, but what could 'the nature' of regions be in an approach that tries to escape the 'ivory tower' of the university and understand the plurality of regions that any passer-by would say 'really exist' in the world? In other words, how can we 'demote' ourselves to a position in line with all the other actors that continuously try to define regions – both in general and in terms of particular regions? As Varro and Lagendijk argue in response to the above-quoted assertion by MacLeod and Jones (2007: 1186), "the degree to which one interprets cities or regions as territorial and scalar or topological and networked is definitely *not* a matter to be resolved ex post and empirically rather than a priori and theoretically" (2013: 24; italics in original). It thus comes down to the question of what do we study when we study regions: empirically observable patterns of geographical differentiation that may take bounded or unbounded forms, or the process of signification and categorization through which these patterns are brought under the label of a region?[3] My research builds on the latter option.

In this regard, it needs to be noted that one does not have to deny the existence of (cultural, social, material etc.) differences in the world if one wishes to avoid the researcher's traditional role as the one who identifies and analyzes these differences and labels 'regions', whether in a bounded or unbounded form, according to them. Rather, one could turn the analytical focus the other way around and ask why they should be labelled 'regional' differences in the first place, and if they are, what implications this potentially has (see Paasi & Metzger 2017). In other words, one should be attentive to how the utilization of different criteria in defining regions (by scholars, but also by policy makers and others) may end up having substantial consequences for the social relations or the material environment based upon which regions themselves are defined. Research that identifies, and thus constructs, regions does not necessarily always take specific regional attributes for granted but still too often quickly labels them 'regional' attributes – as characteristics, processes or 'forces' that constitute regions – without considering the potential effects this labelling may induce. As John Agnew (1999: 93) has pointedly suggested in his discussion on the dualism of realism and constructivism, regions reflect differences in the world but also ideas about differences. Here it is still possible to argue that even though these differences are 'real' in the sense that they are observable directly through our senses, or through various scientific methods, there is no way for us to *know* and think about these differences outside of our ideas about them (cf. Laclau & Mouffe 1985). This is not to deny the materiality of (what is often referred to as) nature but to acknowledge that specific physical geographic features become 'regional' attributes only through the process of signification and associated geographical categorization. The process of signification itself is a relational (but also contested and always ongoing)

[3] This also means that when we speak about regions as social constructs, it must be made clear whether we speak about social construction of those features of geographical difference that we uncover and focus upon in our empirical analyses, such as uneven development as an effect of the social relations of capitalism, or the social construction of the meaning attached to a specific region derived through such empirical observations.

process, as signs only achieve meaning in relation to other signs: echoing Saussurean linguistics, the name of a region as a signifier achieves meaning only in relation to other signs that purportedly define it (and thus also in relation to signs that do not) (see de Saussure 1986 [1916]).

Put in simple terms, the Arctic region, for instance, is often defined as cold and frozen, while the Sahara is defined as hot and dry. It is these relations between signs (Arctic=cold, Sahara=dry) that define regions as coherent wholes. Concurrently, it must be underscored that these features would not have emerged to define these regions if it were not for the (often scientific) practices that ascribed these meanings to them, but also, and to highlight the poststructuralist perspective, that these relations between signs that relay meaning are not fixed but depend on the context in which they are interpreted and are prone to transform. This means simply that for example the Arctic means different things to different people, which also implies that the meanings attached to a region can become politically relevant. The notion that we cannot apprehend regions outside of the ideas that we have about them also applies to social characteristics attributed to regions. This bears a resemblance to Painter's argument that

> *"it is in the cartographic imaginary, more than in the materiality of social life, that regions exist as integrated, territorial wholes. It is almost as if we feel the need to grasp the region as a mappable entity – to locate it visually."* (2008: 353)

Moreover, the claim that regions only exist as coherent entities in the cartographic imaginary and within the language through which they are attributed meaning does not mean that studying regions and regional politics should be merely a linguistic exercise and focus on representations. This is because the ways in which regions are known are translated into practices, such as governance and policy-making, that have quite tangible material effects in the world. This is another key insight provided by poststructuralist thought, and especially by the discourse theory of Foucault (1972, 1977): categories produced through language tie together power and knowledge, and this interrelation becomes manifest in practices and in their spatial 'materialization' (see Murdoch 2006: 29–55). In a similar way as a mental asylum can be seen as a spatial materialization of the discourse on madness (Foucault 1967), so can regional institutions and even the material landscape be seen as materializations of the discourse on the region. For instance, if a region is conceived of and known through city-regionalist discourse, this influences the material investments 'within' the region while simultaneously materializing capitalist social relations 'in' space. From a discourse-theoretical perspective, what this understanding of regions thus also elucidates is how a specific kind of regional knowledge enforces and produces power relations. In addition to capitalist social relations, this becomes apparent, for instance, through the connection between idea(l)s of regional territory and the social or political inclusions and exclusions reinforced by these idea(l)s. Put shortly, the key poststructuralist insight in this sense is that discourse constitutes and is constituted through

language and practice (see Müller 2008), and that it provides the structural conditions of possibility for both linguistic/representational and material agency (see Bialasiewcz *et al.* 2007). However, even though establishing the connection between knowledge on regions and the social and material manifestations that this knowledge may have, these notions alone do not provide insights into how is it that such knowledge on regions is created, maintained and (re)produced.

3.1.2 Putting regions into practice: a performative definition of regions

By taking the position that regions exist as coherent entities only within language and in the cartographic imaginary through which we conceive of them, attention can be drawn to how the meaning ascribed to them emerges and may solidify, only to be transformed again. In other words, emphasis should be placed on the actions through which regions 'become'. This resonates with another way in which to conceptualize regions that emphasizes that

> *"the region should not be regarded merely as a passive medium in which social action takes place. Neither should it be understood as an entity that operates autonomously above human beings. Regions are always part of this action and hence they are social constructs that are created in political, economic, cultural and administrative practices and discourses."* (Paasi 2001: 16)

The elaboration of this conceptualization has been one of the key contributions of the work of Paasi (1986, 1991, 1996, 2002, 2010), who has drawn attention to the historically contingent ways in which regions emerge, achieve specific meaning, and (may) become institutionalized. When compared to the accounts of regions discussed above, this approach has the benefit of incorporating regions into social action itself, rather than seeking to conceptualize regions based on some geographical/spatial attributes of social (political, economic) or natural processes identified by scholars, according to which they arrive to some conclusion regarding what regions are. Surely, Allen *et al.* (1998) also reflect this anti-essentialist sensibility; although by opting to define the criteria in relation to which the region they studied exists, they neglect the other actors involved in the construction of regions. Key cornerstones in Paasi's theoretical framework are the abstractions describing different overlapping 'stages' in the institutionalization of regions, and the role that 'structures of expectations' regarding specific regions play in the process. Put shortly, Paasi (1986) argues that we can approach the institutionalization of regions by examining how the region's territorial, symbolic and institutional shapes emerge, through which it becomes established as a taken-for-granted part of collective spatial consciousness and the regional system of society. Within this process specific 'structures of expectations' regarding the region emerge, which become 'coded' into regional ways of life, mediated through generations and reproduced through spatial socialization (Paasi 1986, 1991, 1996).

Paasi's approach builds on, and has contributed to, what came to be called the 'new regional geography'. The new regional geography emerged during the 1980s and drew

attention to political-economic factors, spatio-temporal structuration of interaction and cultural aspects in the constitution of regions (see Gilbert 1988). In terms of social practices, especially the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens (1984) had a significant effect on the ascent of the new regional geography. Drawing on structuration theory, Thrift (1983) argued that region is an actively passive meeting place of agency and social structure that is lived through not in. This reflects his wish to direct attention to how regions as material and social settings, or 'locales' in Giddens' (1984) vocabulary, condition but also enable specific practices and interactions. The role of social structure becomes explicit in Thrift's (1983) account of the composition of different locales and how they condition the life-paths of people, which illustrates how these structures condition how the region is 'lived through'. In a similar vein, Derek Gregory (1982) deployed structuration theory to underscore the interplay between structure and agency in the transformation of the woolen industry in Yorkshire, England, and Allan Pred (1984) highlighted the historical contingency of the structuration process. This appreciation of structuration also became evident in the work of Paasi (1986) in the emphasis he places on social practice on the level of individual life-paths and social institutions in the institutionalization and reproduction of regions and spatial consciousness. The emphasis on spatial consciousness is an especially relevant aspect however, as it connects the structurationist attention to social practices with the intersubjective construction of socio-spatial meaning. In this sense, attention to spatial consciousness highlights that it is not only the researcher who constructs regions by studying socio-spatial structuration within a specific regional frame, but also the people 'within' these regions who themselves give meaning to material and social space.

While the approach of Paasi – by combining humanistic (i.e. identity and sense of place) and critical (i.e. power relations and the role of the state) accounts of regional geography with structurationist approaches – provides an insightful theory on the ways in which regions emerge gradually and attain a specific identity through social practices and processes operating 'within' and beyond the region 'in becoming', there is reasonable doubt as to whether all regions go through a similar process. This is evident when we consider the contemporary situation in which countless more or less 'ad hoc' regional projects in which regions are 'made up' (Cochrane 2012) have emerged, adding up to what Deas and Lord (2006) have termed 'unusual regionalism' and what Zimmerbauer (2017) has more recently dubbed a 'regional mess'. Especially when considering the more recently conceived supranational regions, it is difficult to see the region as "constitutive for the habituated practices sedimented in local or regional forms of social life, through which it will be reproduced" (Paasi 1991: 251). In other words, even though acknowledging the importance of processes operating beyond the region in the institutionalization of regions, Paasi's framework places greater emphasis on the 'bottom up' nature of this process, and on the regional consciousness of the region's inhabitants (see also MacLeod & Jones 2001).

Further, aside from some relatively general observations about the multiplicity of actors that become involved in producing and reproducing the region, Paasi's theory on

the institutionalization of regions does not provide any explicit further theorization on what drives the agency of specific actors and what happens after the region has become institutionalized (cf. Zimmerbauer *et al.* 2017). The main analytical distinction offered by Paasi (2010) regarding different forms of agency in this respect is between regional advocates and activists. Regional advocates are institutional actors, such as journalists or teachers, whose agency is dependent on the division of labor, while regional activists engage in systematic activism, such as in the case of ethno-regionalism (Paasi 2010: 2300). However, this distinction does not offer more precise insights on how and why different advocates and activists start performing a specific region at a specific instance. In other words, it does not provide us with clues as to how a region becomes a part of activism that was perhaps not framed in terms of the region in question previously, or why different institutional advocates more or less suddenly come to make a certain region the focus of attention, whether in the media or within state institutions. By building on this background, and by placing explicit focus on specific actors, I suggest that more can be said regarding how and why is it that various actors contribute to the process of the region. In other words, even though Paasi's approach asserts region to be a category of practice rather than analysis (Brubaker & Cooper 2000; see also Moore 2008 on scale), there seems to be more that can be said about the agency through which regions are performed.

A key insight that can be drawn from the above discussion is that if we see regions always as a part of action rather than as passive mediums in which this action takes place, this means that the existence of regions itself depends on this action. In this sense, regions can be approached from a performative definition, which can be contrasted with an ostensive definition. As Latour elaborates,

> *"the object of an ostensive definition remains there, whatever happens to the index of the onlooker. But the object of a performative definition vanishes when it is no longer performed – or if it stays, then it means that other actors have taken over the relay."* (2005: 37–38)

In other words, if we were to adopt an ostensive definition of regions, we would presume that regions exist 'out there' in the world, even if only in relation to particular criteria, and researchers can identify them (or, quite literally, point them out) by applying proper methodology (cf. Latour 1986). According to a performative definition, in turn, "regions are constantly performed as an ongoing process . . . [which means that] the social construction of regions does not stop just because a region appears as a stable entity – there are processes maintaining that apparent stability in the moment of observation" (Donaldson 2006: 2076). While this obviously points to the already discussed assertion that regions cannot be found in an essential form 'out there' – any attempt to ostensibly identify them is a part of their constitution – the notion of regions as continuously performed processes elucidates that the continuous repetition and reiteration of statements that presuppose that the region is 'real' is itself the condition for the region's existence. Here reference to the mere existence of 'regional consciousness' does not suffice because this

consciousness is itself dependent on speech, texts or visual representations that produce regional consciousness and the region to which it refers. Similar attention has been drawn to territory, which, according to Painter (paraphrasing Timothy Mitchell's [1991] notion of the state), "should be examined not as an actual state space, but as the powerful, metaphysical effect of practices that make such spaces appear to exist" (2010: 1116).[4] Painter demonstrates this by indicating how various policy-making processes rely on constituting a territory as their effect, which can be approached through the policy itself:

> *"The possibility of conceiving of 'the regional economy' as a focus of policy requires the constitution of a spatio-political object with a number of specific features, including . . . delimitation, contiguity and coherence."* (2010: 1104)

This, of course, also entails that cartography, and mapping in particular, as a socio-technical practice contributes fundamentally to producing and performing the spaces that it 'uncovers' (Pickles 2004; see also Luukkonen & Moisio 2016). Even though Painter's (2010) focus is on illustrating the networked nature of the socio-technical practices that produce the territory as their effect (or that maintain its existence, according to the performative definition), the territory needs to become incorporated into various forms of agency through which it is further performed. When approached through the performative definition, and by that means treating the region as a continuously constituted effect of practices that make it appear to exist, the job of the scholar should thus not be to define the criteria in relation to which a region exists according to the issues of analytical interest and then construct the region (whether in a territorial or relational form) through the research (cf. Allen *et al.* 1998). Instead, it should be to analytically excavate how specific criteria have become established as the key defining criteria of a specific region and how the region defined through these criteria is continuously performed (and transformed) as an ongoing process. At the risk of repeating myself, the suggestion here is that we should

[4] The notion of territory as an effect of practices that make it appear to exist resembles Judith Butler's work on performativity. In Butler's work on gender and heteronormativity, which has had an influence also within geography (e.g. Gregson & Rose 2000; Kaiser & Nikiforova 2008), performativity is defined as the "reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (1993: 2). In other words, she contends that "if gender is performative, then it follows that the reality of gender is itself produced as an effect of the performance" (Butler 2004: 218), and that performativity can be seen as the "reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains" (Butler 1993: 2). This approach to performativity has its strengths in making visible how discourses become solidified in and through 'reiterative' and 'citational' practices, which could also be applied to investigate discourses on regions. However, the performative definition of regions inspired by Latour (2005) is a better fit for interrogating how and why different actors become involved in performing the region into existence. Thus a key distinction needs to be made between a *performative definition of regions* and *performativity of regions*. At the risk of repeating myself, a performative definition of regions means that a region "is not the referent of an ostensive definition discovered by social scientists despite the ignorance of their informants . . . [but is] performed through everyone's efforts to define it" (Latour 1986: 273). In turn, from a Butlerian perspective, performativity of regions would imply that the region would constitute a normative structure, and the attention of the analysis would shift to how these norms regulate the 'reiterative' and 'citational' practices that produce the region as their effect. In a way, my approach takes both these perspectives into consideration, as Butler's notion of performativity is re-introduced in the context of socio-spatial positionality in section 3.3.2.

turn our focus to specific regions and the agency through which they are performed. Deborah Martin provides a similar perspective on neighborhoods:

> *"Rather than trying to define the sociospatial areas that are 'neighbourhoods' by the activities or social interactions that occur in them, however, I suggest that scholars should focus on the practice of neighbourhood: the social and political actions of people that define and constitute neighbourhood."* (2003: 380)

In terms of regions this entails that instead of delving into a dichotomous debate on whether regions are ontologically territorial or relational spaces, attention should be placed on how territorial *and* relational *conceptions* of specific regions become incorporated in different forms of action itself (see also Paasi and Zimmerbauer 2016; Prytherch 2010). In other words, we should place emphasis on the potentially quite diverse array of actors who define and perform a region through their agency. To be sure, previous research has engaged with these issues by focusing on, for instance, "interpreting regionality in the terms regionalists themselves use" (Prytherch 2010: 1538) and by seeking to analyze how territorial and networked conceptions of regions become incorporated into different regional development policies and strategies (Harrison 2013; Harrison & Growe 2014). Still, these approaches rarely reflect on the ways in which specific actors define and perform a region, or on how others define and perform it, thus partially neglecting the inherently contested and continuous nature of the region as a process (more on this below).

Concurrently, while emphasis should be given to how different actors attach meaning to regions on the level of language and representations, consideration should also be given to how the region as defined by specific actors itself becomes meaningful, for instance in politics or governance, and what difference this makes in practice and for whom (cf. Paasi 2002). In other words, and as already pointed above, even though regions exist as coherent entities only within language and in the cartographic imaginaries through which they are performed, we should also be attentive of the 'real world' implications that regions have, for instance, in terms of how ideas and knowledge of them translate into power relations, inclusions/exclusions, practices such as planning, and in some cases even into 'hard' boundaries 'on the ground' that can have significant impacts on people's daily lives. This, I believe, is what Paasi *et al.* (2018: 17) wish to emphasize when they highlight (in the context of documenting the multiplicity of 'new' regional projects) that "much endeavor goes into revealing these new and emerging geographies of regions and territories, but in and of itself what does this tell us about how meaningful these geographies actually are?" Thus rather than focusing solely on the array of novel regional imaginaries that have yet to gain enough traction to become meaningful and consequential in any significant sense, attention should be placed on those that already have an impact in terms of activities such as politics or governance. In essence, it should be of crucial interest to us how the ideas of regions affect the ways in which we act in the world, and how this, in turn, affects others and our material environment. After all, it is arguably due

to these tangible consequences that regions bear with them that many of us, in the end, even bother to speak and write about them, that is, to perform them and by that means keep them in existence. Before I turn to discussing these issues further in section 3.3, the next sub-section focuses more explicitly on the issue of regional politics and situates my approach in relation to the discussion on territorial and relational approaches on the interconnections between politics and regions.

3.2 On regional politics

3.2.1 Politics within a region and politics of territorial/relational regions

This section seeks to discuss the notion of 'regional' politics and how it can be understood, especially in terms of the preceding discussion in which the key argument is that we should approach regions from a performative definition. This provides us with a contrast in relation to approaches that take the region for granted as a mere backdrop of political action, but also in relation to ones that designate regionality based on some underlying criteria, and by that means overlook the ways in which 'the region' is incorporated in the political agency itself. First, we can briefly consider research that takes the region for granted as a backdrop of politics. In general terms this includes research that analyzes politics taking place within a region without reflecting upon how the research itself serves to perform the region as a space defined by the 'type' of politics analyzed. As an example, in the context of supranational regions, one can consider discussions on geopolitics that emphasize, say, "the Indian Ocean at the forefront of world geopolitics and global geostrategy" (Bouchard & Crumplin 2010: 26). Such an approach thus takes for granted the Indian Ocean as a geographical framework in which to study world geopolitics and global geostrategy, while it can be argued that the research itself serves to perform the Indian Ocean as a region defined by geopolitics and geostrategy.

When considered from the perspective of approaches that designate regionality based on some core animating principles and criteria, we obtain another view of regional politics. We can think about approaches that take the state and capitalism as the key arbiters in animating the constitution of regions in this regard. As an example, we can use the work of Erik Swyngedouw (2004), who has drawn attention to regulatory reforms as a form of state re-scaling, and the work of Andrew Jonas (2011, 2013), who has focused on the territorial politics of city-regionalism. First, Swyngedouw, through a scalar perspective, is keen to illustrate that

> *"the disturbing effects of these recent 'glocalisation' processes suggest that the spaces of the circulation of capital have been upscaled, while regulating the production/consumption nexus has been downscaled, shifting the balance of power in important polarising or often plainly exclusive ways."* (2004: 42)

For Swyngedouw, these 'glocalization' dynamics bring with them a call for "a politics that is sensitive to issues of scale [that] can bring a substantial leverage to contest socially regressive regulatory reforms" (2004: 43). According to this approach, regional politics denotes politics that work through scaled forms of socio-spatial organization orchestrated by the state in support of capital accumulation, and 'local' or 'regional' actors can contest socially regressive regulatory reforms through a 'jumping of scales' (Smith 1992).

In turn, in his discussion of city-regionalism as 'contingent geopolitics of capitalism', Andrew Jonas (2013: 288) highlights that "there can be little doubt that the city-region has become an instrument of state policy making across many countries". He further stresses that we should be sensitive not only to the ways in which city-regionalism is implicated in the state space constituted according to a 'geoeconomic' logic (i.e. through the imperative of enhancing international competitiveness), but also to how it functions in the politics over state territorial provisions for infrastructure and other investment within the state itself. Accordingly, as the state's role in generating regions and geographical differentiation through its investment in infrastructure is highlighted, Jonas (2013) takes regional politics as politics over attracting such investment. On a more general note, Jonas thus contrasts the economic logic of state re-scaling with questions pertaining to "how territorial politics (e.g. regionalist tendencies, central–local relations, class-based territorial politics) can in turn shape wider processes of regulation and state rescaling" (2011: 269). Through this reading, the region becomes a territorial space over which actors attempt to gain control and influence, and it is the politics striving towards this control and influence that bears an effect on the process of state spatial transformation.

In a somewhat similar vein to the territorial politics discussed by Jonas and the politics of scale brought forward by Swyngedouw – although through different spatial vocabulary – the proponents of the relational reading of space and regions have devised their own interpretations of regional politics. One of the key points of the relational conceptualization of regions is to draw attention to the inadequacy of 'local' territorial forms of government in managing the region as a social and political space (Amin 2004). This was complemented by assertions that saw politics of territorial identity as regressive (Amin *et al.* 2003) – a point that has come under critical scrutiny itself (see Castree 2004; MacLeod & Jones 2007; Morgan 2007; Zimmerbauer & Paasi 2013). Notwithstanding these controversies, we can explore what kind of 'regional' politics the relational conceptualization of regions presents. In this regard, especially the work of Doreen Massey has been overtly political itself. Through her discussion of 'power geometries', she has been keen to demonstrate that if places are constituted through relations that are themselves imbued with power – because different social groups are positioned differently in these relations – 'local' political agency needs to confront these relations (see Massey 1999). Concurrently, she has turned the argument the other way around by highlighting that as these relations are not only intensive but also extensive (i.e. places are not only 'victims' of globalization but also its arbitrators), we should take

responsibility for the others that we affect through these relations. She elaborates this through the example of London:

> *"The political argument should be about how those small and highly differentiated bits of all of us which position us as 'Londoners' give rise to responsibility towards the wider relations on which we depend."* (Massey 2004: 17)

Similar emphasis can be found in Ash Amin's work, which highlights that we should not assume "that there is a defined geographical territory out there over which local actors can have effective control and can manage as a social and political space". This leads him to contend that "local advocacy . . . must be increasingly about exercising nodal power and aligning networks at large in one's own interest, rather than about exercising territorial power" (2004: 36). Yet, for Amin (2004) 'the region' is practically absent from the conceptualization of regional politics, or what he terms 'the relational politics of place'.[5] Through this lens, attention is placed on the everyday negotiation between diverse actors sharing a given regional space (politics of propinquity)[6] and politics of place that "has to work with the varied geographies of relational connectivity and transitivity that make up public life and the local political realm in general in a city or region" (2004: 40) (politics of connectivity). To be clear, I am not suggesting that the arguments of Amin or Massey (or Swyngedouw or Jonas) would be misguided, since it is beyond question that in order to achieve 'local' or 'regional' outcomes actors often resort to practices that can be interpreted as territorial politics, politics of scale, politics of propinquity and/or politics of connectivity. My concern is that in such a configuration 'the region' itself does not seem to have any role to play in politics and becomes irrelevant in terms of analyzing regional politics. In other words, these accounts do not emphasize how specific conceptions of a region play into – and are consecutively produced in – political negotiations and debates either 'within' the region or in terms of political relationships extending beyond its purported boundaries. In this respect, the performative definition of regions provides a crucial opening for conceptualizing regional politics further.

3.2.2 Regional politics as politics that performs the region

To anchor the region into the analysis of regional politics, we can return to the above discussion on approaching regions through a performative definition and treat regional politics as politics through which the region is performed. Performed, here, means politics

[5] Even though the terms region and place are used interchangeably because this is the case within the literature discussed here, Paasi (1991) for example has highlighted how region and place can be separated conceptually. Place, for Paasi, "refers to personal experience and meanings contained in personal life-histories" (1991: 239), while region "is a socio-spatial unit with a longer historical duration, a representation of 'higher-scale history' into which inhabitants are socialised as part of the reproduction of the society" (1991: 249).

[6] In the end, this is another example of politics 'within' a region.

that is predicated on regional knowledge – a specific, often at the time of observation taken-for-granted conception regarding what a particular region is – and politics that contribute to the effectuation of the region, meaning its continuous reproduction and/or regeneration. Here it is possible to make use of the work of Martin Jones and Gordon MacLeod (2004) on the 'spaces of regionalism' mobilized by actors in their political practices, which often serve to contest the economically driven constitution of 'regional spaces' forwarded by central government actors. Responding to the so-called relationalists' call for attention to 'politics of connectivity', (see e.g. Amin 2004), Jones and MacLeod (2004: 448) provide an example of how 'the region' can be incorporated into the analysis through emphasizing that

> *"much of the political challenge to devolution prevailing across England and elsewhere is being practised and performed through an avowedly territorial narrative and scalar ontology: albeit these practices and performances are also often enacted through topologically heterogeneous trans-regional and cross-border networks."*

This argument, in turn, is based on their contention that

> *"when performing their practical politics, agents often imagine and identify a discrete, bounded space characterized by a shared understanding of the opportunities or problems which are motivating the very nature of political action."* (2004: 437)

It thus can be stated that when agents imagine and identify regions, which motivate political action, the political action itself performs the region (and 'regional identity'; see Donaldson 2006). As this action is engaged in through a territorial 'regional' narrative, the action itself is not only motivated by 'the region', but concurrently reproduces it: 'the region' concomitantly constitutes political agency (by providing motivation for action) and is constituted through it (in the form of the territorial narrative mobilized in the course of politics) (see also Martin 2003). In this regard, it needs to be noted that although the agents imagine and identify a discreet, bounded space, this does not necessitate that the space upon which this imagination draws would *actually* be bounded, even though boundedness in terms of (social) inclusion/exclusion could be one of the effects of these politics (cf. Varro & Lagendijk 2013). Jones and MacLeod thus offer a good example of politics that perform regions by way of asserting the interconnection between regional knowledge, the agency it induces and the role that this agency has in terms of reproducing the region and the knowledge thereof. In more general terms, it provides an example of the uses that regions are put to by political movements (Agnew 2001; Terlouw & Westsrate 2013).

This being said, there are a number of shortcomings in Jones and MacLeod's approach, which, when addressed, enable their insights to be pushed further. First, they do not explicitly problematize how the region that agents imagine and identify has become constituted as such an entity in the first place such that there can be a shared understanding of the opportunities or problems that motivate political action. Evidently, in the context

of regionalist movements, the knowledge of the region that motivates political action has often been constituted through 'bottom up' processes and especially through narratives of 'regional identity', that is, what distinguishes 'us' from 'others' and 'our' region from 'other' regions (cf. Paasi 1986). In this sense their focus on regionalist movements overlooks the role that other forms of regional knowledge, such as those produced through the natural or social sciences, may play in motivating political action. Second, as their argument focuses on reasserting the relevance of territory in contemporary politics, the approach is limited to 'sub-national' regionalist movements, while on many occasions there may be multiple actors involved in regional politics operating on different, at times conflicting understandings regarding 'the region' in question (cf. Baars & Schlottmann 2017). This means that the approach of Jones and MacLeod focuses primarily on how the region is reproduced in the same form through political action, thus backgrounding the potential for the transformation of regional conceptions and the existence of multiple conceptions. Such multiplicity in the ways in which a region or a place is understood by political actors has been discussed elsewhere through the concept of 'place frames' (see Martin 2003, 2013; Pierce *et al.* 2011).

Third, it needs to be underlined that even though in the case of sub-national regionalist movements the spaces of regionalism often take a territorial form, it is unwarranted to make the a priori assumption that 'the region' that motivates the political action through which it is performed should be 'bounded', let alone sub-national. Echoing the calls of the key advocates of relational regional geography, there surely are, or at least could (and perhaps should) be, social and political movements that base their agency on an 'open' conception of regions and embrace their inner heterogeneity together with their 'interconnections' with the wider world.[7] This perspective is echoed by Hudson when states that

> *"depending upon the circumstances and the specific situation of particular regions, policy and politics may be informed by a bounded territorial and hierarchical conception or by a relational conception that emphasizes a flat ontology of networked connections as the more appropriate perspective from which to view the region."* (2007: 1156; see also Harrison 2013)

In this sense, the potentially differing conceptions that different actors have of regions can themselves become the key issues driving political contestation.

When one considers politics, it is necessary to simultaneously think about the issue of power. Power, as understood here, is not something that an actor (whether an individual or an organization) is simply endowed with; rather, it is more fruitful to see it as an effect: as something that manifests itself through the actions of others (see Latour 1986; Allen 2003, 2004). As put by Latour: "When an actor simply *has* power, nothing happens and s/he is powerless; when, on the other hand, an actor *exerts* power it is others who perform

[7] This is, of course, evident in contemporary juxtaposition between ethno-nationalist groups campaigning for closed borders and racial/ethnic exclusion, and 'anti-fascist' and liberal groups promoting more inclusionary politics.

the action" (1986: 264; italics in original). Power is thus something that becomes manifest through the actions of others, and politics can be understood as the medium through which the actions of others are (attempted to be) shaped. This does not have to entail coercive practices such as, in the ultimate case, the use or the threat of violence but can often rely on attempts to engage and enroll others to pursue certain 'common' goals. Power should thus be seen not only as a negative, constraining force, but also as positive, productive force.[8] To approach the issue of space, and more precisely regions, through this perspective on power, one does not have to resort to the idea of territorial power radiating from a predefined political center, which would be simultaneously organized amongst hierarchical scalar levels. Rather, as John Allen and Allan Cochrane highlight,

> *"the practices of power may be less about the visible machinery of decision-making and rather more to do with the displacement of authority, the renegotiation of inducements, the manipulation of geographical scales and the mobilizations of interests to construct politically meaningful spatial imaginaries."* (2007: 1171)

This understanding of power is brought forward by Allen and Cochrane in their discussion of what they term the regional assemblage of political power "that is defined by its practices, not by some predefined scalar arrangement of power" (2007: 1171). Concurrently, they underscore that as regions are constituted through an assemblage of actors 'lodged within' the region, in order to influence the practices through which 'regional' power can be realized these actors must engage in "a 'politics of scale' to fix resources and stabilize geographical definitions to their advantage" (2007: 1171). The region, and its geographical definition, thus emerges as the key medium through which politics are played out in this configuration, and power as an effect of these politics *potentially* achieved. When contrasted with the above-discussed work of Jones and MacLeod, Allen and Cochrane expand the number of actors involved in regional politics to incorporate not only regionalist movements but also any other individual or institutional actors that become involved in performing the region. In turn, what Jones and MacLeod's (2004) work offers to the approach of Allen and Cochrane (2007) is a sensitivity regarding how the region is not only representationally mobilized by actors in the course of politics in the form of 'politically meaningful spatial imaginaries', but how it itself motivates the political action and thus becomes the key issue of political interest in the first place.

[8] This being said, it should be noted that the agency of those engaging in politics to shape the actions of others is itself dependent upon power relations. In other words, politics along these lines is not an activity amongst autonomous subjects but amongst actors, the agency of whom is constituted by their respective subject positions, which are themselves the outcomes of power relations. This presents an analytical choice regarding whether one should excavate the power relations that have constituted the actor engaging in politics or instead focus on the 'realpolitik' and thus the potential effects that this 'structured' agency has in relation to other actors, or whether one should attempt to find a synthesis that tries to take them both into consideration. If both are to be taken into consideration, attention can be directed to realpolitik without obfuscating the productive forms of power acting as its initiator. These issues are discussed in more detail in section 3.3.

By drawing on the examples forwarded by Jones and MacLeod (2004) and Allen and Cochrane (2007), regional politics can therefore be conceptualized as politics that are predicated on some form of regional knowledge that induces action but may further be approached as politics that seeks to transform how the region is known and performed by others. This can be contrasted with those approaches that see regional politics as politics taking place within a region, and with approaches that conceptualize regional politics alongside territorial or relational conceptualizations of regions (see Table 2). Key here is that regional politics comes down to the political agency through which the region is performed, and which often takes place through the mobilization of representations and claims regarding the region's geographical definition. While the geographical definitions of regions upon which actors operate may vary, it is nevertheless crucial to highlight that as the number of actors involved in regional politics increases, the region at the center of these politics comes to appear more and more 'real' and its existence becomes increasingly taken for granted.

Concurrently, it needs to be highlighted that regional politics conceptualized in these terms need not itself be territorially bound. This means that the actors involved in regional politics are not necessarily 'located' within the region in question but can include any individuals or organizations engaging in political activity predicated on the above conceptualization. While some research has touched on the ways in which 'old and new regionalism collide' (Zimmerbauer & Paasi 2013), and on how 'spaces of regionalism' are

Table 2. Different approaches on regional politics.

Regional politics as politics taking place within a region	**Politics of territorial/ relational regions**	**Regional politics as politics through which the region is performed**
1) Takes regions as backdrops for studies in politics 2) Especially evident in a supranational context in studies on geopolitics within a specific region	1) Treats politics as action that confronts the 'forces', processes or relations through which geographical differentiation and thus 'regions' are constituted 2) Evident in studies focusing on territorial politics and politics of scale, but also in research based on relational conceptualization of regions and the concomitant 'politics of connectivity' 3) Approaches the spatiality of politics through the theoretical commitments on the spatiality of regions	1) Treats politics as action that is based on specific conception of a region (regional knowledge) through which the region is further performed 2) Directs attention to how the region is incorporated into political agency itself 3) Can thus be incorporated in both territorial/scalar and relational readings of 'regional' politics

mobilized to contest the 'regional spaces' of new regionalism (Jones & MacLeod 2004), there seems to be much more that can be said regarding such 'collision' as well as the complementarity between different ways of conceiving not only regions in general, but particular regions especially. This opens up the door to analytically excavating what kind of politics this amounts to. This general tenor is echoed by Paasi when he states that

> *"once created, [regions] are also social facts, since they can generate (and are generated by) action as long as people believe in them, and as long as they have a role to play in publicity spaces or in governance. This action may be simultaneously reproductive, resistant, or transformative."* (2002: 805)

The relevant question then becomes: Why do different actors, and not just regional activists, become involved in regional politics, that is, in some form of political agency through which the region is performed – whether in a reproductive, resistant or transformative manner (cf. Paasi 2002)? To answer this question, we can draw more explicitly on literature that has conceptualized regions as processes, which enables the positioning of 'regional' politics in specific spatio-temporal junctures as part of the process of the region itself and its transformation. Hence, we cannot understand regional politics without understanding how the region has emerged as a politically meaningful entity for the actors under investigation in the first place. It is these actors that, in turn, function as the engines of the process of regionalization itself, and perform and effectuate the more or less coherent 'region'.

3.3 Regional politics and the region as a process

3.3.1 An Actor-network theory (ANT)-inspired take on regionalization

The above discussion on the conceptualization of regional politics as politics through which the region is performed, and on power as the potential effect of politics, begs the question as to why is it that a region emerges at a specific point in time and space as a context in relation to which political agency is engaged in in the first place. This is an especially relevant question when we attempt to broaden the analytical landscape beyond the instances of grassroot regionalism described, for example, by Jones and MacLeod (2004). Further, in order to avoid taking the region vaguely as a 'context' of political agency, it is important to excavate how the region is *incorporated in* the agency itself, and thus performed through it. To approach this problematic, we can draw on the wide body of geographical literature that has embraced the conceptualization of regions as processes and explored how regions 'become' through social action rather than act as passive mediums in which this action takes place. In this regard, excellent analytical tools are to be found in the work of Jonathan Metzger (2013; Metzger & Schmitt 2012) and his pursuit of an actor-network-theory-inspired conceptualization of regionalization and regional 'becoming'.

To summarize, by drawing on key literature on ANT and 'post-ANT' approaches together with work on issue formation (Marres 2005), Metzger (2013) contends that the process of regionalization relies on the agency of various actors that serve to 'singularize' a specific 'proposition for regionalization' as a commonly agreed upon understanding of what a specific region is, namely what its boundaries and supposed essence are. This entails that in order to become institutionalized, a proposition for regionalization has to 'stick' and 'travel', that is, catch on and become reproduced by a variety of actors who identify themselves as regional stakeholders with respect to specific territorially framed issue areas or concerns. The process of 'sticking' by 'travelling' means that the proposition for regionalization is "picked up and carried around and placed in new contexts through the adaptations and translations of and by new actors" (Metzger 2013: 1374), by which the proposition achieves "staying power through becoming objectivized and 'real' in the banal, common sense use of the term" (pp. 1374). The actors, who become subjectified as regional stakeholders, can be agents such as individuals or organizations, which, themselves, are not necessarily located in the region but become topologically attached to the regionalization process. It is these actors that then constitute a 'regional stakeholder community' and serve to 'singularize' the proposition for regionalization through negotiation (or in ANT vocabulary 'translation') and transform it into more durable socio-material forms such as "organizations, transport links, legal statutes, etc." (Metzger 2013: 1375). An important point is that within this process the formal regional institutions and organizations often emerge as the key 'regional spokespersons' capable of legitimately defining the supposed essence and interests of the region (see also Metzger & Schmitt 2012).

In general, Metzger's (2013) conceptualization takes its lead from ANT and post-ANT literature's sensitivity to network articulation, that is, the process in which heterogeneous elements (both human and non-human) are translated into networks of association. In ANT literature the process of network articulation has been examined in contexts as diverse as, for instance, the construction of scientific facts (Latour 1987, 1988; Latour & Woolgar 1979), the rearing of young scallops in France (Callon 1986), and in the ability of Portugal to maintain its imperial control (Law 1986). These studies highlighted how different 'actors', such as scientists, laboratories, bacilli and sheep (in Latour's [1988] case), scallops, fishermen and scientists (in Callon's [1986] case) and ships, winds and sailors (in Law's [1986] case) came to form provisionally stable networks of associations. While the focus of these 'early' ANT studies was precisely on how networks of association are articulated, and how they may hold together by weaving together the heterogeneous elements within them, thus producing the 'actors' without which the 'network' itself would collapse, the post-ANT literature has brought issues of fluidity and multiplicity into the discussion (see Law & Hassard 1999). In other words, post-ANT approaches have been concerned not with how objects such as technologies (or regions) hold their shape through network articulation, but with how they may become fluid (de Laet 2000; de Laet & Mol 2000), and, indeed, multiple (Mol 1999) in the process (see also Law 2009).

This is exemplified by Marianne de Laet in her work on patents, regarding which she argues that "it appears that they perform different tasks, to different ends, for different constituencies" (2000: 155), which suggests that a patent is not a singular 'immutable' object but can become multiple depending on the context in which it is used. The same, I wish to argue, also applies to regions. Even though it must be granted that Metzger (2013) sees this potential multiplicity and fluidity of the region as existing mostly in the early stages of the process towards regionalization, his key concern is nevertheless in understanding the dynamics through which regions may become institutionalized as taken-for-granted 'singular' entities (cf. Paasi 1986). More to the point, the vocabulary of the conceptual model offers ways to analytically excavate how a region may also transform and de-singularize through politics that perform it.

The notion of stakeholder subjectification is especially relevant because it allows an enquiry into the potential motivations that induce political responses to regionalization and regional transformation. Metzger defines 'stakeholderness' as "the subject position through which an actor concerns itself to 'have a stake' in and therefore become committed to the fate of a specific entity" and it is "never an actor-property that is ontologically given" (2013: 1379). In this respect, the key notion seems to be that the process of stakeholder subjectification does not occur in relation to the region itself (because one can argue that there is no region *in itself*) but in relation to the issues that become framed as "specifically regional issues or as demanding solution through regionalization" (Metzger 2013: 1378). He further stresses that the actors in question may become "attached or caught up in a regionalization process generated by the issue – either by way of their own deliberate actions or commitments, or as the consequence of the purposeful or unwitting activity of others" (pp. 1378). I take this to mean that an actor may perceive itself to have a stake regarding a region by having a stake in the issue(s) that emerge to define the region. Alternatively, the stakes of the actors can become articulated as other actors start performing the region as defined by specific issues, which conflicts with (or in some cases supports) the perceived interests of the actors in question. Such a case would be illustrative of how the relations between actors become re-contextualized in relation to the region as the region becomes politically significant, for instance as it emerges as a point of policy-making for the actors concerned. By these notions, I wish to foreground the socio-spatial positionality of actors and how it affects the process of stakeholder subjectification and the practice of 'regional' politics predicated on this process itself. This is instead of emphasizing how a common subject position that defines the 'regional stakeholder community' emerges, which is the key focus in Metzger's (2013) conceptualization.

To put the above differently, I wish to shift the analytical attention away from the regionalization process 'as a whole' (from the articulation of a proposition for regionalization to the singularization of the region), and onto the particularities that underwrite it. By this move, my concern is not on questions such as "how does [the region] hold together, how does it endure, how does it come to appear as singular" (Munk &

Abrahamsson 2012, quoted in Metzger 2013: 1369), but on why is it performed, how is it performed, and how can it transform and come to appear more non-singular without losing its status as an objectivized and purportedly 'real' entity. It is in this respect that the notion of stakeholder subjectification proves itself useful, because it allows a way to investigate why specific regions become politically meaningful for specific actors in specific spatio-temporal instances. To paraphrase Jones and MacLeod (2004), it enables us to seek answers to the following questions: When performing their practical politics, what kind of a region do agents imagine and identify; how does this motivate the very nature of political action; and, importantly, how has it been constituted as such an entity that it motivates the political action of the actors under scrutiny? By focusing on the interconnection between regionalization and stakeholder subjectification, we thus get a much more varied picture of regional politics when compared with approaches that focus solely on regionalist movements. Concurrently, we can begin to focus on why it becomes relevant for a whole range of actors to perform the region, whether in reproductive, resistant or transformative ways (Paasi 2002), and how this further contributes to the process of regionalization and regional transformation itself.

3.3.2 Socio-spatial positionality, stakeholder subjectification and regional politics

To approach the question pertaining to how a region that has been constituted as a specific kind of an entity motivates political action at a specific point in time, we need to turn to the 'actors' themselves to understand how their 'stakes' regarding the region become formulated. In this respect, the notion of the socio-spatial positionality of the actors in question becomes relevant. According to Leitner *et al.*,

> *"Positionality means, first, that differently positioned subjects have distinct identities, experiences and perspectives, shaping their understanding of and engagement with the world – subjectivities, imaginaries, interests and knowledge (cf. Haraway 1988). It frames their ontological and epistemological stance, the starting point for action . . . Yet a subject's positionality cannot simply be read off from her social situatedness because the social and the spatial are mutually constitutive."* (2008: 163)[9]

Positionality can thus be interrogated through the notion of identity. As poststructuralist work on identity has shown, identities are not innate features of human beings. Rather, they are constituted through performative practices, and these practices are thus crucial manifestations of social norms that are constitutive of identity categories (Butler 1993).

[9] I use the terms socio-spatial positionality and subject position more or less interchangeably here. Still, it can be argued that positionality of an individual is conditioned by different subject positions. The term subject position thus denotes the more overarching power of the discourses that position us as specific kinds of subjects (such as a researcher, a social or environmental activist or a representative of a specific state or corporation), thus conditioning the ways in which we interpret the world and conduct ourselves.

Identities are in this sense not only ideas of who we, as individuals, are but also ideas that extend to different social groups and, importantly, to socio-spatial institutions such as states. State identity as a form of discourse regarding what the state in question (and its core values and role and 'place' within the world) fundamentally is thus forms a subject position for policy makers and constitutes their socio-spatial positionality, which they perform through policies. The same applies in terms of issue- or place-based social movements where the identity proclaimed by the activists, which they perform through activism, constitutes the commonly understood reason for the activism.

As we remember that by treating regional politics as politics through which the region is performed, the actors engaged in regional politics need not be located 'in' the region. This means that the socio-spatial positionalities of these actors can vary to a great extent, which, in turn, means that the interests that can be attached to a region, and thus the 'stakes' that these actors identify in relation to it, are potentially quite numerous.[10] Further, the socio-spatial positionality of the actors can be argued to influence whether specific actors concern themselves to have 'a stake' regarding a region at all. The key notion in this regard is that the socio-spatial positionality of actors affects the process of stakeholder subjectification, as well as the forms of action predicated on it. This resonates with the idea of 'geographies of reading' which, according to Livingstone (2005: 392), draws attention to the "fundamental importance of the spaces where reading literally takes place, for knowledge is produced in moments of textual encounter". In other words, the idea of geographies of reading encourages us "to focus on how texts are differently received and mobilized in different arenas" (Livingstone 2005: 393). This, in turn, echoes the notion of 'interpretative communities', which places emphasis on the "inescapably collective character of interpretation and the way in which any individual reading is located in the reader's membership of a community sharing some foundational assumptions and interpretive strategies" (Livingstone 2005: 395; see also Fish 1980). This means that as differently positioned subjects encounter speech, images or texts in the form of policies, strategies, research articles, documentaries etc. that perform a region, their positionality, especially within a specific 'interpretative community' affects their interpretation of these speeches, texts and images, and thus the meaning they ascribe to them. In this sense, socio-spatial positionality can be argued to have a significant impact on the process of stakeholder subjectification, but also on the agency predicated on it. This positionality is often mediated by specific institutional frameworks in which various actors are embedded, and it is this institutional position (for example in state institutions) that can be seen to condition their agency (as discussed in more detail in section 6).[11]

[10] Of course, regionalists, that is, individuals whose positionality is constituted by the regionalist movement of which they are a part, can be such actors, and their interests and stakes regarding 'their' region can be of a fundamental nature, such as the preservation of a regional way of life.

[11] In terms of ANT-terminology, this could be seen as an instance of how a mediator forms. According to Latour (2005: 39), mediators "transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry". Mediators, in turn, are contrasted with intermediaries, which "transport meaning or force without transformation" (2005: 39).

As an example, envision a situation in which a geological survey discovers valuable minerals 'within' a region (i.e. the region is already established and taken-for-granted), thus attaching new meaning to the region. This, presumably, compels actors within mining companies and environmental NGOs to subjectify themselves as stakeholders regarding the region as they encounter this novel 'information' about the region. Without taking the spatial side of socio-spatial positionality into consideration, it is apparent that the positionality of individuals constituted by their engagement with these organizations (i.e. mining companies and environmental NGOs) affects to a great extent, first, whether or not they concern themselves to have stakes regarding the region at all, and second, what their perceived stakes and interests regarding the region are. In this example these stakes are arguably the potential to gain profits through establishing a mine (for the representatives of the mining companies) or the prevention of the potential environmental degradation that the excavation of the minerals would have (for the representatives of the NGOs).

To continue with this example, one could then consider how a regional or national government that regulates the land use within 'the region' emerges as a key institution, with which the mining companies and the environmental NGOs need to engage in order to have their interests, and stakes, regarding the region realized. To achieve this, the representatives of the companies and the NGOs then produce various statements highlighting the potential economic benefits or environmental damages of the proposed mine to 'the region'. As these statements make specific claims about the region, they thus further perform it. Importantly, this means that they perform the region as a part of the attempts to shape how the government in control of the land use itself performs the region in its decisions regarding whether or not to allow permits for the mine (cf. Allen & Cochrane 2007).[12] However, and crucially, by making these claims about the region, these different actors not only perform the region but concurrently their respective subject positions, namely, as geologists and as representatives of companies or NGOs, which also serves to (re)produce the companies and NGOs as seemingly coherent collective actors (and geology as a scientific discipline; cf. Barnes 2002). Regional politics – itself predicated on stakeholder subjectification – can hence be seen as performing not only the region, but also the positionalities. Concomitantly, we can witness a 'de-singularization' of the region itself brought about by the results of the geological survey: the region is now simultaneously performed as defined by the unearthed minerals (according to the geological survey), by the potential future prosperity the excavation of these minerals would bring about (according to the mining companies), and by the environment that could be damaged by the excavation (according to the NGOs). At the same time, the

[12] In this regard, it is possible that instead of a simultaneous stakeholder subjectification based upon the publishing of the results of the survey, the mining companies formulate their stakes first, and start lobbying the government, which then grants permission for the mine. It is further possible that if environmental NGOs did not concern themselves to have a stake regarding the region before this point, the permitting of the mine could act as a trigger, which would indicate how it is the way in which the government performs the region through its decision that acts as the propeller of stakeholder subjectification for the NGOs.

companies and the NGOs incorporate the geological survey's 'version' of the region into their own political claims, which indicates how the unearthed minerals have become a key territorially defined issue that now defines the region in a taken-for-granted manner.

While the above scenario of the politics between mining companies and environmental NGOs is a simplified example of the connection between regionalization/regional transformation, stakeholder subjectification, and the regional politics predicated on them, it nevertheless provides a suggestive guideline for empirical analyses. Essentially, the example not only highlights the dynamics between regional transformation and stakeholder subjectification, but it also brings to the fore the question regarding how actors attempt to realize 'their' interests (which have become attached to the region), namely by producing statements, or 'speech acts', that perform the region, and by that means attaching multiple meanings to it. Regional transformation and de-singularization can thus, according to this perspective, be approached through the expansion of the subject positions performed together with the region. This, of course, represents a drastic departure from Metzger's (2013) approach, in which attention is precisely on the 'singularization' of the region via the constitution of a common subject position manifesting itself in the establishment of a 'regional stakeholder community'.

This being said, it is, of course, possible that in the case of the above example the representatives of the mining companies, NGOs and the government controlling the land use may end up finding a compromise concerning 'the region', thus aligning themselves with a more singular conception of it. However, my argument is that it is imperative not to overlook the politics that underwrite the process. Furthermore, in this theoretical example, it is also possible that the aligning of the NGOs, companies and the government behind a singular conception of the region could, in turn, provoke stakeholder subjectification, for instance in the form of local landowners in the vicinity of the proposed mine that would not be satisfied with the compromise itself. The landowners thus could produce yet another version of the region through their politics, which would spark a novel instance of de-singularization. In this respect it needs to be underlined that it is always possible that even though specific actors become involved in performing the region through their politics, this might not have an impact on how others perform it, and would thus not affect the trajectory of the region by transforming it in a wider sense. This does not mean that such instances of regional politics are not analytically interesting, and it is precisely the danger of overlooking these passing instances of politics that looms large when we focus merely on how a region institutionalizes through singularization. Put together, this means that the overall process of the region can be seen as a fluctuation between singularization and de-singularization dynamics, which is never predetermined to lead to a specific outcome but is a highly contingent process. Nevertheless, it is also possible that a region could, at some point, simply not be performed anymore, which would lead to its de-institutionalization (Zimmerbauer *et al.* 2017) and ultimately to the overall disappearance of the region (cf. Latour 2005).

To summarize, the notion of stakeholder subjectification borrowed from Metzger's (2013) ANT-inspired conceptualization offers this research a sensitivity regarding the dynamics through which a region may sometimes emerge as a so-called 'hot topic' and a focal issue in various political debates. In this regard, it is precisely the partial sidelining of politics in Metzger's framework to which I seek to respond, which allows the theoretical debate on regionalization to be pushed further. In other words, we can begin to understand why is it that some regions seem to get no wind under their wings, meaning that they disappear as quickly and quietly as they were put together, and why other regions attain sustained attention in public, political and academic discussions and debates, through which they are in turn performed and transformed. This, together with the more general discussion that has unpacked the 'resurgence' of regions (e.g. Paasi 2009) can help us in understanding the 'regional mess' (Zimmerbauer 2017) that characterizes the world as we know it today, while concurrently enabling a more detailed analysis of the dynamics constituting and transforming specific regions and the meanings attached to them.

When we approach the question of regional politics through the approach developed here, it is thus imperative to situate these politics in relation to the process of regionalization. This can be done, first, through unpacking the process of regionalization, and how specific criteria have emerged to define the region's supposed essence and/or spatial shape *at a specific point in time*. Second, it is imperative to interrogate the social and spatial positionality of the actors under scrutiny to understand how and why these actors have attached 'their' interests to the region itself. In other words, attention should be directed to the process of stakeholder subjectification and its relation to the regionalization process. Third, it is relevant not only to understand why various actors attach their interests to the region, but also to scrutinize how they act to realize these interests. Fourth, the analysis should focus on why they perform the region in a specific way as a part of this agency, and how this further contributes to the process of the region. Through these considerations, it is possible to shift the focus onto how different activists and advocates (cf. Paasi 2010) become involved in performing the region, and more importantly, why they do it. It is through these insights that this thesis contributes to regional theory by highlighting the interconnections between politics and the region as a process through the perspective of specific actors.

Additionally, it is also imperative to point out that even though regional politics conceptualized along these lines may appear as a straightforward contestation regarding the region's territorial or spatial shape, or its supposed essence and interests, we should also endeavor to understand what this contestation can tell us about politics and its spatial manifestations in more general terms. In the case of the above example, it would be possible, for instance, to situate the analysis in relation to the spatial dimensions of the politics of NGOs, or, in more general terms, in relation to the spatialities of contentious politics (see Leitner *et al.* 2008). With respect to the mining companies, it would be possible, for example, to adopt a strategic-relational approach (Jessop 2007)

and scrutinize how private sector actors, and thus the 'social forces' they represent, work through the state and its strategic and spatial selectivity to secure their interests. This generalization would thus contribute to various research themes in political geography by providing an opening for an analysis of how regions, and specific conceptions of them, play into different spatio-political dynamics. In other words, by scrutinizing how regions contribute to these dynamics, we can highlight the contribution that regional theory has to offer political geographic research. These are the key issues that the individual articles incorporated in this thesis focus upon. Before turning to the summary of the key results and contributions of the articles, a more detailed understanding regarding the process of the Arctic region is in order.

4 Tracing the 'changing' Arctic: a region performed through centuries

4.1. How did the Arctic become a 'changing' region?

In order to gain an adequate understanding of the key findings and contributions of the research articles, we need to first discuss how the Arctic region came to be such an entity that actors in (and operating in the name of) Finland, France, Japan and Alaska were compelled to formulate strategies and policies focusing on, and by that, performing it. It can be argued that for some time now, few have questioned whether there exists an entity called the Arctic region. In Paasi's (1986) terminology, the Arctic region has become institutionalized. However, there have been continuous debates regarding what the key defining criteria of the region should be, while the territorial (spatial) shape of the region has been constituted around many different boundaries (see Nuttall 2005). To be sure, before the current discussion on climate change and the Arctic's massive oil and gas reserves – especially in the more distant past before the development of current communication technologies and mass media – few people in the world would have ever heard about such a 'thing' as the Arctic region. Still, the Arctic as a named space attributed with certain distinct characteristics has existed for centuries. In other words, it has been performed for centuries. Even though a comprehensive account of the history of the Arctic is not possible here (if it is anywhere), there are some key issues that need to be raised as a background for the upcoming discussion, especially in relation to the focused treatment of the three case studies of the Arctic policies/strategies of Finland, France and Japan, and Alaska. When I refer to the history of the Arctic region, I thus do not mean a historical account of events that have occurred 'in' the Arctic, but a historical account of the actions through which the Arctic has been performed into existence.[13]

The history of the Arctic, and to a large extent its present as well, has been characteristically dependent on (and told by) 'outsiders', and for a long time the region arguably existed as a somewhat distinct entity only in the records of these outsiders. These records encompass maps, books and stories generated especially through the practice of polar exploration, which itself was a constituent part of European imperialist practices (see Craciun 2009; Fogelson 1992). The ways in which the Arctic became re-framed in state-centric terms during the Second World War and especially the Cold War period act as further evidence of this outsider-dominated constitution and performance of the region. This was evident in the strategic emphasis placed on the region especially in the United

[13] According with the discussion in section 3, any account that invokes the idea of the history of the Arctic as a historical account of what has taken place in the Arctic would itself be an interesting object of analysis. In this regard, one could ask why is the actor in question producing such an account, that is, why is the actor performing the Arctic as a region with a specific kind of history, and how does it relate to the implicit or explicit goals that the production of such an account seeks to realize.

States and the Soviet Union and in the popular media representations of the region's strategic importance, through which the region became increasingly performed as a space of geopolitical juxtaposition and jockeying. Concurrently, it is within the course of these developments that science and scientific knowledge became integral parts of strategic policy-making, echoing the earlier fusion of science and politics in the practices of polar exploration (Doel *et al.* 2014). With these issues in mind, it is also easy to see why science emerged as a focal issue around which the post-Cold War international cooperation regarding the Arctic was constructed.

A speech by Mikhail Gorbachev, given in Murmansk in October 1987, is often attributed to be a transformative moment in the history of the Arctic and to have inaugurated the post-Cold War project of region-building. In the speech, Gorbachev declares:

> *"Let the North of the globe, the Arctic, become a zone of peace. Let the North Pole be a pole of peace. We suggest that all interested states start talks on the limitation and scaling down of military activity in the North as a whole, in both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres."* (1987: 4)

As for several decades the Arctic had been performed as defined by Cold War juxtaposition, the speech thus constituted what could be seen as a 'proposition for regionalization' (Metzger 2013) in which peace and cooperation would become the defining criteria of the region. The region-building process of the 1990s and early 2000s, which was in part initiated by Gorbachev's speech, has been documented in detail, for instance, by Keskitalo (2002, 2004, 2007). What has not been focused on in great detail is how the constitution of the Arctic as a specific kind of object of cooperation, itself drawing on established definitions regarding the region, can be seen as the spark for the recent 'uproar' of voices performing the region (although, see Dittmer *et al.* 2011). The remainder of this sub-section, together with the next one, serves to shed light upon these issues by reflecting on the regionalization process of the Arctic during the past few decades. To this end, it is necessary to start from the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), which was the predecessor of the Arctic Council (AC), which itself has become institutionalized as the key cooperative forum regarding the 'Arctic' and has recently attained a prominent role in Arctic governance. In this regard, it is especially fruitful to focus on how specific territorial concerns were framed in the early phases of AEPS, upon which the cooperative efforts themselves were built.

The AEPS process, also known as the 'Finnish initiative', emerged in the wake of Gorbachev's 1987 speech and drew together representatives of the states with territory above the Arctic Circle – the so-called 'Arctic states' (Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark/Greenland, Iceland, the United States, Canada and Russia) – to discuss initiatives for international cooperation in a regional frame. The AEPS process also entailed the first articulation of the territorial concerns and issues that would define regional cooperation in the Arctic, and thus 'the region' itself (see Keskitalo 2004). In the Declaration on the protection of Arctic environment, the founding document of the AEPS, which

was adopted in Rovaniemi, Finland in 1991, the problems and priorities of the AEPS were defined to be persistent organic contaminants, oil pollution, heavy metals, noise, radioactivity and acidification. The AEPS also established different programs and working groups as a basis for its practical work – these being the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP); Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF); Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME); and Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPPR). The AEPS cooperation was based on these working groups, and especially on the assessments that these working groups were tasked with compiling, thus indicating the reciprocal relationship between knowledge production on 'the Arctic' and cooperative action on these 'Arctic' issues. As the Declaration states:

> *"We intend to assess on a continuing basis the threats to the Arctic environment through the preparation and updating of reports on the state of the Arctic environment, in order to propose further cooperative action."* (AEPS 1991: 2)

This shows how the production of the Arctic territory through various socio-technical practices such as surveying, mapping and modelling became the cornerstone of the constitution of the Arctic region as a policy object already early on in the establishment of regional political structures (cf. Luukkonen & Moisio 2016; Painter 2010). When the AC was established 1996, it subsumed the programs and working groups of AEPS. Concurrently the issue of sustainable development became increasingly attached to the process, especially through Canadian initiative. Nevertheless, as Keskitalo explains, during the early years of the AC:

> *"While sustainable development was given a role on a par with environmental protection, the content of sustainable development and thus of a more general orientation to the areas beyond the environment remained undefined and any guidance as to the concept remained largely procedural."* (2002: 154)

However, a Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) was established in 1998, and its first key contribution was arguably the Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR), which was commissioned by the AC in 2002 and published in 2004. In the preface of the AHDR it is stated that

> *"This report is an integral part of the evolution of regional cooperation in the Arctic. The idea of carrying out an assessment of the state of human development in the Arctic viewed as a distinct region arose in large part from difficulties experienced in devising a coherent agenda for the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Programme. It is our hope that this report will not only make a direct contribution toward eliminating these difficulties but also set in motion ongoing activities that will strengthen the Council's work on sustainable development in the future."* (AHDR 2004: 3)

This indicates how by assessing "the state of human development in the Arctic viewed as a distinct region", the AHDR served to constitute the Arctic as a distinct socio-economic, demographic and cultural region that could be made a focus of cooperative

efforts. This was also the same time period when AMAP and CAFF, together with the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC), put together the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA). It was commissioned by the Arctic Council in the Barrow Ministerial meeting in 2000 and had three main objectives:

1. To provide a comprehensive and authoritative scientific synthesis of available information about observed and projected changes in climate and UV radiation and the impacts of those changes on ecosystems and human activities in the Arctic. The synthesis also reviews gaps in knowledge and the research required to fill those gaps. The intended audience is the international scientific community, including researchers and directors of research programs. The ACIA Scientific Report fulfills this goal.
2. To provide an accessible summary of the scientific findings, written in plain language but conveying the key points of the scientific synthesis. This summary, the ACIA Overview Report (ACIA, 2004a), is for policy makers and the general public.
3. To provide policy guidance to the Arctic Council to help guide the individual and collective responses of the Arctic countries to the challenges posed by climate change and UV radiation. The ACIA Policy Document (ACIA, 2004b) accomplishes this task. (ACIA 2005: 2)

Through these elements it is clear that the ACIA's key objective was to produce specific knowledge to inform policy and the public about climate change 'in' the Arctic. This knowledge, in a similar vein as in the AHDR, came to constitute and transform the Arctic as a specific kind of object of policy. In the ACIA, this took place through the selection of specific indicators (temperature, sea ice, snow cover and permafrost, to name some) and by researching their temporal variability and thus *change*. Further, both the ACIA and the AHDR highlighted that drawing boundaries for the region is not a straightforward issue. For instance, in the ACIA it is stated that

> *"there are many definitions of the Arctic, such as the Arctic Circle, treeline, climatic boundaries, and the zone of continuous permafrost on land and sea-ice extent on the ocean. The numerous and complex connections between the Arctic and lower latitudes make any strict definition nearly meaningless, particularly in an assessment covering as many topics and issues as this one. Consequently, there was a deliberate decision not to define the Arctic for the assessment as a whole."* (ACIA 2005: 2)

Even though this is stated, the ACIA still "uses the definition of the Arctic established by the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme" (ACIA 2005: 2), while the AHDR also based its definition of the Arctic on the AMAP boundary, although adjusting it "for reasons having to do mainly with the location of jurisdictional or administrative boundaries and the availability of data" (AHDR 2004: 17). ACIA together with AHDR were thus

integral parts of the AC's work to produce the object of its cooperation – the Arctic region – while concurrently attaching (climate) change to the region as a territorially framed concern. In other words, they served to constitute the Arctic as "a spatio-political object with a number of specific features, including . . . delimitation, contiguity and coherence" (Painter 2010: 1104). The ACIA and the AHDR served to delimit the Arctic through their work by assigning specific boundaries to it; they provided it with contiguity by producing knowledge of the Arctic as a 'whole' (evident in multiple maps produced in the reports); and they brought coherence to the region by adopting specific physical geographic and socio-economic parameters in the light of which the 'whole' was assessed. In other words, they served to set the specific criteria through which they defined, and performed, the region (cf. Allen *et al.* 1998). Hence, it is especially in cartographic representations that depict only the 'Arctic' boundaries that the Arctic region is performed as a coherent but simultaneously more or less 'empty' space besides the water and land masses 'within' it (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Arctic as a delimited, contiguous and coherent space as performed by the AC. Source Dallmann (2015).

Consequentially, by producing the region as a territorially distinct space, the AC working groups served to further solidify the 'Arctic states' as the key legitimized actors within the AC. It served to tie the states together with the region, not only in terms of their 'Arctic territory' (i.e. underscoring that they are the states with territory above the Arctic Circle), but also in terms of physical geographic, cultural (indigenous) and socio-economic attributes, which likewise became attached to the region through the assessments. In this sense, the constitution of the object of cooperation ('the region') also served as a basis for territorial legitimation (Murphy 2002, 2015), in which the 'Arctic states' and the 'Arctic region' came to constitute one another. However, it is clear that, especially due to the issue of climate change, the Arctic, through these assessments, also became constituted in relation to 'global' processes. For instance, the AHDR states:

> *"Given the fact that the Arctic is still emerging as an accepted region in world affairs, it is tempting to focus on efforts to delineate Arctic-specific issues and, in the process, to ignore or downplay links between the Arctic and the outside world. Such an approach would be misleading. The Arctic is affected increasingly by outside developments and the region has also played a role in shaping the course of world affairs."* (2004: 20)

In a way, then, the work of the ACIA and the AHDR manifested a tension between territorialization of the Arctic and its de-territorialization, the echoes of which can be heard in the contemporary squabbling over power relations between the members and observers in the AC (further discussed below). In other words, the work based on scientific methods, which was meant to facilitate territorial cooperation, itself served to highlight the connections between 'Arctic' and 'non-Arctic' processes, which can be seen as having had a great effect on 'Arctic' politics later on.

Still, the reciprocal relationship between the knowledge produced by the AC working groups and the utilization of this knowledge as the basis for cooperation is illustrated by how the progress of the ACIA influenced the priorities of the AC. For instance, climate change is not mentioned in the 1996 Ottawa Declaration – the founding document of the Arctic Council. In the 1998 Iqaluit Declaration it is mentioned only obliquely, when welcoming the initial work by the CAFF and the AMAP that would later lead to the ACIA, and in the 2000 Barrow Declaration it is only mentioned in relation to the endorsement and adoption of the ACIA. In the 2002 Inari Declaration, however, it is stated that

> "[ministers representing the eight Arctic states hereby] *note with concern the ongoing significant warming of most of the Arctic, and recognize that the impacts of global climate change with increased possibilities of extreme weather events will have large consequences in the Arctic, and that the Arctic can act as an early warning of global climate changes, and to this end [the ministers] welcome with appreciation the good progress of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) and the significant progress in evaluating and synthesizing knowledge on climate variability and change and increased ultraviolet radiation." (*Arctic Council 2002: 4)

It is thus to a large extent the scientific work carried out to produce the ACIA that served to introduce and solidify climate change as a territorially framed concern regarding the Arctic. This association between the Arctic and climate change has been reiteratively sedimented ever since. Another key point that can be made regarding the ACIA is the association it made between climate change and the economy 'in' the Arctic. This is evident especially with respect to oil and gas, and transportation industries (but also in terms of fishing, minerals, forestry, agriculture and tourism):

> *"The Arctic is an important supplier of oil and gas to the global economy. Climate change impacts on the exploration, production, and transportation activities of this industry could have both positive and negative market and financial effects."* (ACIA 2005: 1002)

> *"While climate change will affect many different modes of transport in the Arctic, the likelihood of reduced extent and duration of sea ice in the future will have a major impact. The projected opening of the Northern Sea Route (the opening of the Northwest Passage is less certain) to longer shipping seasons will provide faster and therefore cheaper access to the Arctic, as well as the possibility of trans-arctic shipping."* (ACIA 2005: 1002)

In a way, the ACIA and the AHDR can be seen as important components in the recent discussion on the 'globalization' of the Arctic, which has revolved especially around the integration of the Arctic into the global economy (see Heininen & Southcott 2010). In this regard, the ACIA and the AHDR also exemplify the point made by Keskitalo and Nuttall that

> *"while the 'new Arctic' is not 'new' with regard to globalization, a view of it as 'new' or changing may thus be more of a testament to many earlier, simplifying descriptions that were based only on certain features of northernness to the exclusion of others."* (2015: 185)

Even though the ACIA and the AHDR were somewhat guilty of generating the view of the Arctic as changing based on simplifying descriptions, one could also point out that the impulse to respond to the cartographic anxiety (Painter 2008) is to produce manageable and visible objects that are amenable for policy intervention. While this is evident on a 'sub-national' scale, for instance in the form of fleshing out 'regional economies' as spatio-political objects that can then become the focus of policy (Painter 2010), in a supranational context it is arguably often about constituting spatio-political objects around which cooperation can take place. At least this is evidently the case with the AC and its assessments (see also Wormbs 2015). Concurrently, one might argue that in order to produce such an object, simplifying descriptions are more or less necessary because the complexity of phenomena often exceeds our ability to address them in that very complexity (as also witnessed by the uneasiness in the ACIA report regarding the Arctic's territorial delineation). Perhaps the key point in this regard is that the selection of the features upon which the object of cooperation is constituted is of major relevance.

This is because this selection itself serves to produce the region, and can have far-reaching consequences, as will be discussed in the next sub-section.

4.2 Accelerated circulation of a 'changing' Arctic: multiple actors, multiple Arctics?

Even though it can be argued that 'the Arctic' has never been a perfectly singular region with only one commonly agreed upon idea of its supposed essence or spatial shape, the past two decades have witnessed an increasing 'de-singularization' of the region. After the initial association between climate change and economic potential 'in' the Arctic was made in the ACIA, various assessments on the Arctic began to be commissioned by individual state governments and other actors, thus indicating how the actors involved in performing the Arctic started to multiply. The AC itself – through the AMAP – was one source of such assessments, as evidenced by the 2007 Arctic Oil and Gas Report, but also the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs together with the Nordic Council of Ministers, for instance, funded research for a report entitled The Economy of the North, published in 2006. In the preface of the report it is stated that

> *"the objective of The Economy of the North is to present a comprehensive overview of the economy of the circumpolar Arctic, including the traditional production activities of the indigenous people. The report discusses the importance of the Arctic economy from a global perspective, with particular focus on the natural resources in the Arctic region. Finally, likely effects of climate change on the Arctic economy are discussed."* (Glomsrød & Aslaksen 2006: 3)

As another example, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) published the results of its Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: Estimates of Undiscovered Oil and Gas North of the Arctic Circle in 2008. These results were also published in the journal *Science* in 2009. The report stated that

> *"by using a probabilistic geology-based methodology, the United States Geological Survey has assessed the area north of the Arctic Circle and concluded that about 30% of the world's undiscovered gas and 13% of the world's undiscovered oil may be found there."* (Gautier *et al.* 2009: 1175)

This estimation was quickly picked up on by numerous actors. For example, Google Scholar shows that the article in *Science* has been cited 644 times to date, and the above-quoted phrase can be found in many an Arctic strategy document. Together, the examples of the Economy of the North report and the USGS appraisal indicate how attaching climate change to the Arctic region as one of the key territorial issues defining it became increasingly linked to economic potential. Thus, the meaning associated with the signifier Arctic transformed: the Arctic is not only a region defined by climate change but is also defined by economic potential that is connected to climate change itself. This led to ever

accelerating production of knowledge regarding the Arctic region, no longer merely as an environmental space, but also increasingly as an economic space. This economic potential was understood not only in terms of potential natural resource extraction, but also of shipping lanes that could open up due to melting sea ice.

Because these 'new' features were increasingly attached to the region, the conception of the Arctic as a changing region they constituted started to circulate with accelerating speed. Numerous state governments started to take part in this circulation especially by drafting Arctic policies and strategy documents, and by that exhibiting increasing strategic interest 'in' the region. As the 'changing' Arctic became a locus of strategic interest, ever more new actors became involved. Concurrently, various events such as the planting of the Russian flag in the seabed at the North Pole in 2007 propelled scholars in the fields of international relations, international law and political geography, to name some, to address the potential for geopolitical conflict or the prospects of international cooperation in the 'changing' Arctic. Such analyses performed the region not only as an environmental and economic space, but as a space of geopolitics and potential conflict between states (see Dittmer *et al.* 2011). In this regard, one key example is the perceived territorial competition between the 'Arctic states' over claims for resources in the Arctic Ocean seabed, which became a key point of departure for questions such as 'Who owns the Arctic?' (Byers 2009). This 'version' of the Arctic as a region defined by territorial competition became further solidified especially through maps that exclusively depicted the Arctic in terms of territorial jurisdictions and their potential future extents (Figure 2).

With the heightened attention to the Arctic of the 'Arctic states' (i.e. state governments and other national interest groups), which itself can be traced to the association made between climate change and economic potential, environmental organizations and indigenous peoples' organizations in particular became more vocal regarding their concerns. For instance, Greenpeace published its International Declaration on the Future of the Arctic in 2013, while the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) published A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic in 2009. Concurrently, multiple 'non-Arctic' states have also drafted Arctic strategies and published Arctic policy documents. In parallel with these articulations, the media has also taken a keen interest in the Arctic (Pincus & Ali 2016; Steinberg *et al.* 2014), and any one of us has surely encountered newspaper articles, television documentaries or social media feeds that focus on and thus perform the Arctic region. In the meantime, private sector actors have also become active in taking part in the discussion regarding the Arctic, which is exemplified by the adoption of the Arctic Investment Protocol by the World Economic Forum in 2015 (see Nicol 2018). Further, while scholars of international relations, international law and political geography have broadly 'picked up' the Arctic as a focus for their research, academics in numerous other fields have also added new spin to the circulation of the region. In fact, while the Scopus database has only 1455 results on papers that incorporated the word Arctic in their title, abstract or keywords in 2000, in 2018 this figure was 6788. This research is multidisciplinary but hews especially toward the natural sciences with earth and planetary

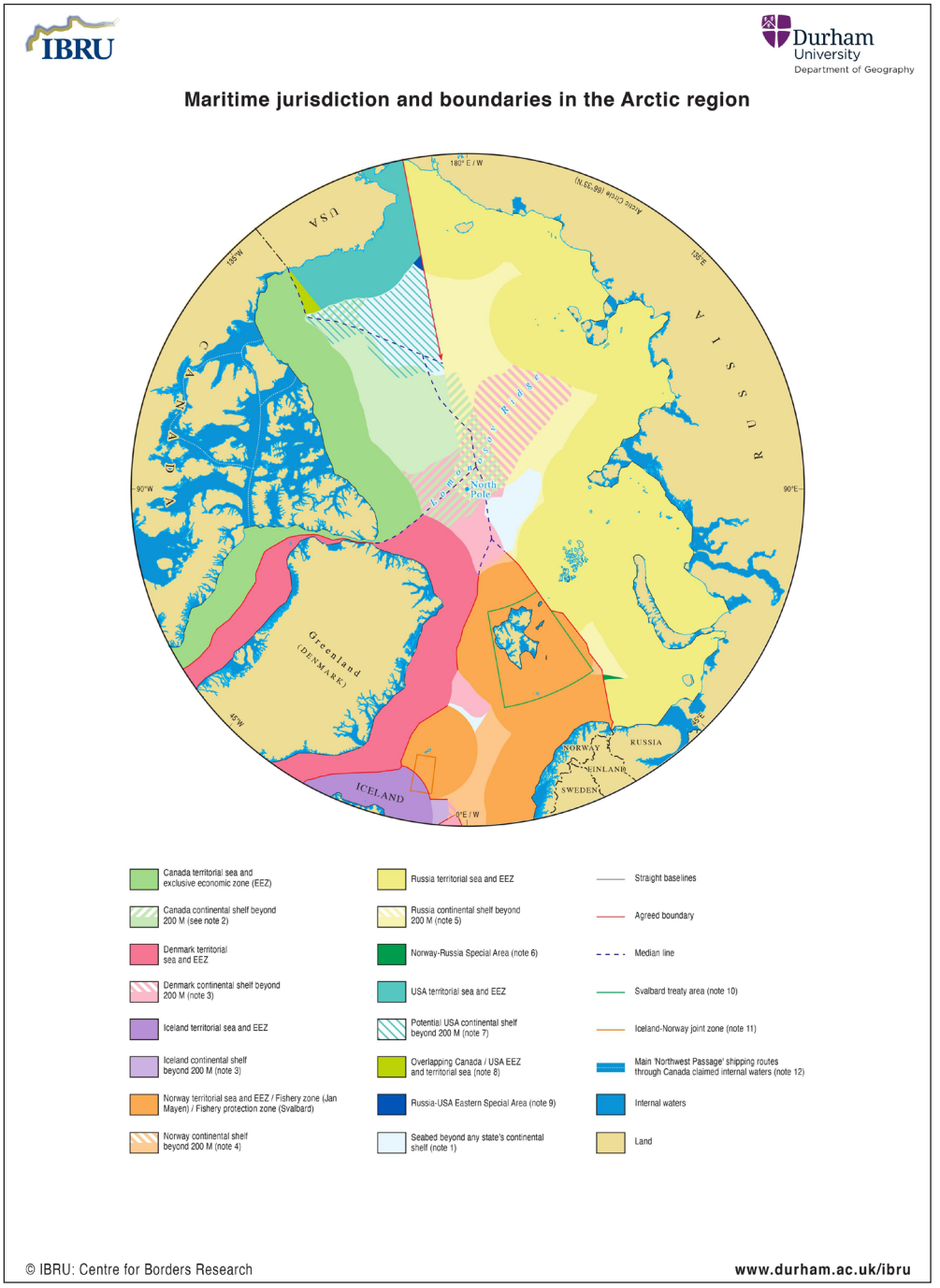

Figure 2. An often-cited map that performs the Arctic as a state-centric space of territorial juxtaposition. Source IBRU, Durham University, UK (http://www.durham.ac.uk/ibru/resources/arctic).

sciences constituting 25,5 per cent of all the documents in Scopus database with the word Arctic in their title, abstract or keywords.

In addition to the above, we should not overlook how the 'picking up' and 'passing on', that is, the circulation of the Arctic, unfolds. First evident example are the conferences that focus on 'the Arctic', and where face-to-face interaction takes place. For instance, the Arctic Circle conference in Iceland has been arranged since 2013, and in 2018 it had over two thousand participants. Another prominent 'Arctic' conference is the Arctic Frontiers conference that has been arranged since 2007 in Tromsø in Norway. While there are of course numerous instances in which face-to-face interaction occurs, and in which 'the Arctic' can be 'picked up' and 'passed on' through direct verbal (or visual) communication, to think about merely 'social' factors in this sense would be inadequate. Particularly, we should not overlook the role of the circulation of actual paper documents, or perhaps more importantly today, of pdf and other files in the process. After all, it is these documents and files that carry speech, text and images forward in space and time, to be picked up by someone else and passed on perhaps in a different form. In the circulation of these files, through which especially scientific articles, news stories, strategy documents or videos are made available for almost anyone anywhere on the planet to view, communication technologies and networks become integral parts of the Arctic's circulation. Then it is of course computers and other devices used to download and upload 'content' that become 'intermediaries' in transmitting meaning. This is not by any means an exhaustive list but serves to show that for the circulation of a region to accelerate, there are more than social elements at play (e.g. Latour 2005).

The above description is meant to illustrate that there, indeed, seems to be a cacophony of voices telling us what the Arctic is, what it will be and what it should be, and thus a plethora of actors engaged in performing the region. This has entailed the 'de-singularization' of the region itself, which in other words means the multiplication of 'Arctic imaginaries' (Steinberg *et al.* 2015). How are we, then, to explain these voices and their relationship to the region that is performed by them? First, we can assert that undoubtedly specific knowledge on the Arctic has enabled (i.e. motivated) various actors, such as academics, policy-makers and representatives of NGOs and private sector representatives, to engage in actions which continually perform the region thereby amplifying its circulation and transformation. But still, it would be unjustifiable to say that 'the Arctic' itself and alone induced these actions. Instead, as discussed above, it is the multiplication of the subject positions performed together with the Arctic that can explain the accelerated circulation of the Arctic, and thus the regional 'buzz' that has been so evident in relation to the Arctic recently.

In the process, even though the Arctic is uniformly performed as a 'changing' region, the region being performed is rarely exactly the same. Take different fields of research for example. Is the Arctic being performed through climatological research and the Arctic being performed through international relations research 'the same' region? The Arctic performed through climatological research bears on air and radiation from the sun, which

affect the temperature that is measured either directly in meteorological stations or through thermal infrared measurement by satellites. The results of these measurements are then translated into cartographic form and displayed in research publications, presentations, or in the media, which all perform the region as a coherent entity based upon the criteria used in the study. In turn, the Arctic performed through (neo-realist) international relations research pertains to military bases, territorial claims and inter-state power relations, which likewise are often translated into a cartographic form, especially in the form of maps depicting the existing and potential extent of each state's maritime jurisdictions (Figure 2 above). Still, both of these strands of research perform 'the Arctic', but importantly, different versions of it (cf. Mol 1999).

More often than not in these studies, some established boundaries of the Arctic are utilized, while the criteria that depict the supposed essence of the region vary according to the research field in question. Significantly in this respect, in their selection of the criteria to be deployed for the study, these scholars are performing not only the Arctic, but they are also performing their respective research fields and thus subject positions traceable to these fields (cf. Barnes 2002). Of key relevance in this respect is then how these versions of the Arctic become circulated, that is, how they come to constitute 'the Arctic' being performed by others. This is relevant because it unquestionably makes a difference whether state actors, for instance, perform the Arctic as a region defined first and foremost by climate change or by interstate (military) rivalry. Additionally, it is crucial to note that the current neo-realist readings of the Arctic are themselves based on a string of assumptions about climate change, economic opportunity, and finally geopolitical juxtaposition (see Dittmer *et al.* 2011). It is thus how the climatological region has been 'translated' to constitute an economic region and then a geopolitical region that is of relevance. Still, even though these translations have been made, 'the Arctic' continues to be all of these regions, and which Arctic of these (and many more) is being performed makes a great practical difference. Based on these notions, it can also be argued that in the process of an accelerated circulation of the 'changing' Arctic, 'the region' itself has multiplied, and that this is a politically relevant phenomenon. This is so because the potentially alternative ways in which the region is performed also have implications 'on the ground', particularly for the people who live in these 'Arctic' areas, but also for the ecosystems these areas comprise.

To summarize the discussion so far, it thus can be argued that the process of the AEPS and the AC is a key ingredient in the molding of the Arctic region as a 'hot topic'. This happened due to work carried out that made the Arctic region as a territory 'legible' (Scott 1999; see also Dodds 2010), hence producing it as an object of cooperation (cf. Painter 2010): in order for there to be cooperation, there has to be something that the cooperation is about. In the Arctic context this was environmental issues, which through scientific research became the key criteria that defined the supposed essence of the region. This, in turn, served as a point of departure for knowledge production that served to solidify climate change as one of the key territorial concerns regarding the region, which has

led to increasing 'de-singularization' of 'the Arctic' itself as multiple actors have come to engage in its performative production. It is thus not only the way in which scientific practice has performed the region that is of relevance, but rather how the circulation of this understanding of the Arctic as a changing region has induced a multiplicity of differently positioned actors to perform the region in more or less modified ways. This is imperative to understand if we are to unveil how the Arctic has become incorporated into various forms of political agency, and what kind of a region (or, indeed, regions) is performed through this agency, why, and with what kind of effects.

5 Research design

5.1 Selecting the cases

As discussed above, there has been no shortage of research on the Arctic region recently, and this applies also in the field of political geography. A key task, then, in terms of my research, has been to position it not only in relation to ongoing theoretical discussions in geography, but also in relation to other (often multidisciplinary) work on the Arctic region itself. To explain the motivation for the selection of Finland, France, Japan and Alaska and their respective Arctic policies and strategies as the empirical cases through which to pursue my research, this section provides background and positions the selection in the context of existing research on 'the Arctic'. To follow the instructive division introduced in the theoretical sections above, we can divide the literature that has approached the topic of (geo)politics in the empirical context of the Arctic into: 1) research that has taken the Arctic region for granted as a backdrop for the phenomena under study; 2) research that has put focus on the ways in which the Arctic region has been constructed, constituted and performed as a spatial entity; and 3) research that has approached the ways in which actors (re)position themselves in relation to the region.

The first strand has been especially evident in studies that have focused on interpreting the interconnections between climate change, the perceived economic opportunity it opens, and the potential geopolitical 'race' to exploit this opportunity. To be sure, these interpretations have been perhaps most vocally presented in the media and by various foreign policy pundits (e.g. Borgerson 2008), but they are also present in academic research. Here provocative titles such as 'Who owns the Arctic' (Byers 2009) and 'Geopolitics of Arctic melt' (Ebinger & Zambetakis 2009) provide suggestive examples of approaches that treat the Arctic as a taken-for-granted backdrop for the projected territorial competition and juxtaposition between states over perceived economic opportunities. Beyond these approaches that cast the Arctic as a distinct space of economic and geopolitical competition and race – while serving to produce it as such – examples of approaches that do not problematize the notion of the Arctic region itself are plentiful. This is apparent, for instance, in approaches that seek to 'critically' evaluate 'the promise of a geoeconomic Arctic' (Käpylä & Mikkola 2016), and in studies focusing on the purported 'globalization' in and of the Arctic (Heininen & Southcott 2010). However, a similar argument can be made even when it comes to the more theoretically ambitious studies. For instance, this can be argued to be the case in studies focusing on the notion of state sovereignty, and its reliance on the division between land and water in changing material conditions (Gerhardt *et al.* 2010), or on the role of cartography and mapping as a form of 'cartopolitics', which Strandsbjerg (2012: 818) utilizes to illustrate "how the relationship between the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea [UNCLOS] and cartography is shaping the attempts by Arctic states to expand sovereign rights into the sea". Similarly, the Arctic

region is rarely problematized in studies focusing on international law, such as the body of work assessing contemporary and potential 'regional' governance mechanisms like the prospects for an 'Arctic treaty' (see Young 2009).

To be sure, the argument here is not that these approaches would be misguided. Rather it is that by not problematizing the notion of the Arctic region itself, and by adopting it as a mere geographical framework in which to analyze (and even speculate over) various phenomena, they provide answers to different kinds of questions than the ones I ask in my research. Noteworthy here is that these studies, often unwittingly, have served to attach specific meaning to the region by the selection of the very phenomena they study, which has itself contributed to the transformation of the Arctic, that is, to the transformation of the meaning attached to it, as discussed in the previous section. This being said, not all research focusing on the Arctic has taken it as a mere given framework for studying other issues of interest, and there has been a sustained focus, especially in political geography, to unpack how the Arctic region itself has been discursively constituted as a specific kind of a space in more general terms and by specific (often state) actors (Bruun & Medby 2014; Dodds 2010; Heininen & Nicol 2007; Keskitalo 2004; Knecht & Keil 2013; Powell 2010; Steinberg 2010; Steinberg *et al.* 2015; Wilson Rowe 2013). Additionally, there is a growing body of work that has shed light on the production of the Arctic region in relation to state 'identities' (Bennett 2015; Dittmer *et al.* 2011; Dodds & Ingimundarson 2012; Medby 2018). For instance, Dittmer *et al.* draw attention to "the various ways in which the Arctic is imagined and performed as a distinct or exceptional space with its own properties" (2011: 202–203), while concurrently highlighting the Arctic "as a space of and for state-building and international relations" (pp. 203).

This notwithstanding, even though these studies show the interconnection between how the Arctic region and specific states are positioned in relation to one another discursively by actors operating on their behalf, the focus on the 'Arctic states' has been mostly on the Arctic Ocean coastal states. By focusing on the Arctic Ocean coastal states, these approaches (although often from a 'critical' perspective) have lent themselves to the territorial logic of geopolitics as practice concerned with control over resources or shipping lanes. In contrast, attention to the 'Arctic states' that do not have coastline on the Arctic Ocean arguably allows for a different perspective on how and why such states have been recently re-positioned in relation to the Arctic region.[14] It is within this context that Finland was selected as the first case study. The case of Finland also allows the tying of the discussion to the interconnections between geopolitics and geoeconomics, and their relation to the transformation of state spatiality, as recent research has been keen to illustrate how Finnish state space has been subjected to numerous transformations (Moisio & Paasi 2013b; Ahlqvist & Moisio 2014). Concurrently, while for instance Bennett has discussed how 'non-Arctic' states have recently positioned themselves in relation to

[14] Dodds and Ingimundarson (2012) provide an interesting analysis on how recognition as an Arctic Ocean coastal state has emerged as a key political issue in Iceland, a state excluded from the meetings between the 'Arctic Ocean coastal states' based on this distinction.

the Arctic region, her main interest has been on China (Bennett 2015) and Singapore (Bennett 2018). While other 'non-Arctic' states such as the United Kingdom have gained increasing attention (Depledge 2013), Japan and France, both states which have recently had Arctic policy/strategy documents published in their name, have mostly escaped scholarly attention. Additionally, by reflecting on the Arctic policies of France and Japan, and additional empirical material, with respect to the Arctic Council observer criteria, more precise insights can be gained when compared to existing research which has examined how and why 'non-Arctic' states are positioned as 'Arctic stakeholders'. Therefore, even though for example Dittmer *et al.* (2011: 210) note that "how different actors perform their Arctic actor-ness and how others recognize their actor-ness may become a crucial issue as far as political tensions and cooperation in the Arctic are concerned", the role of the Arctic Council as an institutional context, and the relations between the members ('Arctic states') and observer members ('non-Arctic states') within the Council, in this regard has not been fully explored.

Simultaneously, even though increasing consideration has been placed on the 'sub-national' dimension of 'Arctic' politics – especially in the contexts of Greenland (Holm Olsen & Shadian 2016) and Canada (Roussel & Payette 2014) – there has not been sustained attention to how the Arctic plays into relations between national and sub-national governments. This is especially the case in terms of how the content of Arctic policy, and thus the criteria and issue areas in relation which these policies become formulated, emerge as key issues of contention in the relations between sub-national and national governments. This is why there is a need to place emphasis on how sub-national governments mobilize the Arctic by performing it in specific ways through their politics, and by positioning themselves (that is, 'their' sub-national states, provinces or regions) in relation to it, and what effects this may entail in terms of the power relations between these different governmental actors. This is why Alaska and the Arctic policy of Alaska provides an intriguing case through which to approach the 'sub-national' dimension of 'Arctic' politics, as Alaska was the first sub-national entity to have a comprehensive Arctic policy drafted in its name.

The cases were thus selected on the basis that the Arctic policies and strategies of Finland, France, Japan and Alaska have not garnered sustained attention in research focusing on the contemporary political geographies of the Arctic region. Aside from this general remark, it can also be claimed that they have not been approached from a perspective that attempts to understand the connection between the co-constitution of the Arctic region and the spatial entities on behalf of which the policies and strategies have been drafted. This, together with the perspectives these cases afford for analyzing the interconnections between regionalization and politics from the perspectives of geopolitics and geoeconomics, supranational regional organizations and the question of legitimation and the spatial politics of 'sub-national' actors, makes this research an important contribution not only in terms of scholarly work on the empirical framework of the Arctic region and its contemporary political geographies, but also in terms of the

wider research and theoretical discussions in political geography from the perspective of regional theory.

5.2. Research material and methods

If methods are the scientific practices and 'devices' designed to enable researchers to make inquiries into 'reality' and make specific claims regarding that reality, methodology itself can be seen as the philosophy of method (see Law 2004). Methodology, then, begs the question regarding the ontological and epistemological foundations and assumptions upon which research is conducted, that is, it touches upon the questions of "how what is, is" (Elden 2005: 16) and how we can acquire knowledge of that what is. In other words: "methodology is best understood as the means by which we reflect upon the methods appropriate to realize fully our potential to acquire knowledge of that which exists" (Hay 2009: 465). As discussed in the theoretical and conceptual section above, the ontological basis of my research is that the existence of regions is dependent on the acts that perform them as entities inscribed with specific meaning. This is connected to the idea of the region as a process in which these meanings get 'singularized', 'de-singularized' and transformed in and through the specific acts that constitute the process of the region. This necessitates that in order for us to analyze the process of the region by focusing on the acts that constitute it, the empirical material of the research should consist of these acts – spoken or written.

Even though the application of this rationale opens a practically endless array of possibilities for empirical research materials, the main body of the empirical material of the research incorporated into this thesis consists of policy and strategy documents. The justification for this choice is primarily based on the objectives of the research, which are based on seeking contributions in terms of research on the political geographies of the Arctic region, and more generally regarding the interrelations between political geography and regional theory. As discussed in section 5.1, the cases of Finland, France and Japan, and Alaska were chosen based on the relatively little attention they have garnered in Arctic-related research, even though much of the existing research has focused on state policies. In this sense, by focusing on official policy and strategy documents of the selected states, they can be discussed and examined against research on other states and their policies. Additionally, as the research objectives of the individual case studies deal with questions ranging from state spatial transformation (Article I) and inclusionary/exclusionary dynamics in supranational regional institutions (Article II) to contestation over power relations between sub-national and national governments (Article III), the choice to focus on Arctic policy and strategy documents in all of the cases provides the present thesis, with its somewhat varying emphases, a degree of common ground. Put differently, by incorporating 'similar' material into the different cases it is possible to

draw these different cases together and to emphasize the diversity of issues that can be approached by analyzing the Arctic policies and strategies produced for different states.

It is important to note, however, that opting to choose official policy documents as the primary empirical material presents some evident drawbacks. First, the documents de-emphasize the policy-making process itself, in which the priorities, emphases and choices made for the final document are set and negotiated. This means that the analysis cannot grasp the (potentially contested) process of policy-making itself, or how the process influences the final product, that is, the published policy or strategy document. Second, the choice of utilizing policy and strategy documents presents a danger of falling into the 'territorial trap' (Agnew 1994), which in this context would mean that the documents would be interpreted to represent the interests and goals of a territorial state as an actor in its own right rather than the interests and goals ascribed to the state by those involved in producing the documents. These drawbacks aside, and especially if the territorial trap is successfully averted, policy and strategy documents provide a clear image regarding the agreed-upon priorities of those involved in the policy-making process. In other words, they showcase the prevailing idea(l)s regarding policy priorities in the institutional contexts of these states, and thus reflect state identity discourses. In this sense, the official policies and strategies provide an excellent window for unpacking the positionality induced by the state institutions as contexts in which, and for which, policy is developed, which sits well within an analysis of the factors influencing the process of stakeholder subjectification and the practice of regional politics predicated on this process itself. Further, and also to counter the evident drawbacks, the main body is complemented with additional material such as speeches, media interviews and public letters that broaden the material beyond mere policy documents. The key empirical material is presented in Table 3, which also presents the composition of actors involved in the policy-making processes.

Additionally, in the case of Alaska, semi-structured interviews were utilized as a method for gathering additional empirical material. The fundamental role of the interviews was to acquire a clearer understanding of the positionality of 'Alaskans'. This does not suggest that Alaskans would form a homogeneous group in which everyone would share common stances on every issue at hand. Instead, the ways in which the interviewees saw the position of Alaska, and the state government of Alaska especially in relation to the Arctic, were teased out through the interviews. Another key aspect was to focus on the relationship between the state of Alaska and the United States federal government, and on the relationship between federal and state-level Arctic policies. This acted as a basis through which the development of Alaska's Arctic policy could be reflected upon with respect to the state–federal state relations, but also with respect to what the interviewees interpreted the Arctic to mean for Alaska and Alaskans. The selection of the interviewees was based on the 'snowball' method, which means that central figures presumed to have knowledge on the state's Arctic policy were contacted and interviewed, and further contacts were sought through the interviewees. The decision to include actors working

Table 3. Research material.

	Primary material	Producers of the primary material	Secondary material
Article I	-Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013 (PMO 2013) - Government Policy Regarding the Priorities in the Updated Arctic Strategy (PMO 2016) -Action Plan for the Update of the Arctic Strategy (PMO 2017)	An Arctic Working Group appointed by the Prime Minister's Office, which has comprised of representatives of different ministries	-Finland's chairmanship program for the Arctic Council 2017–2019 (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2017) -Media interview of the Senior Arctic Official of Finland, René Söderman (Chairmanship of the Arctic Council… 2017)
Article II	-The Great Challenge of the Arctic: National Roadmap for the Arctic (France 2016a) -Observer Activity Report (France 2016b) -Japan's Arctic Policy (2015) -Observer Activity Report (Japan 2016)	-The French Arctic policy has been developed by an inter-ministerial working group, and was published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development -The Arctic policy of Japan was announced by The Headquarters for Ocean Policy, which is an inter-ministerial body directed by the Prime Minister of Japan	-Interview of Japan's Arctic ambassador Kazuko Shiraishi in The Diplomat (Hammond 2017) -Speech by the French Deputy Ambassador to the Polar Regions, Laurent Mayet at the 2016 Arctic Circle conference in Iceland
Article III	- Final Report of the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission (AAPC 2015a) - Implementation Plan for Alaska's Arctic Policy (AAPC 2015b) -11 semi-structured interviews	The Alaska Arctic Policy Commission consisted of ten legislative members, sixteen public members and six ex-officio members. The Commission was co-chaired by Senator Lesil McGuire (Republican) and Representative Bob Herron (Democrat).	-Alaska Arctic Policy Commission Letter of Intent (AAPC 2013) -Alaska Arctic Policy Commission Letter to Papp and Balton (AAPC 2014)

not only for the state government but also in different positions, such as in academia and indigenous peoples' organizations, served to highlight the 'official' viewpoint as well as how this official viewpoint was perceived by others (Table 4). The interviews were seen to be sufficiently representative of the existing viewpoints and thus met the needs of the research.

In Article I, the analysis of the empirical material is approached from a discourse analytical standpoint. Even though there are multiple possible approaches to discourse analysis, I build on the notion that "discourse is not something that subjects use in order to describe objects; it is that which constitutes both the subjects and objects" (Bialasiewcz *et al.* 2007: 407). In other words, in Article I discourse is approached in Foucauldian terms as a form of power/knowledge that forms its subjects and therefore also the knowledge these subjects can attain and hold legitimate and 'true' regarding objects (such as regions). Of crucial importance is therefore how the Arctic region as an object of strategy-making is interpreted and attributed with specific meaning by those involved in drafting the Finnish Arctic strategy through a specific discursive subject position. It is this subject position that defines the 'interpretative community' (Fish 1980) of the Finnish policy makers, and thus functions as a basis for tying the Arctic strategy of Finland to the wider developments that have occurred in Finland, and which have rendered specific modes of thinking about the role and priorities of the state prevalent. As Stuart Hall puts it regarding this way of approaching discourse, "subjects may produce particular texts, but they are operating within the limits of the episteme, the discursive formation, the regime of truth, of a particular period and culture" (1997: 55). The fundamental aim of the analysis then becomes to trace the discourse(s) through which the Arctic region is interpreted in Finland's Arctic strategy. This requires a detailed reading of the empirical material as well as reflecting on it within the context of Finland to uncover how the strategy documents relate to other state policies. Additionally, by approaching discourse in these terms, it is

Table 4. The interviewees and their positions.

Interviewee	**Position**
I-1	Director of a non-profit organization specialized in Arctic issues
I-2	Academic, Arctic governance expert
I-3	Academic, expert in Arctic governance and international relations
I-4	State official, Arctic policy expert
I-5	Academic, expertise in history
I-6	Indigenous peoples' organization representative
I-7	Former Alaskan elected official
I-8	Academic, expert on indigenous issues
I-9	Representative of an Alaska Native corporation
I-10	Indigenous peoples' organization representative
I-11	State official, Arctic policy expert

further possible to emphasize not only the meaning constituted in and through language, but also, simultaneously, the practices predicated on the understanding of the Arctic region through a specific discursive subject position. This dual focus on language and practice thus makes it possible to appreciate not only the process of stakeholder subjectification (how the interests and stakes of Finland are defined in relation to the Arctic), but also the political and spatial dimension of the practices predicated on this process.

With respect to articles II and III, and the conceptualization of 'regional' politics as politics through which the region is performed and as politics that potentially shapes how others perform the region, focus is placed directly on the acts through which regional politics is engaged in. In the empirical analysis of the research material these acts are approached as 'speech acts' that can be spoken or written. The notion of speech acts is built on the work of John L. Austin, in his posthumously published book entitled How to do things with words (1962), and it has been elaborated and debated over by numerous scholars (see especially Derrida 1988; Searle 1977). The key premise in Austin's work is that words, and language more generally, are not merely neutral mediums for transmitting information that can be verified as true or false, but actions themselves are performed by uttering words, that is, through the use of language – hence Austin's term 'performative utterance'. A key analytical distinction in terms of speech acts is between illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts. Illocution refers to what was done in saying something, while perlocution refers to the "achieving of certain effects by saying something" (Austin 1962: 120). While the actors uttering something can anticipate the perlocutionary effects of that what was said, these effects become manifest only through decisions and actions made by others (Cooren 2000). Moreover, as Cooren highlights, "if the recipient hesitates to perform the program the agent suggests, we may enter into a rhetorical phase where a series of good reasons are used to accomplish the desired transformation" (2000: 310). Thus if we see regional politics as engaged in through speech acts that incorporate illocutionary acts (such as acts of convincing or persuading) and anticipate specific perlocutionary effects (that others perform some actions), we can begin to approach how the region is performed through the speech acts themselves and mobilized in a rhetorical mode to give 'good reasons' based on which the achievement of the anticipated perlocutionary effects becomes more tenable.

In this regard, however, the critique levelled against Austin, especially by Derrida (1988), needs to be brought forward. The centerpiece of this critique focused upon what Austin termed 'felicitous conditions', or the appropriate circumstances that determine the success of a speech act. For Austin (1962) these conditions meant that a certain utterance such as "I now pronounce you husband and wife" performed the act of marrying two people only if uttered by an authorized person (such as priest), in a specific context (marriage ceremony). According to this perspective, if these words were uttered, for instance, by actors in a play, the conditions would not be felicitous, and the uttering of "I marry you" would not constitute an act of marrying. Derrida (1988) built on this and argued that it is not the context in which the speech act is produced and the prescribed authority of

the one producing the speech act that determines its success, but the 'citationality' and 'iterability' of the speech act. As put by Derrida:

> *"Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a 'coded' or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce in order to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as conforming with an iterable model, if it were not then identifiable in some way as a 'citation'?"* (1988: 18)

This was also a way for Derrida to bring into question the presence of intention within the speech act. By highlighting the 'iterability' and 'citationality' of speech acts, Derrida argued that "the category of intention will not disappear; it will have its place, but from that place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and system of utterance" (1988: 18). This is because "given that structure of iteration, the intention animating the utterance will never be through and through present to itself and to its content" (1988: 17), which means that intention should not be seen as being in full control of the meaning of what is said or written. I take this to mean that language and its prior use structures how we go about for instance convincing or persuading others, but also that "we can be betrayed by what we say or write precisely because of this relative autonomy of the signs we produce" (Cooren 2010: 31).

In terms of the analysis pursued in Articles II and III, this notion is taken into account in order to highlight the 'iterable models' (to use Derrida's terminology) incorporated in the political agency investigated though the empirical material. In Article II this comes down especially to the issue of how the criteria through which the 'Arctic states' have been constituted as legitimate 'Arctic' actors are now mobilized to build the legitimacy of 'non-Arctic' states that seek to be involved in negotiating 'Arctic' issues. Regarding Article III the ways in which the speech acts incorporated in Alaska's Arctic policy build upon and reflect – iterate – the claims that have been fundamental parts of the politics of Alaskan actors in relation to the United States federal government are brought to center stage. Of analytical interest in Article III is thus why and how these speech acts now incorporate the Arctic region in them, thus illustrating how the Arctic region is performed through speech acts focusing on state–federal state power relations. Put together, the analysis builds upon the notion of speech acts developed by Austin (1962) but also serves to steer clear of the aspects of his theory that have attained criticism. More specifically, particularly the dissatisfactory aspect of Austin's work brought forward by Rose-Redwood and Glass is taken into consideration:

> *"Missing from Austin's account, no doubt, is an appreciation of how competing claims to legitimate authority are themselves enacted through a set of performative acts, each of which aims to constitute and naturalize the conditions that will come to appear as the 'appropriate circumstances.'"* (2014: 6)

This means, in terms of the empirical analysis in my research, that even though the speech acts incorporated in the empirical material are in a way citational – meaning that

they draw their content and force from earlier speech acts – it is simultaneously possible to focus on their politics: how they make claims of legitimacy and authority in order to naturalize the conditions which this legitimacy and authority would be recognized.

6 Key results and contribution of the research

6.1 The co-constitution of the region and other spatial entities

This section summarizes the key results and contributions of the individual articles and situates them in relation to the meta-theoretical framework brought forward in this synopsis. More specifically, I will show how drawing attention to the interconnections between politics and the region as a process through the empirical case studies of the Arctic policies and strategies of Finland, France, Japan and Alaska can contribute to our theoretical understanding regarding: 1) the interconnections between geopolitics and geoeconomics through the concept of geopolitics of international competitiveness; 2) supranational regional institutions and the question of legitimation; and 3) spatial politics of 'sub-national' political actors. The key issue in this regard, I argue, is that if the discussion presented in the theoretical section is put to work in a supranational context, then we can gain additional analytical value by putting emphasis on how regions and other spatial entities are co-constituted and co-performed in the course of regionalization and 'regional' politics. This also functions as a way to take the spatial side of socio-spatial positionality seriously in the analysis itself. Here we can focus more specifically on states – both 'national' and 'sub-national'.[15] The argument is based on the straightforward notion that if regions are best approached through a performative definition, so too should states as coherent spatial entities and as seemingly coherent actors. This point is made explicitly by Merje Kuus when she states that

> *"contemporary political geography shows that state power, and indeed the state itself as a seemingly coherent actor, does not pre-exist policy making. Rather, the state is produced through practices like foreign policy that operate in its name."* (2009: 87; see also Bialasiewicz *et al.* 2007)

Of course, one can argue that it is not only through practices like foreign policy that states become constituted as seemingly coherent actors. Here one could point to research that does not problematize the agentic properties attributed to (territorial) states, which leads to a form of spatial fetishism. To be sure, the media is another source through which states are reified as coherent actors, as on a daily basis one can read and hear about, for example, Russia doing this, and China doing that, and so on. However, if the attention is placed explicitly on state institutions, and thus on individuals operating within state institutions, it is possible to dig deeper into the question of socio-spatial positionality. As discussed in section 3.3.2, identity categories can be seen as constituents of socio-spatial positionality, which conditions the process of stakeholder subjectification. If we take the above suggestion by Kuus seriously, we need to investigate not only how conceptions

[15] Of course, the sub-national spatial entities are not necessarily states but can be provinces or regions. For the sake of clarity, I refer to them as states.

of state identities influence the process of stakeholder subjectification, but how they condition how a specific identity is proclaimed and projected for the state through policies and thus by policy makers. Further, of central interest here is how this projection of state identity (through which the state as a spatio-political entity is performed) can be contextualized in relation to a supranational region (cf. Medby 2018).

It is necessary therefore to contemplate how, exactly, policies that portray the state as a coherent actor contribute to 'locating' it in relation to a supranational region, which, in turn, enables one to seek answers to the question of why this is relevant for the policy makers themselves. Concurrently, emphasis can be placed on how this positioning reflects the prevailing discourses on state-identities, and how these identity discourses become fused with the predominant conceptions attached to the supranational region. This is to say that as we focus on the positioning of a state in relation to a supranational region, attention must be paid to how the established conceptions regarding the state for which (and the region regarding which) the policy is developed condition the positioning.

The following sub-sections review the individual articles and the case studies incorporated in them. Each sub-section first situates the case study in relation to the more precise discussion in political geography to which it is linked. Concurrently the research questions of the respective articles are answered. A summary of the key results of the analysis presented in the three individual articles then follows. The treatment of the empirical findings is structured as follows. First, the question of stakeholder subjectification is addressed. This is done by providing excerpts from the empirical material which indicate how the interests and 'stakes' of the states under scrutiny are defined in relation to the Arctic region. This builds upon the analysis presented in the individual articles. Second, emphasis is placed on the agency predicated on securing the perceived interests of the actors and how the Arctic region and the states in question are performed through this agency in relation to one another. In the case of Finland, the argument is that Finland is performed in relation to the Arctic region through anticipatory geographies that reflect the discourses of international competitiveness. Further attention is directed to how these anticipatory visions are acted upon to secure them. In the case of France and Japan, the co-constitution of the states and the Arctic region is reflected on in relation to the Arctic Council observer criteria, and thus the power relations within the Arctic Council. In terms of Alaska's Arctic policy, the power relations between the state and federal governments are brought under scrutiny.

6.2 Finland's Arctic strategy and the geopolitics of international competitiveness

6.2.1 Geopolitics/geoeconomics and the co-constitution of spaces

To start unpacking the different approaches and contributions afforded by an emphasis on the co-constitution and co-performance of a supranational region and other spatial entities, we can first think about the discussion on geopolitics and geoeconomics and how the co-constitution of a state and a supranational region can be approached through it. Simultaneously, we can reciprocally uncover how attention to the co-constitution of a state and a region can contribute to the scholarly discussion on the interconnections between geopolitics and geoeconomics. We can start from the understanding of territorial politics as a dimension of foreign policy, which has traditionally been associated with geopolitics as a distinct mode of state action. More precisely, we can examine how a state is positioned in relation to a supranational region through territorial politics. As an insightful example, we can use oceanic spaces, such as the Arctic Ocean or the South China Sea. Consider, for instance, how representatives of the Chinese state have argued for sovereign rights concerning the South China Sea in the state media:

> *"However, the truth is China's activities in the South China Sea date back to over 2,000 years ago . . . China has been the first to discover, name and develop the group of islands in the South China Sea, which have been known as the Nanhai Islands in China. For centuries, the Chinese government had been the administrator of the islands by putting them under the administration of local governments, conducting military patrols and providing rescue services."* (Xinhua 2016)

Through the portrayal of China as a coherent actor that has been 'active' in the South China Sea, the South China Sea as a maritime region is both historically and spatially anchored, and thus performed, in relation to China in the statement. The example of China and the South China Sea thus connects the relational co-constitution of states and a region to territorial politics, that is, to politics based on, and striving towards, establishing territorial control over a demarcated portion of space and the resources within it (cf. Cowen & Smith 2009). In this case, it is thus impossible to understand why China is positioned in relation to the South China Sea without understanding the relation of this positioning to territorial politics. In this sense, the example reflects the territorial norms of the modern state system and the 'regimes of territorial legitimation' implicated in national claims to territory, which often incorporate cultural-historical and physical geographic dimensions (Murphy 2002). Such statements are therefore produced because they presuppose a world in which they convey specific meaning – the meaning being that due to the historical connections between China and the South China Sea, 'China' has a legitimate claim to control the region. Similar observations have been made in the Arctic context, especially regarding how Canada has been positioned in relation to the Arctic region to reinforce Canadian sovereignty 'in' the Arctic (see Dodds 2011).

In addition to emphasizing how, in the course of territorial politics, states are positioned in relation to regions through historical and geographical claims and representations that perform these spatial entities in relation to one another, my key argument is that focus should also be placed on 'anticipatory geographies' (Sparke 1998, 2000) that follow a different logic. Anticipatory geography is a term first introduced by Matthew Sparke in his discussion of the applicability of geoeconomics as an analytical perspective. Even though in his later work Sparke returned to more conventional critical geopolitical analysis, focusing on how 'geoeconomics' and 'geopolitics' as intertwined geostrategic discourses were integral parts of the legitimation of post-9/11 American intervention in Iraq (Sparke 2007), in his earlier work he argues that

> *"it is the promotional positioning of specific regions within global flows for which the label of geoeconomics seems so well suited. It is useful in that it gets at the way in which a more or less geopolitical phenomenon (of imagining territory as a mode of political intervention and governance) is closely articulated with a whole series of economic imperatives, ideas and ideologies."* (1998: 69)

In this regard, Sparke's focus was on how the promotional positioning of cross-border regions by 'non-state' actors in the form of anticipatory geographies contributed to the de- and re-territorialization dynamics of globalization (cf. Brenner 1999), and thus to the spatial transformation of the state. Concurrently, his notion of anticipatory geographies serves to detach the idea of geoeconomics from its realist roots, according to which geoeconomics is interpreted as distinct from geopolitics through the emergence of economic logic and means as the fundamental drivers and tools in interstate rivalry and conflict (see Luttwak 1990).

If it is the territorial norms of the modern state system that provide the context in which the positioning of a state in relation to a supranational regional territory can be interpreted as a (more or less justified) claim over the control of that territory, it is the contemporary economic discourses of international competitiveness that do the same in terms of anticipatory geographies. In other words, the promotional positioning of regions is intelligible only in a world in which it is understood to convey specific meaning and presupposes specific outcomes, namely, that it will contribute to economic growth. This underscores how territorial control over resources is being replaced by an emphasis on positionality within various economic networks as the appropriate perspective through which to formulate policy (Moisio 2018a). As highlighted by Erica Schoenberger, the term competitiveness "is not merely an 'objective' description of a fact of economic life, but also part of a discursive strategy that constructs a particular understanding of reality and elicits actions and reactions appropriate to that understanding" (1998: 3). In terms of Cascadia, the cross-border region between Canada and the United States discussed by Sparke (1998), this became evident in how the region, through references to its natural characteristics and relative proximity to Asia, was promoted as an advantageous environment for investment. By building on these notions, my contention is that this argument can be

pushed further to focus on how a state is positioned in relation to a supranational region through similar promotional logic. To unveil different dimensions of this promotional logic, two different aspects of the discourses of international competitiveness can be brought to the fore: international competitiveness as competitiveness of 'national' firms in international product and service markets, and international competitiveness as territorial attractiveness (for an extended discussion, see Fougner 2006). This brings to center stage the issue of how these dimensions of the discourses of international competitiveness become implicated in attempts to promote exports and the attractiveness of the state territory for investments and other 'economic flows' through anticipatory geographies that position the state in relation to a supranational region. Furthermore, while Sparke's (1998) focal attention is on how this promotional positioning affects state spatiality, it is crucial to explore how attempts to secure different anticipatory geographies contribute to the dynamics of de- and re-territorialization.

Reflecting on this with the discussion within the theoretical discussion presented in section 3, it is important to interrogate how the process of regionalization and regional transformation has made the region under scrutiny amenable for anticipatory geographies. Accordingly, it is not about the 'invention' of a new region in the course of attempts to identify and consolidate competitive advantages (cf. Sparke 1998), but about how an 'already existing' region, through the gradual transformation of the meaning attached to it, emerges as a spatial entity in relation to which anticipatory geographies can be formulated in the first place.[16] It is in this sense that the notion of stakeholder subjectification proves itself useful, and allows for an analysis on how state actors already performing a subject position that places economic imperatives (of competitiveness) as the key governmental problems for the state (Fougner 2006), identify 'their' stakes regarding the region, which itself propels the production of anticipatory geographies. This provides the perspective from which Finland's Arctic strategy can be approached.

6.2.2 Key results of Article I

While the above discussion on the Arctic's regionalization already indicated that Finnish governments have been active in promoting Arctic cooperation since the late 1980s, the contemporary process of stakeholder (re)subjectification in relation to the 'changing' Arctic needs to be examined more closely. 'The Finnish initiative' that led to the AEPS process can be seen as an example of how the 'proposition for regionalization' brought forward by Gorbachev in his Murmansk speech was taken up by Finnish actors

[16] This is simply because if a state were positioned in relation to a region that nobody else believed existed, the promotional visions manifest in the anticipatory geographies quite probably would not deliver in terms of generating their presupposed effects (e.g. economic growth). However, if the region in question is a taken-for-granted entity attributed with specific characteristics, such as, say, Africa, the positioning of a state as possessing specific expertise regarding these 'African' characteristics and conditions quite probably resonates with those to which the products or services are marketed through this positioning.

to promote regionalization as a means to tackle specific problems (such as pollution, but also the international political status of Finland in a post-Cold War world). In contrast, the catalyst for the formulation of Finland's current Arctic strategy, which has been developing for a decade now, is unambiguously the desire to benefit from the projected economic opportunity offered by the 'changing' Arctic. While the projected 'stake' of Finland regarding the Arctic in the AEPS process was arguably linked to environmental security and improved political positionality, it is now more profoundly also that of economic growth.

The Finnish Arctic strategy documents, which have been produced by inter-ministerial working groups, provide illustrative examples of how the transformation of the Arctic through the knowledge produced of it has induced the perceived need to develop a national strategy. In other words, it is illustrative of the process of stakeholder subjectification. In the 2010 strategy document it is stated that "changes occurring in the Arctic region *require* that Finland make an overall assessment of the prevailing conditions and how they are changing" (PMO 2010: 8; italics added). The stakeholder subjectification, or perhaps more accurately re-subjectification in Finnish policy-making circles can thus be argued to have taken place in a general sense as a response to the 'change' that has emerged to define the region. More precisely, especially two key aspects of this change are brought to center stage, these being environmental and climatic change, and economic opportunity:

> *"The environment is fragile in the Arctic, including Northern Finland. The principal problems with respect to the environment include climate change with its consequences, the environmental impacts caused by increased shipping and exploitation of natural resources, reduced biodiversity, long-range transportation of pollution and issues pertaining to nuclear safety."* (PMO 2010: 8)

> *"The Arctic Region has considerable economic potential that can be of benefit to Finland. The increase in maritime traffic in the Arctic Ocean and exploitation of natural resources in the region are an opportunity for Finnish expertise."* (PMO 2010: 8)

The way in which these two issue areas are woven together provides the basis for interpreting how Finland is positioned in relation to the Arctic region, and how anticipatory geographies figure into this positioning. A crucial clue in this respect is the reference to 'Finnish expertise' in the above excerpt. This provides an opening for examining how the discourses of international competitiveness provide the subject position through which the 'changing' Arctic is interpreted in Finnish policy-making circles. To illustrate this, two key anticipatory geographies can be identified:

1. Finland as the key provider of solutions to problems in Arctic development
2. Finland as an attractive territorial node in Arctic flows

The first anticipatory geography is predicated on the notion of export competitiveness and relies on treating the Arctic as a specific kind of a territorially framed market in which specific competitive advantages can be identified and consolidated. This is indicated explicitly in the 2013 Arctic strategy document:

> *"For the Finnish economy, the Arctic region represents a growth market close to home where Finland enjoys a natural edge to be active and succeed. It is an area where Finland's geographical, cultural and competence-based advantages come to the fore."* (PMO 2013, 8)

This anticipatory geography is thus firmly predicated on the conception of the Arctic as a space of economic potential that is becoming increasingly attainable due to climate change. Further, this anticipatory geography draws on the territorial distinctiveness of the region and on Finland as a purportedly 'Arctic state', especially through the identification of different 'areas of Finnish Arctic expertise' that reflect the physical geographical characteristics that have been attached to the region, such as cold climate, snow and ice.

The second anticipatory geography is, in turn, predicated on the notion of international competitiveness as territorial attractiveness and treats the Arctic as an anticipated space of flows:

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

These anticipatory geographies accentuate two distinct dimensions of the discourses of international competitiveness. In light of the first anticipatory geography, international competitiveness refers "to the ability of 'national' firms to compete with firms from other countries, [which entails that] the governmental problem on the part of state authorities concerns how to improve their capacity to do so" (Fougner 2006: 174). The second anticipatory vision is based more explicitly on the now hegemonic notion of international competitiveness as territorial attractiveness. As elaborated by Fougner:

> *"Conceived in terms of 'attractiveness', international competitiveness refers not to the capacity of 'national' firms to compete with foreign firms for shares of international or global product and service markets, but rather to the capacity of a state to compete with other states for shares of so-called footloose investment capital."* (2006: 175)

The anticipatory geographies incorporated in Finland's Arctic strategy documents thus highlight how these two distinct but evidently intertwined aspects of the discourses of international competitiveness become manifest in the ways in which, first, the 'changing' Arctic region is seen and interpreted in the strategy documents, and second, how Finland is positioned in relation to the Arctic region. In other words, they provide the answer to the

first research question of the article: "How the discourses of international competitiveness become manifested in the ways Finland is positioned in relation to the Arctic region through anticipatory geographies?"

Finland's Arctic strategy is thus explicitly visionary: it produces a vision of the future of Finland in and in relation to the Arctic as a 'changing' region. However, the analysis should not stop here, because the realization of the envisioned future state of affairs in which Finland (both as a territory and in the form of Finnish exports and services) enjoys competitive advantages necessitates that other actors be enrolled to support the project. This renders the securing of anticipatory geographies a political issue, but it also has wider implications for the Arctic vis-à-vis Finnish state space as well. This makes the securing of anticipatory geographies a spatial issue, which can be interrogated through the existing literature on state spatial transformation. The political facilitation of the realization of the anticipatory geographies takes place first, especially by engaging the Arctic Council and other international fora, such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO), through which specific modes of supranational territorial regulation and legislation can be promoted. It is these forms of legislation and regulation that validate the forms of 'Finnish Arctic expertise' that serve as the basis for the first anticipatory geography. The securing of the second anticipatory geography is, in turn, consolidated through bilateral and multilateral cross-border projects, such as the Arctic Ocean railway and the Northeast Passage data cable between Europe and Asia, that purportedly position Finland as an attractive territorial node within 'Arctic' economic flows. It is these aspects of the attempts to secure the anticipatory geographies and associated competitive advantages through politics that have implications for the spatiality of the Finnish state: the promotion of 'Arctic' regulation and legislation entails a re-territorializing effect on a supranational 'scale', while the proposed infrastructure projects would increase the de-territorialization of the state by facilitating cross-border 'flows' of raw materials, products, tourists and data. Together, these notions provide the answer to the second research question: "How the de- and re-territorialization processes are constituted through strategic efforts that are aimed at securing such anticipatory visions and the associated competitive advantages?"

It thus can be argued that the Finnish Arctic strategy documents perform the Arctic as an anticipated economic space, and Finland in relation to it through the anticipatory geographies, but also that the policy makers responsible for the documents concurrently perform the subject position traceable to the discourses of international competitiveness. The prevalence of the discourses of international competitiveness within Finland's Arctic strategy reflects more overarching developments in Finland, as Finland is a state in which the discourses of international competitiveness have attained a dominant role (Ahlqvist & Moisio 2014; Moisio & Leppänen 2007; Moisio & Paasi 2013b). This is exemplified by the actions of consecutive governments attempting to re-envision Finland's place and role and thus the state's 'identity' in the contemporary 'knowledge-based' economy, which has also had implications for Finnish state space as national territorial cohesion has partly been replaced by the accentuation of key (city) regions as the drivers of the Finnish

economy (Luukkonen & Sirviö 2019; Moisio 2012). Importantly, the Arctic strategy documents of Finland show how the 'changing' Arctic region is interpreted through this discursive lens, namely as a geographically defined market in which specific competitive advantages can be attained, and as a space of flows that can be lured to Finland to promote economic growth. The production of the anticipatory geographies, the political practices predicated on securing them, and the effects this potentially bears on state spatiality are thus illustrative of the kinds of actions and reactions the understanding of the world, and in this case of the Arctic region, through the discourses of international competitiveness elicits (cf. Schoenberger 1998).

In this sense, Finland's Arctic strategy is a continuation of the efforts of successive Finnish governments to promote economic growth through the promotion of competitiveness for exports (Kantola & Kananen 2013), but also through the promotion of the state territory as an attractive 'investment landscape' (Ahlqvist & Moisio 2014). The strategy thus reflects the established rationalities according to which Finnish governments have defined the key governmental problems faced by the state for some time now and by that means illustrates the continuing impact that the discourses of international competitiveness have on policy-making in Finland. Importantly, however, because the discourses of international competitiveness become manifest in the context of the Arctic region, there are novel insights that can be gained in terms of the interconnections between the discourses of international competitiveness and state spatial transformation. These novel perspectives are exemplified by the re-territorializing effects that the development of supranational regional regulation and legislation have, and the de-territorializing effects induced by the development of cross-border infrastructures. In this light, the Arctic strategy of Finland offers a picture of the type of implications the discourses of international competitiveness and the practices predicated on them have in terms of state spatiality, especially beyond the much-emphasized frameworks of 'new regionalism' and 'city-regionalism' (see section 3.1.1; cf. Ahlqvist & Moisio 2014; Brenner 2004; Harrison 2010; Moisio 2018a, 2018b; Moisio & Paasi 2013a). While research on city-regionalism in particular has illustrated how "the discourses of territorial competition and competitiveness instrumentalize the city as the pivotal site of inter-spatial competition in the age of knowledge-intensive capitalism" (Moiso 2018b, 122), Finland's Arctic strategy elucidates how a supranational region feeds into these spatial dynamics.

Together, the anticipatory geographies, their political facilitation through multilateral bodies and bi-lateral relations, and the connection of these issues to state spatiality can be conceptualized as 'geopolitics of international competitiveness', which provides novel insights into the geopolitics integral to (geo)economic processes (cf. Jonas & Moisio 2018; Moisio 2018a). By such an emphasis, the constraining view of geoeconomics as the practice of power through economic means by states upon one another on the international 'stage' can be overcome (Luttwak 1990). Concurrently, it sheds light on how state space becomes transformed through imperatives emanating from the discourses of international competitiveness, beyond the prevailing focus on sub-national and especially

city-regions. In other words, emphasis can be shifted to how foreign policy or policies that focus on a supranational region (thereby transcending the division between foreign and domestic policies) figure into the discussion on state spatial transformation. In this respect, anticipatory geographies that position a state in relation to a supranational region afford a crucial opening for the empirical investigation of these dynamics, without overlooking the process through which the region itself became amenable to such anticipatory envisioning. In this sense, as exemplified by the case of Finland's Arctic strategy, it is imperative to understand the process through which the Arctic emerged as a region in relation to which anticipatory geographies could be drafted in the first place. If we did not understand the process of regionalization, and how the Arctic has gradually emerged as an imagined 'opening' economic space (as discussed in section 4), our analysis would risk assuming the region merely as a backdrop rather than an active constituent of the agency manifested in and through Finland's Arctic strategy. In other words, by focusing on how the knowledge regarding 'Arctic change' has induced the development of Finland's Arctic strategy, we can gain a valuable perspective on the interconnections between the politics that manifest through the strategy and the process of the Arctic region.

6.3 France, Japan and the Arctic Council observer status

6.3.1 Supranational regional institutions and the question of legitimation

While the above discussion shows how discourses of international competitiveness can be used as an analytical perspective through which to approach the co-constitution of state and regional spaces, the second issue I would like to focus on is the process of region-building and the power relations inherent in such processes. In this respect it is possible to emphasize that as regionalization processes evolve to the extent that a specific 'proposition for regionalization' is solidified in the form of regional organizations (Metzger 2013), it is not only 'the region' that has been constituted and performed through the process, but also specific sets of power relations that rely on the 'form and substance' of the region. In a supranational context, these power relations often depend on the co-constitution of the region and specific states, and can also be seen as an instance of territorial legitimation (Murphy 2002). Importantly, in this case, the territorial legitimation does not denote a national claim to territory but indicates how inclusions and exclusions in supranational regional organizations are legitimized through territorial demarcations that are based on explicit criteria. This is most evident in region-building processes which identify cultural-historical and physical geographic attributes that tie the region and the 'to-be' included states together. This process arguably relies on the establishment of certain boundaries which can be traced to the boundaries of the states themselves or to the boundaries drawn according to the (cultural-historical or physical geographic) criteria in relation to which the region is constituted in the process of region-building. These

territorial bases for inclusion are evident in organizations as diverse as the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Caribbean Community (Caricom) and Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR). In the case of ASEAN, for example, the first criteria for the admission of new members is "location in the recognized geographical region of Southeast Asia" (ASEAN 2019: 9). In a similar vein, the Treaty of Chaguaramas, which established Caricom, states that "membership of the Community shall be open to any other State or Territory of the Caribbean Region that is, in the opinion of the Conference, able and willing to exercise the rights and assume the obligations of membership" (Caricom 2001: 6).

While the notion of territorial legitimation exemplifies how geographical inclusionary/exclusionary dynamics are implicated in the establishment and practices of regional organizations, there are also numerous instances in which 'the region' to which the regional organization refers is territorially expanded to facilitate inclusion. This was the case, for instance, with the South Pacific Forum, which was established in 1971 but was subsequently re-named the Pacific Islands Forum to facilitate the inclusion of island-states located in the North Pacific. Similar developments have been reported in the context of the EU and its eastward enlargement, but with the emphasis on how the process of enlargement has entailed the re-imagining of Europe itself together with the states aspiring to membership in the Union (Hagen 2003; Kuus 2005; Moisio 2002). It is thus relevant whether the regional organization in question is in principle open for or aspirant to expanding its membership (e.g. Europeanization) or is more exclusive. Of course, the criteria for membership can be seen as instances of attempts to exercise power and expand political and economic space. This has been argued to be the case regarding the different macro-regional projects promoted by the EU on and beyond its current borders (Jones 2006; Smith 2015). This is because the criteria for inclusion are not only geographical per se, but also include various issues pertaining to the political and economic practices of the inclusion-seeking states, which must conform to the EU's standards (see Moisio *et al.* 2013). Here, the EU is not an exception, as practically all supranational regional organizations establish similar criteria.

Of course, the process of legitimation could be thought of in non-territorial terms, if the actors legitimize their (that is, 'their' states') involvement in regional organizations through specific qualitative criteria that do not rely on and constitute regional territorial boundaries. One might consider the example of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). In the statute of OPEC, it is stated that

> *"any other country with a substantial net export of crude petroleum, which has fundamentally similar interests to those of Member Countries, may become a Full Member of the Organization."* (OPEC 2012: 3)

The main criteria for inclusion, that is, that a country must be a substantial net exporter of crude petroleum and have 'fundamentally similar interests to those of

Member Countries', are not in any way based on geographical and 'regional' terms. This means that while it would be misguided to talk about OPEC as a 'regional' project and organization, the criteria for inclusion nevertheless prompt inclusion-seeking actors to perform 'their' countries as territorial entities. This performance, arguably, occurs when the representatives of applicant states produce and portray (statistical) information regarding the quantity of crude petroleum exported by their respective countries, but also through assurances that 'their' countries share similar interests to those of the members. Even though organizations such as OPEC cannot be regarded as 'regional', they could be understood as instances of what Harrison *et al.* (2017) term 'constellatory regionalism', which, according to them, is "an analytical tool for comprehending and critically interrogating relational regions in the making" (pp. 1032). Relational regions, in this context, refer to regional projects that do not rely on geographical proximity and therefore do not base their 'regionalism' on territorial terms. The difference between organizations such as OPEC and the 'constellatory regionalism' manifesting in networks of higher education actors described by Harrison *et al.* (2017) is that the higher education networks embrace the language of regions and regionalism. In other words, constellatory regionalism can be accounted as regionalism only insofar as it is in practice based on some idea and conception of a region – in this case relational – that provides a collective and collecting spatial frame for cooperation as well as the basis for inclusion. Otherwise, the concept of constellatory regionalism would be yet another instance of academic labelling of regions based on the phenomenon selected for the research (cf. Paasi & Metzger 2017). Of importance here is that territorial and relational conceptions of a region can and do exist side-by-side, which opens up the door for analyzing their political relevance in terms of inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics. This provides the opening for the discussion presented in Article II on the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within the Arctic Council, and how territorial and relational conceptions of the region and the states of France and Japan figure into these dynamics.

6.3.2 Key results of Article II

Where are the boundaries of the Arctic region? Are they to be found 'on the ground', for instance, at the Arctic Circle, or are they lines drawn on a map? In Article II the key premise is that a fruitful way to understand Arctic boundaries is by 'locating' them within the practices of the Arctic Council, and within the criteria that separate Arctic Council member states (i.e. the 'Arctic states') and observer states (i.e. 'non-Arctic states'). In this sense, as they manifest themselves in the AC, the boundaries of the Arctic are not constituted by lines on a map but by documents such as the Arctic Council Rules of Procedure (Arctic Council 2013) and the Arctic Council Observer Manual for Subsidiary Bodies (Arctic Council 2016). This means that the boundaries of the Arctic region are

implicated in the practices of the Arctic Council itself, for instance in decision-making[17] the circulation of documents, seating arrangements and turns of speech in meetings. However, these boundaries rely on the division between 'Arctic' and 'non-Arctic' states – a division that itself is made possible only through the application of specific definitions regarding the region and the states. These definitions have been solidified through the process of territorial legitimation (cf. Murphy 2002) within the region-building process exemplified by the establishment of the Arctic Council in 1996, in which the 'Arctic states' and the 'Arctic region' were co-constituted as mutually implicated entities. In other words, the establishment of 'Arctic' cooperative platforms and forums tied the 'Arctic states' and the region together through cultural-historical and physical-environmental attributes.

Especially due to the bourgeoning discussion and knowledge production on the Arctic that has taken place during the past few decades, representatives of 'non-Arctic' states as well have become more vocal regarding the region, and regarding their interests and concerns connected to it. In Article II the emphasis is on France and Japan, states that have attained an observer status within the AC in 2000 and 2013, respectively. As a stepping stone for the treatment of the key results of the empirical analysis incorporated in this article, it is first useful to illustrate how the interests and stakes of these states were articulated in their respective Arctic policy documents. In Japan's Arctic policy document it is stated that

> *"changes in the Arctic environment have political, economic, and social effects, not only in the Arctic but also globally. Resulting opportunities and issues are attracting the attention of the global community, both of Arctic and non-Arctic states. Japan is called upon to recognize both the Arctic's latent possibilities and its vulnerability to environmental changes, and to play a leading role for sustainable development in the Arctic in the international community."* (Japan 2015: 2)

Concurrently, the Arctic policy document of France asserts that

> *"in the last twenty years, developments in the Arctic climate and environment, which are under pressure from climate change, led to the recognition of the far northern latitudes as an area experiencing a major environmental crisis, as well as a potential new economic and trade area, with polar shipping routes, off-shore energy resources, biological resources, etc."* (France 2016a: 9)

The quotations show that very similar aspects regarding the Arctic region are brought forward in both the Japanese and French Arctic policy documents in terms of the ways in which the relevance of the Arctic as an object of policy is discussed. It is thus climatic and environmental change, but also their relation to economic, political and social changes, that have acted as the propellers of the articulation of the stakes and interests of these states in relation to the Arctic. In the case of France, this is accompanied by an assertion that due especially to the 'challenges and opportunities' provided by the Arctic, France

[17] In the Observer Manual it is stated that "decisions at all levels in the Arctic Council are the exclusive right and responsibility of the eight Arctic States with the involvement of the Permanent Participants. All decisions are taken by consensus of the Arctic States" (Arctic Council 2016: 6).

has scientific, environmental, economic and political interests regarding the region, while the position of Japan is outlined in relatively similar terms.

In addition to the process of stakeholder subjectification, through which actors concern themselves to have stakes in a region, Article II highlights the way in which 'stakeholderness' is projected outwards as a way to legitimize actors representing specific states as credible 'regional' actors. To understand why this is the case, it is imperative to understand why such projection of stakeholderness through specific speech acts has itself become relevant. In this respect, it is argued that as the Arctic has been reconstituted as a 'changing' region through the process described in section 4, the role of the Arctic Council has been elevated, especially as several multilateral legally binding agreements pertaining to regional governance have recently been negotiated between the 'Arctic states' under the auspices of the Council (see also Humrich 2017; Koivurova 2010). Concurrently, the Council's role has been highlighted in more general terms as the key platform on which 'Arctic' governance issues are negotiated and guidelines regarding the region's future set. In this regard, especially the role of the Council's working groups as producers of knowledge regarding the region has been accentuated. This has entailed that as actors representing numerous 'non-Arctic' states have started to see themselves as having a stake in 'the Arctic', observer status within the Council has become a sought-after position. In response to the growing 'global' attention on the Arctic region, and on the Arctic Council, the AC has adopted specific criteria for admitting observers and requires observers to renew their status by evidencing their contribution to the work of the Council via Observer activity reports. While there are several criteria that the observers need to fulfill, the most relevant criteria in terms of the analysis presented in Article II are those showing that the applicant "accepts and supports the objectives of the Arctic Council defined in the Ottawa declaration" and "has demonstrated their Arctic interests and expertise relevant to the work of the Arctic Council" (Arctic Council 2013: 14).

Reflecting on these criteria, the analysis of the empirical material is premised on how the states and the region are positioned in relation to one another and thus co-constituted within the material in order to demonstrate that the criteria have been fulfilled. Hence the first research question: "How does the Arctic become (re)constituted by states, and how are states reconstituted through their 'engagement' with the Arctic?" The observer criteria are thus seen as integral parameters in relation to which the co-constitution of the states and the region achieves specific meaning, the meaning being that the states have 'Arctic' interests and contribute to the work of the Arctic Council. The analysis in Article II is thus based on the presupposition that the speech (written or spoken) that positions the states in relation to the region is designed to indicate that the observer criteria have been met in the context of 'dialogue' between the Arctic Council members (in the form of the observer criteria) and the 'observer applicants'. The illocution, that is, what was done in saying something, in the speech acts that position France and Japan in relation to the Arctic is thus an indication that the observer criteria have been met, or, in other words, the positioning itself forms the act of indication that the criteria have been met.

The anticipated perlocutionary effect in this respect becomes that the member states will renew the observer status of the respective states.

The key findings indicate that in order to demonstrate that the criteria have been met, the speech acts serving to do this constituted both the states and the region variably as territorial entities and as network-like relational spaces (Table 5). Table 5 thus provides an answer to the second research question: "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?"

It is noteworthy in this respect that underlining the historical and physical-environmental connections between the states and the region illustrates that the criteria through which the 'Arctic states' and the 'Arctic region' have been co-constituted in the region-building process are also utilized by the French and Japanese actors to illustrate the (historical) 'Arctic' interests of these states. In this process, certain ideas connected to the identity discourses of these states are mobilized, such as when France is defined as a maritime state (echoing the colonial legacy of France), and when Japan's technological proficiency is highlighted as a source of the state's Arctic expertise. Concurrently, as connections between the states and the Arctic are highlighted, they draw on the more contemporary knowledge regarding the interrelations between 'Arctic' and 'global' processes. Even though the more relational conception of the region has not gained traction as the sole legitimate understanding of the region (as witnessed by the still prevailing territorial criteria for membership within the AC), the knowledge produced within the AC working groups itself has highlighted the interconnections between the region and the 'outside world' (as discussed above in section 4). In this sense, highlighting the interconnections between the Arctic and the rest of the world in the empirical material merely 'cites' what has already been said and written about the Arctic, thus giving the idea of a more 'global' Arctic a new spin (cf. Bennett 2018). Concurrently, considering that the observer applicant states are required to demonstrate that they have contributed to the work of the Arctic Council, it is possible to see that as the work of the Council is based on cooperative networks, this criterion itself induces the speech acts that highlight the Arctic as a relational, networked space to which the states are connected both territorially (e.g. by hosting various events) and relationally through actors representing the states.

Table 5. The Arctic and the states as territorial and relational spaces.

	The state as a territory	**The state as a network**
The Arctic as a territory	Proximities between state territories and the Arctic as a territory	Present and historical presence of the states in the Arctic through explorers and scientists
The Arctic as a network	Connectedness through 'Arctic' flows, such as climate, but also through the hosting of events for cooperative 'Arctic' networks	Participation of the states in 'Arctic' networks, e.g. through scientists

Put together, the analysis of the empirical material in this article highlights the success of the AC members in enrolling 'non-Arctic' states to its observer member category through the criteria set for the observers. In this light, the adherence of the observer applicants to the criteria can be seen to reinforce the power relations dependent on this distinction between the members and the observers, that is, on the Arctic boundary. This presents a somewhat paradoxical situation in that the adherence of these states to the criteria that reinforce the boundary between 'Arctic' and 'non-Arctic' states is itself partly presented through speech acts that highlight the Arctic as a relational 'unbounded' space. In the case of France and Japan, the analyzed speech acts thus perform not only the Arctic and the states in relation to it, but concurrently the more specific position of France and Japan as AC observer applicant states. This position itself has been constituted through the AC observer criteria, which means that the speech acts made by the representatives of France and Japan can themselves be seen as perlocutionary effects of the setting of the criteria.

However, the analysis also shows that the speech acts that position the 'non-Arctic' states in relation to the Arctic serve as attempts to convince the AC members not only that the observer status of the applicant states should be renewed, but also that the role of the observers should be increased. Therefore, the second key argument derived from the analysis is that the power relations between the members and observer members are also brought into question by the representatives of the 'non-Arctic' states. This pertains especially to the repetitive highlighting by both French and Japanese representatives of the 'global' character of the Arctic, that is, its relational character and interconnections with the wider world, which is accompanied with subtle claims regarding the need to widen the role of the states affected by these connections. Crucially, this is not about the division between the members and observes per se, but about the practices in which this division, and thus the 'Arctic boundary', and therefore the current forms of power relations manifest themselves. The claims for extending the role of the observers is exemplified by a statement made by Japan's Arctic ambassador Kazuko Shiraishi 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)

To use the vocabulary of speech act theory, the anticipated perlocutionary effect of these kinds of speech acts is that the AC members will grant a wider role for the observers within the work of the Council. Even though these speech acts rely on highlighting the 'global' character of the Arctic region, the fact that the division between members and observers is not itself brought into question means that we are not likely to witness a complete overhaul in terms of which states can be considered 'Arctic', and thus what

the Arctic region itself is understood to be (a territorial or relational space) within the AC itself. This being said, it is highly probable that the issue of inclusion and exclusion, and its geographical basis, will be debated in the future as well. Thus, there is potential for a re-institutionalization of the Arctic around a more relational conception of the region, even though it is more probable that the territorial and relational conceptions will continue to coexist side-by side. Of course, if the observers succeed in gaining a more prominent role, for instance in presenting frameworks for future binding agreements, this could have implications in terms of Arctic governance and its priorities, which highlights the practical importance that the question of inclusion and exclusion and its geographical basis has. In addition to this potential 'de-territorialization' of the Arctic through a relational conception of the region, there is also an apparent potential for the re-configuration of the Arctic Council vis-à-vis 'the Arctic' through the political tensions that can arise from a disagreement regarding the issue areas at the core of the Council's work. This is evident in how the Trump administration's position on the issue of climate change has caused problems regarding the wording of the declarations published after AC ministerial meetings. This is to say that as the US moves away from recognizing an issue area that has been central for the work of the AC, it can be potentially positioned as 'the other' in Arctic-related practices, a position thus far in 'the west' often associated with Russia (see Dittmer *et al.* 2011; Steinberg 2016). This, in turn, could incite a re-imagination of the priorities of the Arctic Council, or of the political relations that its cooperative practices facilitate.

Based on the analysis presented and conclusions drawn in Article II, it is thus possible to bring to light the frictions that emerge within regional organizations and institutions with respect to legitimation of actors through the mobilization of territorial and relational conceptions of regions, and their relations to states. This is an especially relevant question in more exclusionary regional organizations in which membership itself is not open to new (state) actors, but which facilitate the participation of others through categories such as observer or associate members. It is arguably the boundary between the categories of members and observers that crystallizes the geographical boundaries of the region in question, and the relevance of this regional boundary as the basis for power relations is maintained only insofar as those excluded from membership on its basis accept their status. It thus becomes necessary to shift the focus onto the actors representing specific states that seek to obtain or renew their observer or associate status, and to interrogate how and why these actors produce speech acts that perform the region. To situate this with respect to the process of regionalization, it is important to understand why the actors under scrutiny wish to take part in the regional organization in the first place. In other words, attention should be placed on stakeholder subjectification, its relation to regionalization and how participation within the regional organization is seen to facilitate the securing of the perceived interests of the actors in question (which have become articulated in relation to the region). In such a situation, attention can be directed to how actors aspiring to be granted the status of an observer or associate member, or wishing

to call into question the geographical basis for inclusion and exclusion, produce speech acts that position 'their' states in relation to the region.[18]

This necessitates attention to how connections and proximities between the states and the region are established by mobilizing the (physical geographical, cultural-historical, economic etc.) criteria in relation to which the region has become constituted within the regionalization process, and which have acted as the main components in the territorial legitimation with respect to the inclusion of the established 'regional' states. Of crucial importance thus is how these criteria lend legitimacy whereby 'non-regional' states (e.g. provinces or states/France and Japan) can position themselves as viable 'regional' actors, which may bring with it a potential re-imagination of the region in relation to the states. At the same time, emphasis can be placed on how, through these speech acts the prevailing forms of territorial legitimation upon which the boundary between members and observers relies are brought into question in order to transform the power relations within the regional organization, as well as the region upon which they rely. Through these perspectives we thus can approach the question as to based on what justification do certain actors claim the right to be involved in discussions and decision-making regarding, ultimately, tangible issues such as policy priorities in 'regional' governance, which means that the question of legitimation in supranational regional organizations is a highly relevant practical issue, one with potential consequences 'within' the region in question as well.

This emphasis on the geographical basis for legitimation of actors and power relations in supranational political organizations provides openings for further research as well. While it is clear that many supranational regional organizations do not attain such focused 'global' attention as the Arctic Council has recently attained, it is highly probable that questions of inclusion and exclusion will at times become focal matters of discussion in other supranational regional contexts as well. The EU is of course a prominent example, but as the wide-scale proliferation of various regional projects on various geographical 'scales' bears witness to, there are multiple potential empirical cases that can be mobilized to analyze these issues. This means that sustained emphasis in research should be placed on how territorial and relational conceptions of regions and states play into discussions in terms of inclusions and exclusions, and how they relate to power relations and attempts to solidify and/or transform them. Even though, at least for now, regions are still often conceived of as territorial spaces with specific boundaries, there is a possibility that also supranational regions at some point will be increasingly seen through the relational viewpoint, as has been evidenced by research on sub-national and cross-border regions (see Harrison & Growe 2014). An especially interesting issue for further research is how this potential transformation would affect the practices of regional governance and related power relations.

[18] This, of course, comes down to the criteria set for the accreditation of observer or associate members, which can vary. Of importance nevertheless is how the criteria prompt the inclusion-seeking actors to respond in ways that perform the region in relation to the states. When the focus is on explicitly 'regional' organizations, it is presumably geography that plays a key role in this (re)positioning.

6.4 Alaska's Arctic policy and the contested state–federal state relations

6.4.1 Spatial politics and the co-constitution of sub- and supranational spaces

The third analytical avenue that drawing attention to the co-constitution of a supranational region and other spatial entities affords has to do with sub-national and supranational spaces and their interrelations. When it comes to the politics of 'sub-national' actors, attention has often been directed to the territorial politics of regionalist movements (Agnew 2001; Jones & MacLeod 2004); the building of 'spaces of engagement' to secure 'spaces of dependence' (Cox 1998); scalar politics in which 'local' actors strive towards 'scale jumping' or 'scale bending' to dictate decision-making that affects them (Smith 1992, 2004); and the 'politics of connectivity' regarding the exercise of nodal power (Amin 2004). As discussed above, these approaches have been integral in the debate regarding the spatiality of regions, and in attempts to understand how 'regional' politics itself should be understood and conceptualized (see Allen & Cochrane 2007). With reference to supranational and cross-border regions, and how they figure into politics, several approaches have been developed. These have unpacked, for example, how 'sub-national' actors have mobilized networks to bypass national governments and seek out direct funding from the supranational institution of the EU as a form of 'Euro-regionalism' (MacLeod 1999). Further emphasis has been placed on how regions can be utilized by sub-national actors in order to pursue political and economic goals through cross-border regionalism (García-Alvarez & Trillo-Santamaría 2013; Perkmann & Sum 2002; Popescu 2008; Sparke 2002; Zimmerbauer 2014). Still, relatively little has been said regarding how a supranational region emerges as a context of and 'tool' for sub-national actors to pursue different spatial strategies in their politics in relation to a national government and how this relates and contributes to the process of the region.

To begin approaching the question regarding the political relevance of a supranational region for sub-national actors, Ray Hudson provides a useful insight through his discussion on the politics of devolution:

> *"Pressures for greater regional devolution 'from below' have been generated by regionalist and nationalist movements, seeking to create more powerful sub-national spaces of governance and regulation within the boundaries of national states or – indeed – to create new national spaces. This can involve challenges from within regions to the authority of central government and to existing regional boundaries, and/or challenges over the criteria used to define regions, and/or challenges as to the existing order in terms of who has the power to decide matters of regional interest and concern."* (2007: 1152)

While Hudson refers in this passage explicitly to 'sub-national spaces of governance and regulation', I suggest that if we shift the focus onto the supranational region, there are additional insights that can be gained in terms of 'sub-national' political agency. First,

sub-national actors can challenge the authority of the national government and, by that means, can call into question who has the power to decide matters of (supranational) regional interest through speech acts that position 'their' sub-national region/state/province in relation to the supranational region. In other words, by these kinds of territorial arguments claims can be made regarding 'regional spokespersonship', that is, regarding "the right to formulate the interests of the region and the power to define what does and does not belong to the region" (Metzger & Schmitt 2012: 269). Further, through these claims of regional spokespersonship, challenges to the regional boundaries or the criteria used to define the supranational region can be voiced (cf. Hudson 2007: 1152). In this sense, by performing the supranational region as a specific kind of an entity that differs from the 'version' of the region performed by the national government in its policies, policies can potentially be shaped if the criteria used by the national government to define the region and its supposed essence that guide policy can be altered. This indicates how supranational regions can become incorporated into the political agency of sub-national actors, how and why the supranational region may be performed by sub-national actors in specific ways, and why the sub-national region, province or state is positioned in relation to the supranational region. It is these issues that are brought to center stage in Article III, in which state–federal state relations and their contested character are brought under analytical scrutiny through the Arctic policy of Alaska.

6.4.2 Key results of Article III

Alaska was the first sub-national entity in the world to have a comprehensive Arctic policy drafted in its name. This prompts the questions as to why such a policy was necessary and what could be achieved through it. To answer these questions, it is first necessary to revisit the process of stakeholder subjectification. While the economic potential of the Arctic has emerged as a key ingredient in defining the perceived stakes and interests of Finnish, French and Japanese actors in relation to the region relatively recently, and due to the transformation of the Arctic into a 'changing' region, in Alaska the Arctic has been defined in economic terms for a longer time. This has to do especially with the importance of the Prudhoe Bay oil and gas fields for the state's economy, which are located within what is often referred to as the 'Arctic slope' of Alaska. While the state of Alaska has held a relatively marginalized status at the decision-making tables in Washington DC, the emerging interest in the Arctic within the federal government, together with the US chairmanship of the AC between 2015 and 2017, provided an opportunity for Alaskans to potentially exploit this attention to their advantage. However, federal approaches on the Arctic especially during the Obama presidency were generally seen in Alaska to conflict with the state's interests, as they prioritized environmental issues and climate change. This was a significant issue, since most of the land areas in (the officially defined) 'Arctic Alaska' and the maritime space beyond the strip of three nautical miles in the Beaufort

and Chukchi seas are under federal ownership and jurisdiction, which means that federal policies on the Arctic have major implications for the state's economy. Moreover, if understood in terms of Alaskan positionality as forming the 'interpretative community' through which the federal approaches were interpreted, additional insights can be gained. In other words, we can appreciate how the Alaskan response to the federal Arctic policies reflects the ways in which the federal government and its relationship with Alaska has emerged as an important constituent of the very identity discourse of Alaska and Alaskans (Ganapathy 2013; Thomas & Boyer 2016). As Haycox elaborates:

> *"Antistatism [opposition to federal intervention] characterizes Alaska's self-identity to an exaggerated degree. The state's governors and legislators and its congressional delegation maintain a persistent plaint of persecution by an overweening, abusive use of federal power in the state that illegitimately usurps state sovereignty while it threatens personal freedom."* (2016: 16)

With this in mind, the apparent mismatch in how federal and state actors conceived the Arctic prompts actors in Alaska to concern themselves with having a stake on the Arctic not only because of the increasing discussion on the Arctic's economic and environmental transformation, but also because of, and crucially in relation to, the federal Arctic policies. The foreword of the final report of the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission (AAPC) crystallizes these two aspects:

> *"The Arctic presents us with unparalleled opportunities to meet the needs of Alaskans and the nation. As Alaskans we have a shared responsibility to understand the issues at stake, including the perspectives and priorities of Arctic residents, and to set a clear course for leadership now and into the future. The United States is just now beginning to realize it is an Arctic nation – and that it should assume the responsibilities that come with that reality, while assessing the potential. While the state may not always agree with the federal government, the actions of federal agencies clearly affect the interests of Alaskans. We want to chart our own destiny with a large say in how that destiny will unfold."* (AAPC 2015a: 2)

In the Alaskan case, the process of stakeholder subjectification regarding the Arctic region and the development of the state's Arctic policy thus cannot be understood without considering the role of the United States federal government and its Arctic policies, and how they we interpreted in Alaska. Further, it is important to understand the institutional mechanisms of the Arctic Council, especially in terms of the rotating two-year chairmanship of the 'Arctic states', which elevates the region's status in the national government during and in preparation for the chairmanship. It is in this sense that American chairmanship of the AC intensified the federal focus on the Arctic region and thus Alaska. In other words, the stakeholder subjectification that induced the drafting of the state's Arctic policy took place especially in relation to the federal government and its Arctic policies, thus serving to re-contextualize the contested relationship between these two governments (cf. Haycox 2016). This provides the answer to the first research

question: "How have the state–federal state relations been re-contextualized in relation to the Arctic region through the Alaska Arctic Policy?"

The second research question of this article is "What could be achieved through such a policy in terms of state–federal state relations?" Through the empirical analysis of the research material, Article III shows that increasing say and influence over federal policies that affect Alaska is what could be achieved. In this respect, the analysis demonstrates that transforming the criteria that defined the supposed essence of the region (i.e. as performed through federal Arctic policies) emerged as the key goal in the attempts by the state representatives to engage and enroll the federal government to pursue 'common' goals with 'Alaska'. Here it is not only the direct engagement of federal authorities that emerged as a key focus for action, but also the utilization of the Northern Forum (a collaborative network of northern sub-national governments) and the Arctic Council together with an emphasis on the national public as the driver of federal policy-making. This 'politics of engagement' (cf. Cox 1998) was especially premised on communicating particularly to the federal actors and the national audience the conception of the Arctic as a space of the people in need of economic development, rather than merely as an environmental space in need of protection – which Alaskans often interpreted the federal Arctic policies of the Obama administration to represent.

Simultaneously, by repeatedly highlighting throughout the empirical material that it is Alaska that makes the United States an Arctic nation, and thus by those statements positioning Alaska in relation to the Arctic, the authority of the federal government regarding decision-making on 'Arctic' issues is downplayed. In other words, this is indicative of claims for regional spokespersonship by which 'Alaska' would take upon itself "the right to formulate the interests of the region and the power to define what does and does not belong to the region" (Metzger & Schmitt 2012: 269). In accordance with the terminology of speech act theory, the speech acts through which the claims for regional spokespersonship were articulated were thus premised on the anticipated perlocutionary effect that the federal government would either grant the representatives of Alaska an increasing role in setting federal Arctic policies, or would change their policies according to the suggestions provided by the state's representatives. The positioning of Alaska as 'America's Arctic' thus reflects the rhetorical facilitation of the anticipated perlocutionary effects. The positioning of Alaska as America's Arctic showcases how 'good reasons' based on geography are utilized in order to achieve the desired goals (Cooren 2000: 310) and to persuade the federal government to embrace specific courses of action – these reasons being that because Alaska is America's Arctic, 'Alaskans' should have a say in federal Arctic policies.

The ways in which the claim for regional spokespersonhip is connected to the attempt to shape federal Arctic policies is exemplified in a letter sent by the chairs of the AAPC to Admiral Robert J. Papp (who held the position of a Special Representative for the Arctic in the U.S. Department of State between 2014 and 2017) and Ambassador David Balton

(who was the Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials during the US AC chairmanship period):

> *"While we can all agree on the need to identify the 'national imperative' that will motivate all Americans in supporting Arctic endeavors, your recent comments on this being a "moral obligation to protect the region and preserve it for future generations" dismisses the fact that Alaskans have been doing just that, and quite well, for many decades. We already have that moral obligation, because the American Arctic is our home. We are not supportive of locking up the Arctic or designating additional wilderness areas; Alaskans should have access to the development lands that we were promised. Instead, we hope you will focus on the important goal of supporting a vibrant economy through resource development, a simplified permitting regime and a positive investment arena, which has the potential to deliver social benefits while responding to the need for a healthy environment."* (AAPC 2014: 2)

Together, these notions illustrate how the contested state–federal relations became re-contextualized in relation to the Arctic region, and how the Arctic region emerged as a key ingredient in the political agency of Alaskan actors seeking to have a say on federal policies, that is, seeking to enroll and engage the federal government to pursue common goals with 'Alaska'. Alaska's Arctic policy thus performed not only the Arctic region, and Alaska as a spatial entity in relation to the Arctic, but also the 'Alaskan' positionality through which the federal government is seen to 'overreach' its position in terms of its policies that affect Alaska (Haycox 2016). In other words, to understand why 'Alaskan' actors started to perform the region at this specific point in time, it is crucial to understand the 'Alaskan' positionality, how the state–federal state relations are conceived through it, and how these relations became tied to the issue of the Arctic region.

As the federal government has taken quite a different approach to environmental issues and with respect to the utilization of natural resources during the Trump presidency, the current federal policies that have sought to open new areas for oil and gas industries in 'Arctic' Alaska have understandably received a more positive response from the Alaskan government. However, as these federal policies have not been 'Arctic' policies per se, and as the Arctic region has not achieved such sustained attention in the federal government during the Trump presidency, the reactions that these policies spark in Alaska are not necessarily articulated in terms of the Arctic region. This means that Alaska's Arctic policy and its politics can be understood only within the specific temporal context in which it was fashioned – which can be brought under analytical scrutiny through the notion of stakeholder subjectification – and its relation to state–federal state relations. Concurrently, what needs to be reflected upon is how the speech acts through which this 'regional' politics is pursued reflect and 'reiterate' the long string of political claims through which the state–federal state relations have been contested, even before Alaska's statehood in 1959. In the case of Alaska, one can see clear parallels between the speech acts incorporated into the state's Arctic policy and associated documents and, for instance, how the proponents of Alaskan statehood made their case in the 1950s. In this respect

the title of a keynote address by Ernst Gruening, a key proponent of statehood, in 1955 is illustrative: "Let us end American colonialism: Alaska the United States colony" (Gruening 1955).

On a more general level it needs to be highlighted that this 'sub-national' political agency discussed in Article III can be interpreted through both territorial/scalar and relational/networked theoretical lenses. First, it can be interpreted as territorial politics because, ultimately, its goal is to transform territorial forms of governance and/or policy 'within' and affecting the sub-national territory (cf. Jonas 2011). Second, it could be interpreted as scalar politics because it operates through the national 'scale' of government, which could be seen as an instance of scale jumping – as an attempt to commandeer decision-making on a purportedly 'higher' political and geographical scale (cf. Smith 2004). Third, it could be interpreted as relational politics of place (Amin 2004), or politics of engagement (Cox 1998), because the attempts to engage and enroll the national government together with international platforms such as the AC represent attempts to exercise 'nodal' power and to align (policy-making) networks to the advantage of the sub-national actors. Thus, whether one subscribes to a territorial/scalar or relational/networked theoretical approach to spatial politics, spotlighting how a supranational region emerges as a key political focus for sub-national actors in relation to the national government provides a way to investigate how the region plays into the politics through which it is performed. The case of Alaska's Arctic policy, in this respect, thus provides crucial insights into the spatial politics of sub-national actors, how a supranational region feeds into these politics, and how and why the region is performed through these politics in specific ways.

The results of Article III thus lead to the following remarks. To uncover why it becomes relevant for sub-national actors to perform a supranational region, we need to understand how a supranational region emerges as a politically relevant entity for these actors. In other words, we have to first focus upon the process of regionalization, and by that, upon stakeholder subjectification. In this respect, in the instances in which the 'sub-national' actors are not themselves the initiators and driving forces of supranational regionalism or region-building, it can be argued that stakeholder subjectification occurs as other actors, most notably the national government, start performing the supranational region – of which the sub-national space is conceived to be a part – through their policies. How this affects and is interpreted to affect the sub-national space can of course vary to a great extent. This depends, for instance, on the historical relationship between the sub-national and national government, the conformity of the interests of the actors representing them at the moment of observation, and thus on the positionality of the sub-national actors. Additionally, the institutional power relations between these two 'levels' of government, such as the degree of autonomy or the pattern of landownership but also economic relations, have an impact on the response that the national policies spark in the sub-national actors. In other words, we must first understand whether the ways in which the supranational region is conceived and performed by the national government is interpreted to fit or contradict the interests of the sub-national actors, and second,

whether the national government can ignore and bypass the sub-national government in its policy decisions regarding the supranational region. Especially if widespread disapproval regarding the national policies on the supranational region emerges within the sub-national region, and it is perceived that the national policy should be challenged and changed, it is arguably in such a situation that the (supranational) region emerges as a central political issue for the sub-national actors.[19]

While focusing on the specific case of Alaska's Arctic Policy and the power relations between the state and federal governments, the discussion presented in Article III can give novel insights into the spatial politics of (national, 'sub-national', local, non-state, social movement) actors that resort to political practices through which to shape the actions of others. The discussion presented here shows in particular how the criteria in relation to which a region is conceived and performed as an object of policy emerge as a key issue of contestation. If we take into account the widespread proliferation of various supranational regional projects, there are untold possibilities for the emergence of similar political responses in the future in other contexts. In this respect, one does not have to become fixated on how a supranational region emerges as a context for politics between a sub-national and a national government, but one can think of, for example, how macro-regions of the EU such as the Mediterranean emerge as similar points of politics between (nation)states and the EU. In such instances attention could be drawn to how state actors aspire to shape EU policies that affect their perceived interests by influencing the EU's macro-regional policies and the criteria through which these regions, and thus the policies that address them, are formulated. By interrogating how regions play into these kinds of politics, it is possible to understand how and why regions become continuously performed by a variety of actors in and through their attempts to shape how the region is performed by others. In the Arctic context alone, a similar emphasis could be placed on the politics of indigenous peoples' organization or environmental NGOs, such as Greenpeace, and how their agency performs the region in order to influence the practices of others.

[19] This is not to suggest that everyone in the sub-national region or even within the sub-national government would constitute a cohesive 'interpretative community' that would interpret the national policies similarly. Instead, it is to highlight that there often are established ideas regarding the relationship between the sub-national and national governments, as well as regarding the interests of the sub-national region, that are held by a majority of the people living within the sub-national region. This, of course, is reflected in how the sub-national government formulates its responses and policies, either because they share these ideas and perspectives, or because they are held accountable for their decisions by the 'general public' through the political system itself.

7 Concluding discussion

To draw the different cases analyzed within the research articles together, the results of the articles can be reflected in terms of the objectives set for the research in the beginning of this synopsis. First, the Arctic strategies and policies of Finland, France, Japan and Alaska indicate how the Arctic region has emerged as a politically meaningful entity for actors representing and acting in the name of these states. Further, they illustrate why these actors perform the region as a part of their agency, and why they do it in specific ways. Through these insights, the individual articles approach the interconnections between politics and the region as a process through three distinct perspectives. Article I touches upon agency emanating from the discourses of international competitiveness, which manifests itself in the drafting of anticipatory geographies that are acted upon through attempts to secure them. Article II, in turn, places emphasis on the agency of actors performing the subject position of a state seeking observer status within a supranational regional organization, while illustrating how this agency concurrently serves to undermine and transform the prevailing power relations between the members and observers. In Article III, consideration is given to the agency of 'sub-national' actors seeking to gain more say on governance practices that affect 'their' (sub-national) state, especially in relation to the national government.

At the same time, all of the articles illustrate how 'the same' supranational region feeds into and is performed through these forms of agency. Article I shows how the transformation of the commonly held conception of the Arctic into a 'changing' region – through its gradual incorporation into the agency of a plethora of actors – prompted the generation of the anticipatory geographies that position Finland in relation to the Arctic. In Article II, it is highlighted that the transformation of the region has inspired actors in 'non-Arctic' states to seek and renew their observer status within the Arctic Council, and to transform the power relations between the members and the observers. It is through this agency that the region and the states have been co-constituted in relation to one another through policies and various speeches, media interviews and other statements. Article III, in turn, indicates how increased federal interest in the Arctic region was a key ingredient in prompting actors in Alaska to formulate their policy in relation to the region. It is this policy that – by positioning Alaska as America's Arctic and by attempting to alter how the Arctic region was conceived and performed by the federal government – performs the Arctic region, and the state of Alaska in relation to it.

Through these points, the articles show how Finland, France, Japan and Alaska, are (re)positioned as spatio-political entities, and thus performed in relation to, and together with, the Arctic region. In accordance with the second key research objective of this theses, I argue that attention placed on this co-constitutive positioning provides us with insights on 1) the interconnections between geopolitics and geoeconomics and their relation to state spatial transformation through the concept of geopolitics of international

competitiveness, 2) power relations in supranational regional institutions, and 3) spatial politics of sub-national political actors. In this sense, the approach on regions and regional politics developed here not only contributes to the theoretical discussion on regions, but also illustrates the utility of engaging regional theory in an analysis that seeks to engage these three themes of political geography. The contribution of this research to these themes is based on approaching them through the prism of the Arctic region.

As regards the geopolitics of international competitiveness and its connection to state spatial transformation, focusing the point of research onto the Arctic region illustrates how supranational regional knowledge may induce economic strategies the political facilitation of which may contribute to de- and re-territorialization processes in yet underexplored ways, as exemplified by Finland's Arctic strategy. In terms of power relations in supranational regional institutions, the present readings of the Arctic region and the AC observer criteria show how different spatial conceptions of regions, and their relation to states, figure into power relations that become manifest in negotiations over regional governance priorities and practices. Finally, when it comes to the spatial politics of sub-national actors, the approaching of these politics through the perspective of the Arctic region illustrates how a supranational region may emerge as a key issue, and 'tool', in the contestation over power relations between sub-national and national governments. Together, these results show how the region is not a mere framework or a background for political action, but instead functions as a key ingredient in this action itself. It is this constitutive aspect of the region with respect to political agency, together with an emphasis on the constitutive role of this political agency with respect to the region itself, that the treatment of regional politics as politics through which the region is performed brings to the fore. Concurrently, drawing attention to specific actors and how they position themselves in relation to the region and simultaneously contribute to the process of the region enables an interrogation of the more specific political and spatial dynamics to which 'the region' contributes. These dynamics are here represented by the individual case studies and the spatial aspects of politics that they foreground.

Although it has unpacked only a few instances of action through which the Arctic region has been and is being performed by a plethora of actors, by interrogating these selected actors and their policies and strategies, this thesis provides important insights into the process of the Arctic region. On a more general note, these cases elucidate in particular how scientific knowledge production that has transformed the Arctic into a 'changing' region drives the current political debate and policy-making on the Arctic. It is the political debate and policy-making processes through which various actors themselves contribute to the regional 'buzz' that has prevailed in the Arctic context recently. Importantly, it is through the strategies, policy documents, speeches and statements of these actors that they simultaneously engage in producing and transforming the political geographies of the 'changing' Arctic. Even though the decision to focus primarily on state policies in the empirical analysis somewhat limits the perspective of this thesis and partially de-emphasizes the ways in which individuals negotiate policy-making processes, this can be

seen as a stepping stone for further research incorporating more wide-ranging materials and actors. Thus, further research could dig deeper into, for instance, how environmental NGOs or indigenous peoples' organizations have become entangled in the process of the Arctic through their politics. The wide range of possibilities for further research, in turn, serves to highlight the assertion central to this thesis that the Arctic, then, is best conceived through the processual perspective as a region that has been performed into existence by a rapidly widening network of actors, especially during the past few decades. In this process the dynamics of 'singularization' and 'de-singularization' fluctuate never adding up to a completely uniform and singular region. As the Arctic clearly means different things to different actors, there are wide-ranging possibilities for further scholarly attention to be placed on the interconnections between politics and the Arctic region as a process.

In terms of the theoretical discussion on regions, the research articles highlight that instead of drawing conclusions regarding the spatiality of regions based on the geographical dimensions of the processes or based on issues that happen to be central to our analytical interests, we should instead focus on how a whole range of actors *themselves* define regions and start our analyses from there. Through the performative perspective (Latour 2005), these definitions can be tied to the process of the region, and the relations that any individual definition produced by a specific actor has to those made by others in other places and in other times can be brought to the center stage of analysis. Reflecting on this in terms of the territorial/relational debate, it is through this kind of sensitivity that we can begin to understand why some actors conceive and perform a region as a relational, networked space and why others highlight its territorial and bounded character, but also why some embrace both of these spatial conceptions. Concurrently, we can uncover what practical political difference this makes, and what potential consequences this may have, especially in terms of power relations and regional governance practices.

When we focus on regionalization processes as 'wholes', that is, analyze merely their institutionalization and singularization (Metzger 2013; Paasi 1986), we are at risk of missing out on many intriguing dimensions of these processes. That these dimensions can be opened up though a focus on specific actors – on the structural conditions that drive their agency and how the region figures into the motivations and the potential outcomes of this agency – has been a central concern of my research. More specifically, by asking the question *why* specific actors contribute to the processes of regions in specific ways, we can gain novel insights into how regions play into the politics through which they are performed. To be sure, the answer to this question is always context dependent, but it can be articulated in the form of a theoretical statement: Various actors perform the region because they have formulated interests regarding the region through stakeholder subjectification, which is conditioned by their socio-spatial positionality and the regionalization process, and performing the region is an integral part of the agency produced by this process and thus is essential in attempts to realize these interests. The asking of this question in different empirical contexts can bring us to new approaches for analytically investigating why specific regions become central matters in public, political

and academic discussions and debates, and why a whole range of actors suddenly become involved in performing and transforming these regions.

On a more general level this thesis has shown that, when considering regional politics, the region can be seen as an important driver of the agency through which it is performed. In this sense the region and the accepted regional knowledge can be seen to constitute a structural element which simultaneously produces and conditions agency. However, as has been shown in this thesis, this knowledge and thus the region can transform and 'de-singularize', indicating that discursive social structures do change. This transformation, in turn, can be attributed to an expansion of the socio-spatial positionalities performed with the region. In this regard the key argument is that positionality of actors provides another structural element that conditions regionalization processes, and it is the fusion of the conditioning and productive forces of both the region and the positionalities that sets the trajectory of the wider regionalization process. The region and socio-spatial positionalities can thus be treated as structural factors operating on the discursive level influencing how the region is known, how it can be known by specific actors and how these actors perform the region not only through language and representations, but also through concrete policy choices that have social and material effects.

In light of the above remarks, one can consider the wider applicability of the approach developed here. This can be done by reflecting on how the scale and context of different regions condition regionalization processes and the politics that become attached to them. When it comes to the issue of scale and how it affects the process of regionalization there are some observations that we can make. First, it is unlikely that a sub-national, city- or cross-border region could ever garner such a wide variety of actors to perform it as the Arctic has. This is simply due to the fact that when it comes to such regions there usually are fewer actors that can become interested in the region, and those that do formulate stakes and interests regarding the region are often public actors working for state institutions, private sector actors invested in the development of the region, or place-based NGOs or ad hoc movements that assemble as a reaction to policies that are perceived as a threat (cf. Allen & Cochrane 2007; Jones & MacLeod 2004). In other words, when it comes to the purported scale of a region and the regionalization process, it can be presumed that 'smaller scale' regions are more often performed through geographically less extensive networks of actors, even if this network would not be confined by regional boundaries. This, of course, also entails that in the case of 'smaller scale' regions there is less positioning of other spatial entities in relation to the region through regional politics. Even though it is possible that political agency manifesting in the context of 'smaller scale' regions could incorporate the positioning of neighborhoods in relation to cities, cities in relation to sub-national regions or sub-national regions in relation to cross-border regions, it is difficult to imagine instances where policy makers in far-off states, for instance, would start positioning their states in relation to sub-national regions within other states. In this sense, the Arctic provides a more or less 'unique' context for investigating this positioning, as such positioning has become apparent in contexts as diverse as Arctic Ocean coastal

states, 'Arctic' states with no Arctic Ocean coastline, 'non-Arctic' states, actors within and working for sub-national regions, indigenous peoples' organizations, environmental NGOs, private sector actors and higher education institutions. It is this diversity that has also generated so much political geographic interest on the region, which this thesis has sought to assess and to which it has sought to contribute.

As suggested by this reference to the 'uniqueness' of the Arctic, it is evident that context has a considerable effect on the ways in which regionalization unfolds, and on the role that different actors assume in it. If one considers how context affects regionalization processes and regional politics, the status of the Arctic as a predominately maritime space surrounded by continents can be argued to be of central relevance. This maritime status provides a framework for the UNCLOS, under which the representatives of Arctic Ocean coastal states can engage in territorial politics and territorial expansion of their economic zones without the need for military conflict. Rather, it is the scientific practices of seabed mapping and surveying that provide the 'weaponry' of territorial politics so long as the legal framework is adhered to (see Strandsbjerg 2012). This also illustrates why it is relevant for state actors in Canada or Norway, for example, to claim an 'Arctic' identity for their states, as such claims have been integral parts of territorial politics for centuries (see Dodds 2011; Medby 2018; cf. Murphy 2002). In this sense, the maritime status of the Arctic provides opportunities for politics and policies that would be harder to conceive of in mainly 'terrestrial' supranational regions where the existing extent of political territorialization is more rigid. It is also partially in this respect that we can understand why 'non-Arctic' states (also beyond the cases of France and Japan discussed here) have become more vocally positioned in relation to the Arctic. This is because the governance mechanisms and thus the political territorialization of the Arctic are still in the nascent stages of formation (rather than consisting mainly of existing 'sovereign' territorial state spaces), which also makes it possible for the representatives of these states to have a say regarding the direction in which these mechanisms are developed. This can explain why it has become relevant for such states as France, Japan, Italy, China and Singapore, to name a few, to have Arctic policies developed in their name and to seek observer status within the AC. A further possibility when considered from the perspective of 'non-Arctic' states is that engagement in Arctic-related practices can be utilized to produce and project a specific brand of a political identity for the state, which is seen as expedient in 'non-Arctic' instances as well (see Bennett 2015 on China).

While the 'scale' and context of the Arctic region has enabled specific policies to be developed by and for states, this has simultaneously opened up possibilities for 'sub-national' actors to make the Arctic a focus of policy-making and politics. In addition to the case of Alaska, this is evident in the Canadian context in which actors representing the province of Quebec have become particularly active in developing Arctic policy (see Roussel & Payette 2014), and in the context of Denmark, where Greenlandic officials have adopted an active position in discussing 'Arctic' policy in the sub-national and national context (see Holm Olsen & Shadian 2016). Characteristic in all these cases is that

the 'sub-national' Arctic policy is developed as a response to and together with national officials, which highlights the relevance that national contexts and power relations have for 'sub-national' Arctic policy. In addition to the national contexts, it is notable that the territorial extent of the Arctic region provides opportunities for 'sub-national' actors to mobilize the Arctic politically. This is because the territorial extent established and produced predominately by state actors has drawn Arctic boundaries so that only some of the sub-national regions, provinces or states within these (nation)states fall within the Arctic region. This, as also discussed in the context of Alaska, means that even though the (nation)states can claim an Arctic identity based on the geographical position of their northern provinces, the actors representing these provinces can, in turn, forward an argument regarding their authority over national capitals in terms of policies that deal with the Arctic. When compared with supranational regions in which the regional boundaries are established along the borders of (nation)states (such as the EU or the ASEAN), there is certainly more room for political maneuvering for sub-national actors in the Arctic context when they can make political claims according to these geographical bases.

These considerations serve to highlight that the scale and context of a region condition the politics through which the region is performed, and through which the actors position the spatial entities on behalf of which they speak and act in relation to the region. The utilization of the approach developed here in other contexts would thus need to incorporate a careful consideration not only of the ways in which stakeholder subjectification occurs, but also of the ways in which socio-spatial structures that manifest in territorial jurisdictions, patterns of land ownership and institutional power relations provide the conditions in which stakeholder subjectification becomes possible, and in which specific courses of political action become desirable. The conception of the Arctic as a distinct supranational region with specific boundaries and consisting to a large extent of maritime space has thus arguably made possible the policies and politics discussed here and by other scholars. This encourages research in other contexts and regarding regions on other 'scales' to open up these dynamics and how they contribute to regionalization processes.

While the scale and context of the region provide important factors that condition who becomes interested in the region, and what the political dynamics in question relate to (i.e. territorial politics, politics of inclusion, geopolitics of international competitiveness), of key concern in this thesis has been how the issue areas that become attached to the region themselves drive the processes of stakeholder subjectification and thus regional politics. As these issue areas in the Arctic context have been the processes of change incorporating climate change, environmental change, economic change, political change and social change, it is important to understand how this knowledge on the 'changing Arctic' has induced stakeholder subjectification for actors stemming from multiple socio-spatial positions and what kind of 'Arctic' politics this amounts to. Based on these considerations, the political geographies of the changing Arctic discussed in this thesis from the perspective of the interface between politics and the region as a process

foreground three intertwined aspects of political geography. First, they illustrate the ways in which geographical knowledge feeds political agency. This becomes apparent in how knowledge production on 'Arctic change' has prompted the generation of various Arctic strategies and policies, which is an issue that can itself be brought under analysis through the notion of stakeholder subjectification (Metzger 2013). In this respect of utmost importance is to foreground how this knowledge has been constructed, and how it has been taken up on by a plethora of other actors, in addition to the one(s) at the center of our analysis.

Second, the political geographies of the 'changing' Arctic emphasize the utility of geographical knowledge for political action. This utility is especially evident in how different conceptions of the region have emerged as focal issues in political debates, as exemplified especially by the cases of France, Japan and Alaska. In other words, whether a region is conceived to be a territorial or relational space, or first and foremost an environmental or economic space can become central issues in negotiations over power relations between actors. Third, they highlight the potential consequences of the political utilization of geographical knowledge. These potential consequences are evident in, for example, the infrastructure projects pursued through Finland's Arctic strategy, the increasing influence that 'non-Arctic' states could achieve in negotiations over 'Arctic' governance practices, and in the sought-after transformation of national Arctic policies as pursued by state actors in Alaska. This means that even though we would deny the existence of regions as ontological entities 'out there', we need to remain attentive of the tangible consequences that regions bear with them, as they become the basis for policy-making. In the Arctic context this does not mean that we would have to deny that there are material changes occurring in the environment or with respect to climate. Instead, we should deny that these changes are taking place 'within' an already existing region. This puts the attention on the ways in which knowledge of these changes is produced, attached to the region and mediated to policy makers. My research, for its own part, has attempted to show the political and material implications of policy makers relying on the assumption of the Arctic's 'out-thereness', which is a position that needs to be brought under critical scrutiny.

To conclude, a sobering moment of reflection is in order. Of course, and to keep in line with the argument being made regarding the 'nature' of regions in general, my research – even though attempting to produce an account on how others perform the Arctic region – also performs the region. And it does so in a very specific way. The key, as I have tried to highlight throughout this synopsis, is to understand why it is that I perform the Arctic at all in the first place, and why I do it in a specific way, that is, through a performative definition. One could argue that I do it because this way of conceptualizing the region enables me to pursue research that contributes to the relevant academic discussion within the field in which I have positioned my research. This means that we have to understand my subject position within human geography and political geography in order to understand why I perform the Arctic region through my research, and especially why I do it through

a specific theoretical perspective. Moreover, it is worthwhile to consider the potential consequences that the way in which I perform the region might have. In a sense, this reflection is a response to the call made by Law and Urry that "if social investigation makes worlds, then it can, in some measure, think about the worlds it wants to help to make" (2004: 390). What kind of a world, then, would I want to help make through the specific way that I have conceptualized the region in my research?

In the Arctic context it is imperative to note that since science plays a fundamental role in performing the region, and since many scientific assessments regarding the region entail projections regarding future developments 'within' and affecting the region, Arctic politics and policies are a good example of the type self-fulfilling prophecy that such projections of the future can become (see Dodds 2013). One of the key points in this regard is that by highlighting the connection between regional knowledge and its contribution to policy-making, we could, perhaps, more critically question the often-presumed inevitability of the 'economic opening' and 'globalization' of the Arctic brought about by the normative status that science has attained in guiding Arctic policy (cf. Dittmer *et al.* 2011). This is especially the case because it is evident that the policies and strategies that act upon this future vision of the region in the present make this future more probable: they bring it into being. However, it is crucial to call into question this teleological reading of 'Arctic change' and to underscore that it need not be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Such a reading could act as a stepping stone for politicizing the presumedly a-political nature of the natural sciences and various fields of applied research that perform the Arctic. We could then ask questions as to whose interests are served through specific forms of 'Arctic' knowledge, who funds these research projects, and how the 'regional' knowledge produced through research may end up bearing significant consequences for the 'Arctic' itself. Indeed, this knowledge has an effect not only upon the Arctic itself (understood as a distinct material and environmental space), but potentially for the world as a whole, and especially for the people inhabiting remote northern areas who end up facing the consequences of the actions of the (often topographically) distant national governments, company CEOs, capital investors and others operating on these forms of knowledge. This, in other words, calls for reflection not only on the part of scientist working in various academic fields, but also policy makers who often hold the key positions in determining what kind of knowledge is produced and to what ends it is utilized. Concurrently, especially natural but also social scientists should continue to engage in political debates and discussions on the ends to which the knowledge we produce is being used. In this respect, this thesis might best serve as a reminder to scholars to take a position in political debates to envision and defend alternative future(s) for the Arctic beyond the still prevailing emphasis on the region's economic 'opening'. To achieve this, one possible solution would be to foreground 'local' forms of knowledge such as those produced by indigenous communities. This could help in countering the 'wider scale' regional knowledge produced through scientific practices while simultaneously providing ways to empower communities affected by the application of scientific knowledge by policy makers in distant national capitals.

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