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Abstract

The Arctic has increasingly become the subject of strategic debates, prompting numerous actors – including the European Union (EU) – to develop Arctic strategies. Importantly, these strategies need to address the ‘Arctic paradox’, that is, the trade-off between pursuing the economic opportunities arising from an increasingly ice-free Arctic and preventing environmental degradation in a region of central importance for the global climate. This paper investigates how the EU has positioned itself in this respect by asking to what extent its emerging Arctic policy has integrated environmental concerns. To do so, it initially conducts a discourse analysis of Arctic strategies of the EU institutions, Arctic and major non-Arctic EU member states. It finds that these three groups each form a ‘discourse coalition’ advocating for strong, weak and moderate environmental policy integration (EPI) in the EU’s Arctic policy respectively. A probe into the Arctic policy practice of typical representatives of these coalitions shows that a multi-level pattern exists which combines an EU-level pro-EPI discourse and action and varying member state-level commitments to EPI. The paper concludes by arguing that the Arctic policy at the EU level is currently ‘green by omission’ – avoiding contentious subjects in the discourse as well as in actions – and discusses the implications of this finding.

Introduction¹

Profound climatic transformations have turned the Arctic, the area of the globe located north of the Arctic Circle, simultaneously into an environmentally highly fragile space and a prospective El Dorado offering numerous economic opportunities. The environmental degradation processes in this region, which harbours some of the world's most delicate land- and sea-based ecosystems, are unequivocal: accelerated warming leads to biodiversity loss of "Arctic species and ecosystems [that] are also affected by ... persistent organic pollutants, mercury ... and marine litter" (EEA 2015: 3). Arctic warming also has well-documented and serious global repercussions. At the same time, though their extraction remains costly, there are strong expectations that permafrost thawing will provide more favourable conditions to attain the estimated "13% of undiscovered oil and 30% of undiscovered gas" laying in the Arctic ground (ibid.: 6).² This situation is aptly captured by the notion of an 'Arctic paradox': the very extraction of hydrocarbons – and one of its consequences, climate change – facilitates the access to further oil and gas resources in the Arctic, which in turn aggravates the harmful regional and global effects of climate change (Palosaari & Tynkkynen 2015).

These developments have turned a region that was long marginalised in global politics into "one of the big, strategic challenges of the 21st century" (Borg 2009). A crucial aspect of this challenge concerns the way of dealing with the 'Arctic paradox'. To limit global temperature increase to 2°C, let alone 1.5°C, as stipulated by the Paris Agreement, climate scientists have argued that hydrocarbons in the Arctic should be 'left in the ground' (McGlade & Ekins 2015). Given the vulnerable Arctic environment, this argument must be broadened to an overall abstention from potentially ecologically harmful activities. In other words, "[s]olving the Arctic Paradox should err heavily on the side of ... sustainability and not development" (Russell 2015).

In view of a possible future acceleration of the 'rush' to an increasingly ice-free Arctic, Arctic states such as Canada, Norway, Russia or the United States (US), and non-Arctic states like China (State Council Information Office 2018) and India (MEA India 2013), have begun to position themselves. The most prominent examples of Arctic strategies from non-members of the European Union (EU) are illustrative of the tensions that exist

¹ The authors would like to thank Katja Biedenkopf and the other participants in a panel at the "EU in International Affairs" conference, Brussels, 16-18 May 2018, for their comments.

² These are said to represent a value of \$35 trillion (Standish 2018). The economic opportunities opened up by Arctic permafrost thawing are not limited to fossil fuel extraction, but also concern easier access to strategic non-fuel minerals as well as the opening of maritime transport routes – all of which may lead to further environmental degradation. The paper concentrates on the arguably most lucrative and potentially most damaging opportunities related to fossil fuels.

around the Arctic paradox. The 2009 Canadian strategy speaks about the Arctic's "tremendous opportunities" and "enormous economic potential" (MIAND 2009: introduction-5). While it initially refers to the "paramount" necessity to respect the environment, it ultimately goes as far as considering mining and hydrocarbon extraction "the cornerstones of sustained economic activity" in the North (ibid.: 15). A similar discrepancy characterises the 2013 US Arctic strategy, which refers to the "need to protect and conserve this unique, valuable, and changing environment" while making "the most of the emerging economic opportunities in the region", notably by exploiting oil and natural gas resources (White House 2013: preface). Even less equivocally, Norway and Russia prioritise the Arctic's economic potential: Norway's 2017 Arctic strategy emphasises the exploitation of oil and gas reserves but also of the Arctic's renewable energy potential (Norwegian Ministries 2017); the 2013 Russian "strategy for the development of the Arctic Zone" puts economic development regarding transportation and extractive industries at its core, attaching limited importance to the environment (Russian Federation 2013).

For more than a decade, the European Union and a number of its Arctic and non-Arctic members have equally been positioning themselves on the Arctic. Given the specific nature of this polar region, any Arctic policy becomes necessarily a 'composite policy', which must include positions on issues ranging from climate change and the environment to energy and mining, fisheries, regional development, research and transportation policies (Raspotnik 2018: 67-83). At the EU level, debates have therefore concentrated on "An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic" (European Commission & High Representative 2016). In developing any such policy, Art. 11 TFEU stipulates that "environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of the Union's policies and activities" (the so-called environmental policy integration (EPI) principle) in order to promote "a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment" (Art. 3 TEU, Art. 21 TEU), act in line with the precautionary principle, and in particular combat climate change (Art. 191 TFEU). These provisions and the science-guided logic the EU has adopted in relation to its environmental policies more generally, would lead to the expectation that the Union strives for strong environmental protection in addressing the 'Arctic paradox'.

This paper investigates whether, to what extent and why the EU and its member states do actually take environmental concerns into account in their current Arctic policy documents and activities. In this context, the recent adoption of an "integrated European Union policy for the Arctic" does not imply that the EU possesses a full-fledged Arctic strategy (Stępień & Raspotnik 2016a). Rather to the contrary, this debate, which emerged in 2008 in the context of considerations on novel maritime

transportation opportunities in the Arctic Ocean, may have become opener over time given the evolving nature of Arctic geopolitics and the EU's internal politics when it comes to Arctic matters (Raspotnik 2018: 90). Against this backdrop, the cognitive interest guiding this paper is pursued through a study inspired by Maarten Hajer's 'environmental discourse' theory and captured in the research question: to what extent are environmental concerns – as opposed to economic, especially energy-related opportunities – taken into account in the EU's and the member states' discourses, possibly leading to 'discourse structuration', and practices, potentially resulting in 'discourse institutionalisation' regarding the Arctic (Hajer 1995; 1993)?

The responses to these questions do not only contribute to the discussion about EU EPI in its external action (Marín Durán & Morgera 2012; Tosun & Solorio 2011), but also provide a better understanding of the EU's Arctic policy from an EU foreign policy perspective. This fills a gap in the debates about this policy (e.g. Nengye *et al.* 2017), which have so far been confined to think tank papers and specialised Arctic journals (e.g. Morgunova & Westphal 2016; Wegge 2012; see, however, Raspotnik 2018; Pieper *et al.* 2011).

The paper proceeds as follows: it first develops an analytical framework that defines and operationalises key concepts. It then conducts a discourse analysis involving the main strategic documents of EU institutions and member states in order to chart the discursive field in search of 'discourse coalitions', with particular emphasis on the degree of EPI. It finds that three coalitions with differing visions of EPI in the Arctic currently co-exist. The paper then compares rhetoric and action by probing into the existing practices of the EU itself and of two member states (Finland, France), and analyses the extent to which discourses have become 'institutionalised' as entrenched practices. It argues that the EU on the whole is currently – in both its rhetoric and action – primarily 'green by omission', that is, by avoiding contentious subjects in its discourse and by focussing on non-controversial actions primarily in the science domain. The paper concludes by explaining this finding with reference to legal constraints and the EU-internal politics regarding the Arctic, before discussing the prospects of an EU Arctic policy and activity with strong attention to EPI.

Analytical framework

Through its three member states that are Arctic countries, the Arctic is an object of EU-internal policy. However, most of the Arctic, especially the Arctic Ocean, fall outside EU jurisdiction. Therefore, "the EU acts mostly as an external actor" (Keil & Rasputnik: 117) operating with a multi-faceted Arctic foreign policy resembling "an unconventional internal/cross-border/external mix, in which the EU varies in competences, strengths and influence" depending on issue areas (Kobza 2015: 4). This paper

concentrates on two such areas – the environment and energy –, both of which are shared competences. However, whereas environmental matters are largely communitarised, the “energy article” 194 TFEU foresees a stronger role for member states by preserving their right to determine their energy mix.

The solid anchorage of the environment in EU law and policy-making comprises the “environmental policy integration” principle of Article 11 TFEU. As the environment is considered as a cross-cutting issue in the EU, in both its internal and external policies, “the incorporation of environmental concerns in sectoral policies outside the traditional environmental policy domain” should be pursued (Runhaar *et al.* 2014: 233; Marín Durán & Morgera 2012: 30). Although Arctic policy is not a sectoral policy *per se*, it combines different sectoral policies, which is why the notion of EPI remains pertinent.

EPI is a matter of gradation. To analyse the extent to which EPI exists in a policy field, one can heuristically distinguish between the two ends of a spectrum ranging from weak to strong EPI, the former meaning that the EU simply takes environmental considerations into account, the latter implying that it makes a “commitment to minimise contradictions between environmental and sectoral policies by giving principled priority” to environmental objectives over other policy goals (Alons 2017: 1606; Lafferty & Hvoden 2003: 9).

The EU has generally discursively settled for a strong support for environmental protection and sustainable development (which says nothing about its policy practice) (Vogler 2017). Yet, the ongoing debate around the EU’s still emerging Arctic policy represents *inter alia* a discursive struggle about whether environmental concerns should prevail. The discourses that coexist in the ‘discursive field’ surrounding this matter have to be understood as frames of “certain problems; that is to say, they distinguish some aspects of a situation rather than others” (Hajer 1993: 45-46).

Particularly significant in the context of discursive struggles is the notion of “discourse coalition”, that is, “the ensemble of a set of story lines, the actors that utter these ... all organized around a discourse” (Hajer 1993: 47). A group of actors adhering to the same discourse can come to dominate a political context under two conditions: first, “central actors are persuaded by, or forced to accept, the rhetorical power of a new discourse” (discourse structuration); second, this becomes entrenched in institutional practices where policies conform to the ideas of the dominant discourse (discourse institutionalisation) (*ibid.*: 47-48).

Starting from these concepts, the paper examines the discourses in the strategic documents of the main stakeholders involved in EU foreign policy-making on the Arctic, that is, the EU institutions themselves, in particular the European Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS), the Foreign Affairs Council and the European Parliament, but also (key) member states. The analysis focuses on the Arctic EU members (Denmark, Finland, Sweden) as well as four non-Arctic EU members (France, Germany, Italy, Spain), all of whom possess articulate positions on the Arctic.³

These actors' discourses are analysed in two respects: first, the story lines regarding the extent to which they consider environmental and/or economic (especially energy-related) opportunities as important in their Arctic policies are examined; second, the analysis establishes the extent to which the actors perceive the EU as a platform to advance their Arctic policy objectives. This is of particular importance given the strength of the EU's environmental *acquis*. A strong EU anchorage of Arctic policies would arguably bolster their environmental component, whereas a preference for national solutions leaves member states with the option of reinforcing the importance of other than environmental concerns.

These two parameters (strong versus weak EPI, pro-EU versus pro-national solutions) constitute a discourse field, and the first objective of the analysis is to locate the different actors' discourses on this field in order to identify possible discourse coalitions. In this context, strong rhetorical commitment to EPI entails the prioritisation of environmental objectives over those of other sectoral policies (and here specifically energy-related ones); moderate EPI implies a balanced approach to environmental risks and economic opportunities; indicative of weak EPI is a predominance of other sectoral policies over environmental concerns. Methodologically, this effort relies on a discourse analysis inspired by qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2000). It operates with codes related to EPI and focuses on the abovementioned actors and their main strategies regarding the Arctic. It covers the period since the first publication of an EU document on the Arctic (European Commission 2008) until 2018.

The second objective of the analysis is to probe into the recent Arctic activities of one actor that is representative of a given discourse coalition. As explained below, the analysis focusses on the European Commission, Finland and France. This exercise is based on document analysis and semi-structured interviews. It examines the extent to

³ These are also the EU members that are either 'permanent participants' or observers in the Arctic Council, with the exception of Poland, The Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Whereas Poland does not possess an explicit strategy, the Dutch strategy covers both the Arctic and Antarctic (Schulze 2017). The UK is not included in the study because – given its announced withdrawal from the EU – its discourse is bound to weigh less on how the Union will address the Arctic paradox in the future.

which environmental concerns shape these players' Arctic activities, as well as whether these activities are in line with their rhetoric. Contrasting discourse and action will allow for establishing whether the former is impacting the actors' behaviour. If the institutional practices conform to the detected discourses, discourse institutionalisation has occurred (Hajer 1993: 47-48).

Concretely determining the level of EPI in a player's activities requires, on the one hand, a brief overview of the ways in which the actors exploit economic, primarily energy-related opportunities in the region. This must, on the other hand, be complemented with a scrutiny of the EU's and member states' specific (internal and) external action affecting the Arctic environment. In theory, the EU (and its members) can directly or indirectly affect Arctic governance in three ways (Raspotnik 2018: 65-85): first, by virtue of being a "market power", that is, based on its legal acquis regulating the single market, which can – unintentionally – directly or indirectly (via the European Economic Area including Norway) provide incentives for non-EU countries to follow EU rules (Damro 2012); second, by spending money: "with the EU having invested over €1.14 billion in the European Arctic since 2007, [it] is a key investor in the Arctic" (European Commission 2014: 1), especially in the major funding areas of research and regional development policies; and, third, as a diplomatic actor engaging in both bilateral relations with non-EU Arctic countries and multilateral Arctic-related activities.

Out of these potential leverages that the EU (and its members) can have over the Arctic environment, this analysis focuses on intentional action and investigates EU, Finnish and French Arctic research policies and multilateral actions. First, research policy – arguably "the flower in the buttonhole of EU policies with relevance to the Arctic" (Airoldi 2014: 49) – is mostly confined to the EU's multi-annual framework programmes, and the analysis therefore focuses on the extent to which research programming and funded projects integrate environmental concerns (as opposed to energy-related opportunities) when it comes to the Arctic. Second, multilateral activities are examined by asking to what extent Finland (as a member), France (as an observer) and the EU (as a quasi-observer) promote environmental measures (as opposed to energy-related opportunities) in the Arctic Council (AC) and uphold Arctic-relevant multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) as well as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in the Arctic. As, contrary to the Antarctic, no agreement regulates Arctic issues, UNCLOS represents the main regulatory framework for the region.

Charting the discursive field of EU Arctic policy

This section delves into the Arctic-specific discourses of the European Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS), the Council, the European Parliament, the EU's Arctic members Denmark, Finland and Sweden, as well as key non-Arctic members (France, Germany, Italy, Spain) (see Annex for an overview of the key documents) with a view to locating them on the discursive field regarding EU Arctic policy (see Figure 1).

EU institutions

A first major Communication on "The European Union and the Arctic region", drafted by DG Mare and DG Relex, was released in 2008. It had three key objectives: the protection and preservation of the Arctic, the promotion of a sustainable use of resources and a contribution to multilateral governance in the region (European Commission 2008). While advocating resource use, this use was to follow "strict environmental standards" (ibid.: 7). Its successor, a 2012 Joint Communication, was drafted in the context of the EU's (unsuccessful) bid for observer status in the Arctic Council and aimed at "developing a European Union policy towards the Arctic Region" (European Commission & High Representative 2012). To avoid alienating Arctic Council members, the EU abandoned the idea of promoting multilateral 'Arctic governance' and instead focussed on non-controversial issues related to Arctic cooperation, notably regarding knowledge (research), responsibility (sustainable development) and engagement (international cooperation) (ibid.: 4; Raspotnik 2018: 107-110).

Finally, in 2016, the Commission and the High Representative, building on earlier efforts and on the 2014 Council "conclusions on developing an EU policy toward the Arctic region" (Council of the EU 2014), which had called for a low-profile policy (Raspotnik 2018: 112), published a Joint Communication on "An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic". This Communication was a step in the direction of a full-fledged and comprehensive EU policy towards the Arctic region, an intention underscored a few months later by the 2016 Council Conclusions (Council of the EU 2016).

The 2016 Union's Arctic policy largely builds on existing policy frameworks, combining several sectoral policies relevant to the Arctic: (i) climate change and safeguarding the Arctic environment, (ii) sustainable development in and around the Arctic, and (iii) international cooperation on Arctic issues (European Commission & High Representative 2016). With these foci, the Joint Communication watered down the three original objectives of the 2008 document which became mere 'priority areas'. While these priorities and their extensive treatment point at first sight to a highly pro-environmental stance, the Communication lacks comprehensiveness. It makes no

mention of the precautionary principle, and does not, for instance, address the use of heavy fuel oil in maritime transportation. A major shift over time can also be observed in the discussion related to minerals and fossil fuels extraction. While the 2008 and 2012 documents saw the sustainable use of resources as a major challenge, the 2016 Communication only discusses the extraction of natural resources in the context of international cooperation. Finally, where earlier documents had discussed the Arctic *sensu stricto*, with a focus on the Arctic Ocean, the 2016 update emphasises the sustainable development of the EU's northernmost regions and the need to improve the integration of these regions into the EU's internal market. This shift allows the EU to avoid questions related to the combination of economic development and environmental protection (Stępién & Raspotnik 2016a): by no longer discussing the Arctic Ocean *per se* and its energy sources, the EU fails to recall its significant energy dependence on Norwegian and Russian Arctic fossil fuels (EEA 2015). Ostensibly neglecting the environmental implications of exploiting these energy sources comes close to a tacit endorsement of the energy-related opportunities in the Arctic with a view to ensuring EU energy security.

This omission notwithstanding, the Joint Communication represents a blueprint for an EU-level Arctic policy that leans towards strong EPI. With its 2016 'Conclusions on the Arctic' (Council of the EU 2016), "the Council welcomed the ... joint communication and refrained from any criticism" (Raspotnik 2018: 117). Collectively at EU level, the member states thus support the Commission and the EEAS' approach, including its commitment to EPI. This assessment places the Commission, the EEAS and the Foreign Affairs Council in the upper right corner of Figure 1.

The European Parliament has – via several resolutions (2008, 2011, 2014, 2017) – equally been involved in the EU's policy-making efforts regarding the Arctic. In 2008, it proposed an Arctic regime drawing upon the Antarctic Treaty, with high environmental protection standards (European Parliament 2008). This controversial proposal, not supported by any Arctic player (Wegge 2012), was abandoned in 2011, leading Parliament to change its focus by first calling for a comprehensive and coordinated EU Arctic policy in 2014, and then for a comprehensive EU strategy in 2017 (Raspotnik 2018: 105-107).

The 2017 European Parliament resolution is by far the most detailed, particularly with regard to the environment (European Parliament 2017). It lists all possible environmental agreements relevant to the Arctic and "underlines the importance of UNCLOS in providing the essential multilateral legal framework for all ocean activities, including in the Arctic, for the delimitation of the Arctic continental shelf and for settling intra-Arctic sovereignty issues as regards territorial seas" (ibid.: para. 3). The European Parliament thus recognises the autonomy of Arctic states regarding their

territorial waters, but wishes to limit their sovereignty. Contrary to the Joint Communication, the European Parliament does call for a ban on the use of heavy fuel oil (ibid.: para. 58). Nonetheless, also the Parliament's focus on environmental policy integration has its limits. Following intense lobbying by Norway, the originally proposed, complete ban on oil drilling in Arctic waters was limited to 'icy waters'. Through European Economic Area rules, these proposals also apply to Norwegian waters. However, as Norway already bans drilling in icy waters, these provisions have limited practical effect (Eriksson 2017).

In sum, while clearly favouring the emergence of an EU-level Arctic strategy, the EP has a strong preference for EPI, placing it in the top right corner of Figure 1 – even if in the last years it has reduced the vehemence with which it initially defended environmental protection *vis-à-vis* economic objectives.

Arctic EU member states

Denmark

Denmark adopted its first ten-year Arctic strategy in 2011. It applies to the entire Kingdom, including Greenland and the Faroe Islands, which are not part of the EU. Denmark is through Greenland the only EU country with access to the Arctic Ocean, and is therefore also comparatively less keen on EU-level Arctic action.

The Danish position is aptly captured in the formula: "The huge economic potential in the Arctic must be realised while appreciating its human impact, i.e. the economic and social integration of the population and with sensitivity to environmental concerns" (Government of Denmark *et al.* 2011: 23). Its clear focus is on economic growth and energy opportunities. This becomes already evident when considering the order and degree of detail by which these issues are discussed. The strategy describes at length how oil, gas and minerals are (to be) extracted in Greenland and the Faroe Islands (ibid.: 23-25), before then adding that the highest environmental and safety standards will be used (ibid.: 26-27). There is, however, little explanation on how these two objectives will be reconciled.

Environmental issues are generally alluded to, recognising the vulnerability of the Arctic environment and the need to protect its unique biodiversity. The strategy also argues that it is important to apply the precautionary principle regarding fishery resources and living animals if "there is a lack of adequate knowledge about development in previously icecovered areas" (ibid.: 32) and that knowledge on pollutants must be applied proactively (ibid.: 46). At the same time, it fails to recognise precaution as an overarching aim.

With its limited focus on an EU-level policy, its clear preference for economic development opportunities and the supplementary character of environmental protection considerations, the Danish Arctic strategy is placed in the upper left quadrant of Figure 1.

Finland

The Finnish Strategy for the Arctic was released in 2013 and updated in 2016. It revolves mainly around the economic benefits of the Arctic, paying particular attention to the development of Finland's northernmost region, Lapland. It is not surprising that the country continues to support an enhanced EU role in the Arctic, considering that it successfully managed to upload its regional development focus to the EU level through, *inter alia*, the creation and then re-launching of the Northern Dimension (ND). The ND had been created under the auspices of the Finnish Council presidency in 1997, but was eventually not fully implemented. The second Finnish presidency in 2006 tried to re-launch the ND as a 'partnership model' with Norway, Russia and Iceland. While the ND was not created purely for Arctic cooperation, due to its geographical scope this initiative was an important stepping stone for EU involvement in the region (Wegge 2012).

The strategic document discusses the (potential) contribution of the Finnish industry to the exploitation of oil and gas, renewable energy and forestry opportunities and the ways its industry can cooperate with partners like Greenland and Russia. The strategy indeed considers Finnish companies to be well-suited to participate in the extraction of Arctic resources, due to their expertise and experience of working in Arctic conditions in fields ranging from construction to ship-building (Prime Minister's Office 2013: 26-27). By contrast, its section on the environment is relatively short and general – even though the precautionary approach is mentioned as a general principle of managing environmental risks (*ibid*: 39). It recognises the sensitivity of the Arctic region, the negative impact of a changing climate on biodiversity and the need to pursue environmental monitoring. At the same time, the strategy is explicit in stating that these effects "also open up new opportunities" (*ibid.*).

The 2016 update of the strategy reiterates the prioritisation of economic benefits by only briefly discussing the need to combat climate change and protect the environment, while emphasising economic opportunities such as sustainable tourism and the 'commercialisation' of Arctic expertise. The latter would allow Finland to take advantage of its expertise of working in cold Arctic conditions in areas such as the construction industry and the bioeconomy (Prime Minister's Office 2016).

Finland is therefore placed in the same quadrant of Figure 1 as Denmark, albeit a bit higher to reflect its more pronounced pro-EU stance.

Sweden

The Swedish Arctic strategy dates from 2011 and is arguably more environment-friendly than Denmark's (Regeringskansliet 2011). It was complemented (but not replaced) by a 2016 memorandum released by the Ministry of Environment and Energy on a "New Swedish environmental policy for the Arctic", which focuses on environment-specific considerations (Regeringskansliet 2016). However, the 2011 strategy provides the overarching frame of Swedish Arctic policy, arguing that "Sweden will actively contribute to the development of an EU Arctic policy ... [and] promote the EU as a relevant cooperation partner in the High North within relevant policy areas" (Regeringskansliet 2011: 18).

Like the Danish strategy, the 2011 Swedish document discusses the impact of climate change on the Arctic, the vulnerable Arctic ecosystem and the role of pollutants, but stops short of referring to the precautionary principle. The 2016 memorandum by the Environment Ministry only mentions it specifically in the context of fisheries. Nevertheless, this latter document arguably represents the most environment-friendly of all analysed EU members' strategies. While the 2011 strategy stated that "sensitive areas must be protected from exploitation" of resources (Regeringskansliet 2011: 31), the 2016 memorandum mentions that "the extraction of oil and gas for burning must be restricted" in order to limit global warming to 2°C (Regeringskansliet 2016: 4).

Sweden explicitly recognises the economic opportunities in the Arctic, while stating that "the anticipated future extraction of natural resources ... and the use of renewable resources" should "take place in a sustainable manner" (Regeringskansliet 2011: 30). It claims to have no "direct national energy interests" but does see a role for its industry in supporting the energy sector, for instance "in the fields of ice-breaking, sea transport" (ibid.: 37). The strategy does not fully explain when environmental concerns should take priority over economic opportunities, except when referring to environmental assessments and to the Polar Code of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

Locating the Swedish discourse on the Arctic is intricate, given the existence of two different documents on the subject. The original Swedish strategy, while solidly pro-EU, falls into a similar category as Denmark's and Finland's with regard to EPI. It thus belongs into the upper left quadrant of Figure 1. By contrast, its environmentally friendly 2016 memorandum, which is however only an add-on to the main document (see Schulze 2017, who does not even consider it), could place Sweden into the upper right

quadrant. This double-counting of Sweden is indicative of internal political cleavages surrounding the 'Arctic paradox', which in other countries have been settled through compromise documents. In the further analysis, the 2011 Prime Minister's Strategy is considered as the key document of importance for Sweden.

This overview of the three Arctic EU member states' strategies shows that economic benefits receive more attention than environmental concerns, most strongly in the cases of Finland and Denmark. All countries recognise the vulnerability of the Arctic environment and the need to balance economic development with environmental concerns, but there is little discussion of how this would work in practice, that is, which dimensions should receive priority in which case(s). All three countries support a role for the EU in Arctic governance, but Denmark is clearly the most reluctant in this regard, given its longstanding defence of Greenlandic interests within the EU framework.

Non-Arctic EU member states

This section looks at four non-Arctic EU members (France, Germany, Italy, Spain), all of whom are observers in the AC and possess articulate positions on the Arctic.

France

France's 2016 "national roadmap for the Arctic" covers scientific research, economic development, defence and security, the protection of the Arctic marine environment, France's role in international fora, the EU, national interests and the common interest in the region (MFA France 2016). Like other countries' strategies, the roadmap speaks of the many economic opportunities and challenges that are opening up as a result of climate change. Economic opportunities include international shipping, pleasure cruising, the extraction of mineral resources, infrastructures, satellite surveillance and fisheries. Noteworthy is the explicit naming of French companies whose economic interests in the Arctic are predicted to increase, such as Total, Engie or Technip (ibid.).

The French strategy recognises the authority of Arctic coastal states to regulate economic activities, but suggests to work at bi- and multilateral levels to regulate the activities of extractive industries, bearing in mind their environmental impact and risks. Indeed, the roadmap expresses a belief that all "potential users of the Arctic Ocean" have to act responsibly to protect marine ecosystems in a context of economic growth (ibid.: 11, 40). In this context, it recommends to "mainstream environmental protection" (ibid.: 28), but remains unclear about how private companies are to abide by this.

In order to meet the “obligations of environmental ethics”, France itself is to “behave in an exemplary manner” (ibid.: 40). To that end, the roadmap backs the process of delimiting marine protected areas in the Arctic in cooperation with stakeholders, as well as in close collaboration with the European Commission in order to achieve a successful outcome in talks on the regulation of activities in the central Arctic Ocean. A section on “France, an Arctic player” highlights the support for the precautionary principle and advocates the “empowerment of the non-Arctic countries that are potential users of the Arctic Ocean” through an engagement in the planning and decision-making processes (ibid.: 60).

With this roadmap, France is championing the involvement of non-Arctic countries in the region. Although “on the whole, the profitability of business activities in the Arctic still seems to be limited for French companies” (ibid.: 27), and despite the “obligations of environmental ethics” (ibid.: 40), the document leans towards economic and energy interests over environmental concerns. France sees the EU as having a ‘key’ role in the region (ibid.: 51-52) and believes that a more integrated EU Arctic policy will strengthen the EU’s bid for permanent observer status in the Arctic Council (ibid.: 53).

This discourse places France into the camp of pro-EU Arctic policy member states, with a moderate vision of EPI.

Germany

The 2013 ‘guidelines’ of the Federal Foreign Office intend to place the Arctic at the centre of Germany’s foreign policy. Indeed, the document highlights the “great potential” for the German and European “industry and consumers” of Arctic energy, raw materials and fishing resources (Federal Foreign Office 2013: 1, 6). However, Germany also acknowledges the multiple dangers linked to the impact of climate change on the region. To mitigate these risks, the document emphasises the need to ensure “that the highest environmental standards are met and the principle of precautionary action is adhered to” (ibid.: 7). One of the suggestions put forward to safeguard the environment and the region’s biodiversity in a context of “positive economic prospects” (ibid.) consists of creating a network of marine protected areas, an idea also mentioned in the French roadmap.

Additionally, Germany sees the need for the EU to take on a more active role in Arctic policy and wishes to guarantee “horizontal coherence on Arctic issues” (ibid.: 15) on a wide range of policies including but not limited to, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), environment, energy, maritime transport, which represents a particular German interest, and fisheries (ibid.; Raspotnik 2018: 121). The underlying goal for

Germany is “to make Arctic policy part of long-term strategic planning within the EU” (Federal Foreign Office 2013: 15).

The German guidelines are similar to the French and Italian ones (see below) in that they propose national expertise in research, technology and environmental standards to further sustainable economic development, trying to strike a balance between economic and environmental concerns but ultimately tilting the balance towards the economic side. This places the country in a similar position as France in Figure 1.

Italy

In a document entitled “Towards an Italian Strategy for the Arctic: National Guidelines”, Italy dissects its interests in the region into four dimensions: political, environmental and human, scientific, and economic. Contrary to most other non-Arctic EU member states’ documents, the economic section comes last, with the underlying goal of “sustainable development” permeating all parts of the text (MFA Italy 2015).

In relation to the political dimension, Italy’s contribution to science and energy company ENI’s expertise in hydrocarbon extraction in Norway and Russia is presented as a factor to foster “sustainable Arctic development” (ibid.: 4). The strategy explicitly acknowledges the importance of the Arctic Ocean to the EU and highlights the active role Italy played in the drafting of the Directive on safety of offshore oil and gas operations. Quoting the requirement to “ensure the environmental protection of the Arctic” in offshore operations, Italy offers its expertise on hydrocarbon exploration and extraction in compliance with “the highest standards of safety and environmental protection” (ibid.: 5, 6).

The section on the “environmental and human dimension” of the Arctic outlines key environmental aims: “protection of biodiversity, prevention of air pollution, reversal of climate change, marine conservation and integrated management of coastal zones ... and the exploitation of natural resources as well as addressing environmental risks posed by transport by sea, tourism, mining and harbour operations” (ibid.: 7). Cooperation and exchanges with Arctic countries “can and must” provide development opportunities for Italy in some of those fields (ibid.).

The chapter on science contains the most concrete strategic guidelines. Scientific knowledge is seen as key to inform policy options on economic development – in particular the use of natural resources – as well as on climate mitigation. One such guideline concerns Italy’s efforts to strengthen European Arctic infrastructure.

The section on economic development tries to make a case for Italian enterprises, notably ENI, to which a full subsection is devoted, when it comes to bringing together “advanced technology and the preservation of its environmental and cultural heritage” in the economic exploitation of the Arctic (ibid.: 16). This explicit reference to the Arctic stakes of national private sector ‘champions’ mirrors – but transcends by far – the French approach.

In conclusion, although environmental concerns play a more prominent role in Italy’s than in the Arctic countries’ strategies, the ultimate goal seems to be that of investing in scientific research to pursue economic development. As is the case with other countries’ positions, this economic development is to be built to a large extent on the exploitation of fossil fuels. This places Italy, together with France and Germany, towards the upper centre of Figure 1.

Spain

The least economic-oriented document of those studied here, the 2016 “Guidelines for a Spanish Polar Strategy”, covers both the Arctic and Antarctica (MEIC Spain 2016). In line with other EU members, Spain claims that it desires to take on a more active role in EU policy-making in the Arctic regarding fisheries and CFSP matters. To this end, it proposes the formation of a Polar working group under the Council (ibid.: 14).

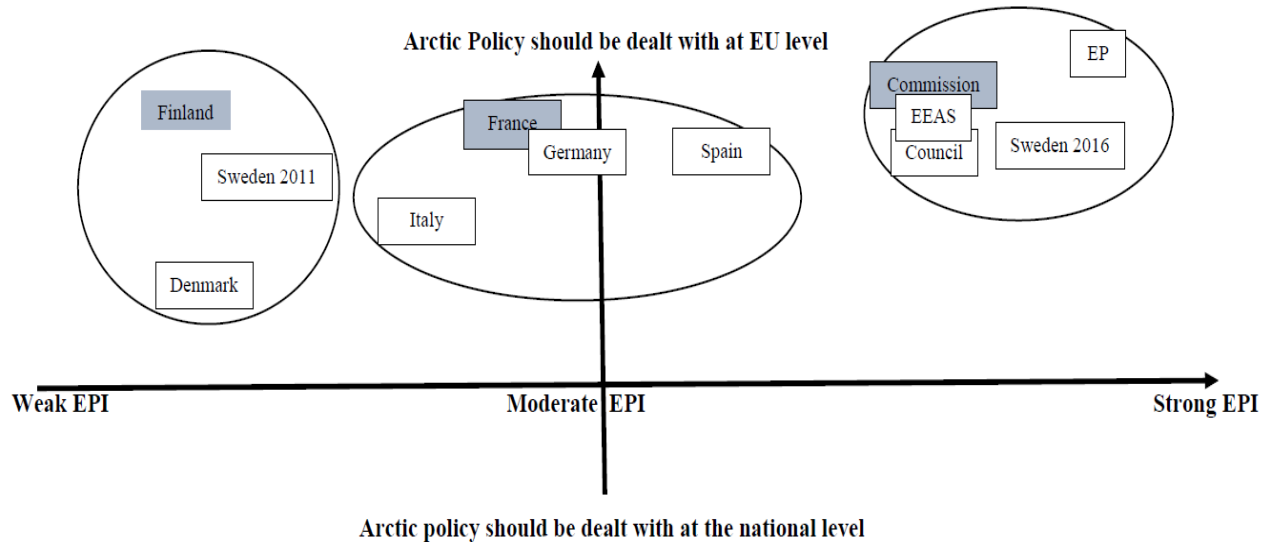
Like the Italian document, the Spanish one discusses economic issues last, but without reference to national companies. The guidelines contain only a subsection on “sectoral issues”, which advocates a “stable, sustainable and environmentally-friendly” economic development attaching high priority to “maintaining biodiversity” (ibid.: 27). Additionally, a paragraph mentions key areas of interest for Spain: natural resources, navigation, a vaguely formulated “commercial activity in the polar regions” and development of new technologies (ibid.: 28). Only the parts on fishing and navigation are more elaborate (ibid.). Altogether, the Spanish guidelines appear as the most EPI-minded document of the four non-Arctic EU member states, placing the country in the same category as the other three countries, but slightly more towards the ‘stronger EPI’ end of the spectrum.

Overall, the member states studied in this section share an inclination towards economic interests over environmental preoccupations, albeit to different degrees. All strategies try nonetheless to argue that economic development can go hand in hand with environmental protection and offer their countries’ expertise to exploit Arctic resources. The EU also features in the member states’ strategies, which recognise its importance in Arctic affairs and support its bid for observer status in the Arctic Council.

Comparative summary: coexisting discourse coalitions

The analysis reveals the co-existence of three different clusters of discourse coalitions⁴ constituting the current discursive field on the EU's Arctic policy (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The discursive field of the EU's Arctic policy



Note: The countries in grey and the European Commission were selected as case studies.

Source: authors' compilation

A first, "strong EPI, strong pro-EU" cluster brings together those actors who rhetorically support an important EU role in Arctic policy alongside a rather strong form of environmental policy integration into the Union's Arctic policy. This cluster comprises the EU institutions and Sweden's 2016 Environment Ministry's add-on to the country's 2011 strategy. It contains thus those supranational actors (including the Council as collective voice of the member states) who will normally defend an EU position, and have additionally adopted a pro-environmental rhetoric. Due to the absence of support from any (major) EU member state, the cluster remains overall weaker. Further analysis will focus on the European Commission as representative of this cluster,

A second, "moderate EPI, strong pro-EU" cluster comprises the non-Arctic EU members France, Germany, Italy and Spain, which all advocate environmental policy integration to some extent, with minor differences, and support an EU-level Arctic policy. From this cluster, the analysis will focus on France as a typical representative of the cluster's shared discourse (see also Raspotnik 2018: 121).

⁴ These clusters are considered as 'discourse coalitions' not because their members have purposively decided to coalesce and align their discourses, but as a result of similar and overlapping story lines.

A third “weak EPI, moderate pro-EU” cluster comprises the Arctic EU members, all of which have a clear preference for seizing the economic opportunities offered by the Arctic over environmental protection needs. While Finland’s strategy and Sweden’s 2011 strategy are moderately pro-EU, the Danish strategy may be the outlier of all analysed cases, which – given its relations with Greenland – is not in favour of an engaged EU Arctic policy (see also Raspotnik 2018: 120). Given the privileged access to Arctic governance fora enjoyed by the three countries, this cluster carries a certain weight. From this cluster, the analysis further concentrates on Finland as a typical case of a country whose strategies express preferences for weak EPI (Interview 6).

Altogether, and answering the question to what extent environmental concerns – as opposed to economic, especially energy-related opportunities – are taken into account in the EU’s and member states’ discourses regarding the Arctic, the findings point to the co-existence of three discourse coalitions which largely agree on the role of the EU but display differing positions when it comes to the desired degree of EPI. This points to the fact that discourse structuration, that is, a situation in which “central actors are persuaded by, or forced to accept, the rhetorical power” of a *single* discourse, has not yet occurred with regard to EU Arctic policy (Hajer 1993: 47-48). Rather, the findings underscore that the discursive field on the EU’s Arctic policy – in particular with regard to the ‘Arctic paradox’ – remains wide-open. This confirms that “the 2016 joint communication is not a definite EU-Arctic statement but rather aimed to act as ... guidance to Commission services” (European Commission & High Representative 2016: 17; Interview 5), and that the EU’s declared Arctic policy “remains a very diverse set of ideas, trying to reconcile contradictory values and interests” (Stępień & Raspotnik 2016b: 397).

Probing into practice: have EU discourses on EPI in the Arctic become institutionalised?

Based on the selection of three emblematic actors⁵ from each of the above discourse coalitions – the European Commission, Finland and France – the purpose of this section is to probe into their Arctic activities in order to examine to what extent (i) environmental concerns (as to economic, energy-related opportunities) are taken into account and (ii) whether this behaviour is in line with their rhetoric, that is, whether discourses have impacted on practices even in the absence of discourse structuration. The extent of EPI in these actors’ practices is assessed by examining their research funding activities as well as multilateral activities in the Arctic Council and in

⁵ The three actors chosen from the clusters represent ‘typical’ cases of the respective discourse coalitions. This allows for employing them to illustrate the types of activities such representatives of a cluster undertake, bearing in mind that energy mixes and specific interests in the Arctic can of course vary even among actors with similar discourses.

support of international environmental law for the Arctic. To be able to determine this extent and compare rhetoric to action, this assessment is preceded by a brief consideration of the players' pursuit of economic objectives in the Arctic.

Pursuing economic opportunities in the Arctic

The pursuit of opportunities beyond that of a diffusely defined 'sustainable development' is not explicitly formulated as an objective of the EU's Arctic policy, and the EU currently is not empowered to become active in key Arctic-relevant policy domains. It may be able to set regulatory frameworks for its economic actors with regard to some of the Arctic opportunities (e.g. fishery), but does not possess the legal competence regarding such an important matter as the steering of the EU-28's energy security policies, for instance. As article 194 TFEU foresees that the "choice between different energy sources and the general structure of [their] energy supply" falls upon member states, the latter are the first in line when it comes to exploiting already discovered and undiscovered Arctic fossil fuel resources. Experts estimate that there are "\$35 trillion worth of untapped oil and natural gas under the Arctic seabed" (EEAS 2015: 6; Standish 2018).

The Commission *per se* may therefore not be so active when it comes to Arctic opportunities, but there is a strong engagement of the EU-28, notably in the energy domain. Almost 70% of natural gas and 41% of oil imports into the EU-28 stem from Russia and Norway (Eurostat 2017: 15). A significant share of these hydrocarbons is extracted in the Arctic (EEA 2015). European companies such as ENI and Repsol are already active in the Arctic and gearing up for more. ENI, which is explicitly mentioned as a potential beneficiary of Arctic environmental changes in the Italian Arctic guidelines, considers the "Arctic ... a key pillar to [its] growth" (ENI 2012). Shell (2016) halted its Arctic explorations in 2015 for reasons related to extraction costs and local unrest about its activities, but its CEO explained: "In the long run, ... the world economy is going to need Arctic oil ... a lot of the oil and gas used around the world today comes from the Arctic and ... it will continue to play a key role".

France makes comparatively limited use of (imported) oil and gas, accounting for 30% respectively 14% of total energy consumed (Commissariat Général 2016: 11). Although Arctic countries are among France's key providers of gas (42.2% from Norway, 11.4% from Russia), they are less significant when it comes to oil (7.9% from Russia, 6.1% from Norway) (Ministère de l'Environnement 2016: 36, 39). Although French companies are active in the Arctic,⁶ mostly in Norway, but also in Canada and Russia (MFA France 2016: 29), the dependence on Arctic fossil fuels is thus limited.

⁶ Interestingly, one of the companies identified in the French roadmap as potential beneficiary of a changing Arctic, Total, has ruled out Arctic oil drilling, citing the 2°C goal (Darby 2016).

The Finnish energy mix heavily relies on imported hydrocarbons, which make up 38% of its energy mix (oil: 23%, coal: 9%, gas: 6%) (IEA 2017). Roughly 88% of oil, 64% of coal and 100% of gas are imported from Russia (ibid.). Besides this reliance on Russian (predominantly Arctic) fossil fuels, the country is actively seeking to develop its northernmost region by pursuing Arctic opportunities. Most recently, Finland's Ambassador for Northern Policies Mäki-Reinikka argued that there is "immense potential in the Arctic (...) [w]hy wouldn't we use the opportunities that are being presented to us?" (Standish 2018). Illustrative of manifold activities to exploit these opportunities are plans to join Norway in constructing a railway route linking Lapland to the Norwegian port of Kirkenes, which would *inter alia* "provide a more direct route for exporting Arctic resources from the area's lucrative mining, forestry and fisheries industries to Asian markets" (ibid.). The Finnish government is thus fully acting in line with its discourse to pursue opportunities in the region (Interview 6).

This brief probe demonstrates in the first place that discourse and practice are fully aligned when it comes to economic opportunities. Given legal constraints, the EU cannot and does not really engage in exploiting Arctic opportunities, while Finland is openly doing so and France is prepared to do so, but to a more limited extent.

Funding research on the Arctic

Both the EU (Commission) and its member states have been major investors in Arctic research, making this one of their key regional activities. With such funding, they can contribute to a better knowledge base about the Arctic in manifold ways, for instance regarding changing environmental conditions and ways to protect this fragile environment. Analysing research programming and the types of activities to which funding is allocated is thus crucial to understand the degree of EPI pertaining to this component of the EU's Arctic policy.

At the EU level, funding for Arctic research goes back to the research framework programmes (FP) 5 and 6 (1998-2006), which fed into the International Polar Year 2007-2009 (Raspotnik 2018: 80). During FP 7 (2007-2013), the EU then invested some € 200 mio into Arctic research (Immler 2014). Key themes included geo-observation and climate change-related research, but some projects also focussed on maritime transport, fisheries and resource extraction (ibid.). Under Horizon 2020 (H2020, 2014-2020), the EU has been continuing to fund Arctic research with a steady focus on the environment and climate change. This responds to the 2012 Commission and High Representative's call for research to be "at the centre of European Commission engagement in the Arctic" (ibid.: 6), and the aim to spend 20% of the EU's 2014-2020 budget on climate-related activities.

Under H2020 Societal Challenge 5 “Climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials”, “the Arctic dimension and earth observation” represents a sub-domain in its own right. In the 2017 call for proposals, € 97 mio out of a total of € 367 mio were dedicated to this cluster, representing the highest share among the thematic sub-domains (e.g. “climate services and decarbonisation”, “circular economy”) (European Commission 2018). As of April 2018, the Community Research and Development Information Service (CORDIS) database indicates that 67 Arctic-related projects have been financed since the start of H2020 (in total 455 such projects were financed under all FPs, including both collaborative and individual research projects). Currently, the major projects are brought together in the “EU Arctic Cluster”, a network of seven Horizon 2020 and one FP7 projects (EUPolarnet 2018). The general funding trend is replicated in this cluster: the overwhelming majority of projects is related to climate and environmental research as well as geo-observation, with few projects looking into, for instance, future maritime transportation opportunities in the Arctic. Another major Arctic-related call programmed for 2019 (“LC-CLA-07-2019: The changing cryosphere: uncertainties, risks and opportunities”) further confirms this trend: amidst several strands focussing on climate change, it contains only one sub-theme focussing on “the viability of new economic activities – such as resource exploitation, shipping and tourism”, but even here the subtitle adds “and their ecological and socio-economic impacts and feedbacks at various scales” (European Commission 2017: 23).

In the case of France, its research funding has regularly been allocated to “polar science” covering both the Arctic and the Antarctic. Specific Arctic research has been concentrated within the “French Arctic Initiative” (“Chantier Arctique”), created in 2010 to coordinate over 400 French researchers in the natural, social sciences and humanities working on the Arctic.⁷ It is co-organised by the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), which operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Research, and the French Polar Institute Paul-Emile Victor, a public organisation bringing together key players of French polar research (Chantier Arctique 2018). The Initiative published calls for proposals in 2015-2016, focussing on understanding the changing Arctic environment, but has been less active since.

In contrast to France, Finland has continuously and strategically dedicated funding to Arctic research. As a key follow-up to the country’s 2013 Arctic strategy, the Academy of Finland launched the “Arctic Academy Programme” (ARKTIKO, 2014-2018). It “aims to study and understand the change factors affecting the development of the Arctic

⁷ This represents the main Arctic research-focussed French initiative. French research institutes also quite successfully participate in EU-funded Arctic research under H2020, and France ranks 9th world-wide when it comes to Arctic research (MFA France 2016: 17).

region, the transformation process, and the dynamics of change” (Academy of Finland 2018), focussing on “key questions ... related to understanding economic, social, cultural and ecological change”, with a notable emphasis on socioeconomic factors (Academy of Finland 2014: 6).⁸ Consequently, its four main themes are: “good-quality life in the north; economic activity and infrastructure in Arctic conditions; the northern climate and environment; and cross-border Arctic policy” (ibid.). ARKTIKO funds 20 international research projects and two international joint projects that involve other Arctic countries like Norway (Academy of Finland 2018). The projects financed, at around €10 mio annually, are thematically varied. While several address environmental issues, a considerable amount deals with socioeconomic topics such as “Oil Production networks in the Russian Arctic” and “Understanding the Cultural Impacts and Issues of Lapland Mining” (ibid.). Finnish Arctic research funding is thus fully reflective of its 2013 strategy. In its rhetoric and action, Finland seems to understand sustainable development in the Arctic as being primarily about development.

In sum, Arctic-related research programming and project financing have been concentrated largely at the EU level, with more limited opportunities in France and Finland. For all three cases, actual practice fully corresponds to the previously analysed discourse. At the EU level, considerable sums are invested, and they primarily concern research aimed at better understanding the changes in the Arctic environment. In France, national science funding for Arctic research is limited, but where it exists, it tends to privilege environmental issues. In Finland, funding is to a large extent geared towards economic opportunities in the Arctic context. These findings need to be properly contextualised, however. From the European Commission and French perspectives, Arctic science funding has been explicitly used as a vehicle to claim a stake in the Arctic and to gain a(n observer) seat in the Arctic Council (Interview 3). In that sense, the EU and French strategies involve a form of “science for diplomacy”, that is, the instrumental use of science (funding) for the purpose of advancing the objective of becoming important players in the Arctic.⁹

Participation in the Arctic Council

This section examines the funding and participation of the EU (Commission), Finland and France in relevant working groups of the Arctic Council, the forum credited with

⁸ This is currently the main Finnish funding source for Arctic research, modelled on similar programmes operated by Canada and the US (Academy of Finland 2014). Other sources, such as the Nordic Council’s “Joint Nordic Initiative on Arctic Research” (Nordforsk 2018), exist, and Finnish researchers also participate in EU-funded Arctic projects.

⁹ ‘Science for diplomacy’ depicts the use of science as a means to advance other foreign policy aims, whereas ‘diplomacy for science’ is about how diplomacy can facilitate international science cooperation (The Royal Society 2010: v-vi).

the shifting of the Arctic from a mere geographical entity to an operational regional cooperation framework (Young 2011). The AC's main tasks involve the promotion of cooperation among Arctic states (i.e. 'permanent participants'), including with regard to environmental issues. Finland is one such permanent participant and it is currently the chair of the AC (2017-2019). Non-Arctic states may apply for 'observer status', a status enjoyed by France since 2000. The EU, despite not having obtained this very status, is treated as an "observer-in principle" (Koivurova 2016).

The Arctic Council has no budget of its own, and its Secretariat is largely funded by Norway (42.5% of the budget) and its permanent participants (57.7%, distributed equally) (Arctic Council Secretariat 2016). The AC working groups are funded through both direct contributions (mainly from Arctic states) and in-kind contributions/collaborations, usually in the form of individual experts' working hours (national, European and international agencies, observer states, etc.) (ibid.). In 2017, out of €1.8 million proposed by Finland for Baltic Sea, Barents and Arctic cooperation (Finnish Ministry of Finance 2017), €1.3 million were channelled into projects supporting its AC chair's four priority areas (environmental protection, receiving the largest share; connectivity; meteorological cooperation; education) (Interview 4). Contrary to Finland, no French ministry has a specific budgetary line for AC projects, nor a breakdown of the money spent in AC projects (Interview 3). For the EU, there is also no specific budgetary line for participation in Arctic governance, which is why it has supported its bid for observer status in the AC by pointing to the most tangible financing that has flown into Arctic-related matters, which stems from its research framework programmes, as discussed above (Immler 2014).

When it comes to promoting environmental protection, the most relevant AC working groups are the Arctic Contaminants Action Programme (ACAP), the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) and the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME).¹⁰

In ACAP, only one submission was (co-)authored by the Finnish administration, the 2017 Framework for the Circumpolar Expansion of the Local Environmental Network (ACAP 2017a). Another document on the reduction of black carbon (one of the Finnish preoccupations (Interviews 1, 2)), was signed by NEFCO, an international finance institution with observer status at the AC, which was established by Finland and the other Nordic countries (ACAP 2017b). No activity could be detected for the Commission and France.

¹⁰ The analysis relies on eight reports and assessments published by ACAP in the Open Access Archive, AMAP's 15 scientific assessment reports and PAME's 17 meeting reports.

AMAP, the largest and best funded working group (Exner-Pirot 2016), published 15 scientific reports between 2009 and 2017. Although these documents explain in the preface that the list of contributors is not comprehensive and does not include “many national institutes, laboratories and organisations, and their staff” (AMAP 2017a), the examination of the specific acknowledgements can shed light on the degree of participation of the three players. In 14 papers, AMAP thanks the Nordic Council of Ministers (including Finland), for its financial support. One of these reports explicitly highlights Finland’s role (AMAP 2017b). By contrast, France and the EU (Commission) are not mentioned once.

The participation in PAME meetings of Finnish, French and EU representatives is well-documented in the meeting reports. Although Finland is more active and visible (e.g. as co-leader of the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment Implementation Progress Report), France and the EU have shown an interest in projects such as the Arctic Ocean Review and have presented their perspectives on the Arctic (PAME 2018). Contrary to the Finnish delegation, which is regularly represented by the Ministry of Environment, the French and Commission participation has considerably varied. France initially sent an expert from the Ministry of Transport, but from 2015 onwards the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took over. In the EU’s case, representation has been shared among Commission DGs MARE, ENVI and MOVE, as well as with the European Maritime Safety Agency and the European Environment Agency, the latter being the only official representative attending PAME meetings since 2015.

Altogether, while the visibility of France and the Commission in the AC’s operations is very limited, Finland as an Arctic country, permanent participant and current AC chair is an active contributor to the Council’s work, including with regard to the environment.

Promoting international environmental law for the Arctic

This section probes into the EU’s, Finland’s and France’s activities in the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and of several multilateral environmental agreements with particular relevance for the Arctic. All member states and the EU are parties to UNCLOS, the main international agreement related to the world’s oceans and marine resources. Specifically from an environmental point of view, the ongoing discussions under UNCLOS regarding Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) are important for the Arctic, given that the Arctic Ocean is biodiversity-rich, but largely falls outside national jurisdictions. Building on its promotion of other environmental initiatives within UNCLOS, the EU has played a key role in the preparatory stages of the BBNJ talks (Churchill 2018: 17-21), actively pushing for the start of the treaty negotiations which kicked off in December 2017 (Interview 1).

While no international agreement specifically targets the region, several MEAs mention the Arctic and are at least partially aimed at solving Arctic-related issues. Two important MEAs concern chemicals: the 2001 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the 2013 Minamata Convention on Mercury. As the hazardous substances regulated by these conventions are persistent, bio-accumulative and have long-range transport potential, they can be particularly harmful for the vulnerable Arctic environment. The negotiations on both conventions partially started in response to the findings of Arctic research programmes (Selin 2014: 5-6). In these negotiations, the EU played an ambitious and largely successful leadership role, first driven by individual member states such as Sweden, then collectively (Biedenkopf 2018: 194-196). Since its entry into force, the EU has been an active player regarding the addition of chemicals to be prohibited or limited in their use under the Stockholm Convention, such as perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) (Chemicalwatch 2015). While it is still too early to analyse its role in the implementation of the Minamata Convention, the EU and many of its members such as Finland and France perceive this treaty as important for the Arctic, despite the fact that some EU members like Italy, Poland and Spain have not yet ratified it (UNEP 2018).

Next to pollution from chemicals, a key challenge to the Arctic environment stems from heavy fuel oil used in maritime transportation. Heavy fuel oil could be environmentally harmful in case of an oil spill, and its combustion releases black carbon, reducing the reflecting capacity of the ice-covered Arctic, and thus accelerating climate change. In the IMO, the European Arctic countries are pushing for a heavy fuel oil ban similar to the one already in place in Antarctic waters. Among EU countries, Finland has taken the lead on this matter, together with Germany, The Netherlands and Sweden. Most other EU countries, including France, are supportive, but seem to be less proactive (Stefanini 2018).

Overall, the EU has thus been rather active in the negotiations of MEAs relevant to the Arctic, with Finland being among the most supportive EU members and France among the regular, but less proactive supporters.

Extracting key patterns

The probe into the practice of the representatives of the three discourse coalitions on EPI in the EU's Arctic policy largely confirms the results of the discourse analysis. As argued above, no 'discourse structuration' could be detected in the original sense of the term, that is, in the form of a *single* discourse emerging as dominant when it comes to EPI in the EU's Arctic policy, which could then lead to a pattern of consistent institutional practices (Hajer 1993: 47-48). Instead, the co-existence of three discourses is replicated through a distinct set of practices, as the behaviour of each of the

examined players largely conforms to the discourse of its 'coalition', with a nuance concerning Finland and further discussed below. Discourses have thus seemingly become institutionalised as per cluster of discourse coalition.

When it comes to the Commission as representative of a 'strong EPI' discourse coalition that is essentially confined to the EU institutions, its actions are mostly concentrated on what it can effectively do under its current legal mandate: promoting environmental measures through its research funding and multilateral activities, while keeping a lower profile in the Arctic Council, in which it is – given Russian resistance in particular – only a *de facto* observer. Its activities – notably the considerable funding that flows into Arctic research – do not merely pursue environmental objectives. Instead, they are also meant to guarantee the EU a (future) stake in the Arctic.

France is the typical representative of a cluster that includes EU member states with an interest in the Arctic and observer status in the AC. It supports an EU policy on the Arctic and has, in its self-understanding, a rather 'balanced' view of sustainable development in the region. France's primary interest is to be a player in the Arctic. If this means employing scientific research (funding) as an access point, it will employ such 'science for Arctic diplomacy'. Additionally, each country has interests in certain sectoral policies (e.g. Germany in maritime transport and research, Italy in hydrocarbons, Spain in fishing) (Raspotnik 2018: 120-122). Their support to EPI in the framework of the EU's Arctic policy is now moderate, but may be contingent on future developments in the region.

Finland as a typical representative of the Nordic countries' discourse coalition (and often acting in concert with them through the Nordic Council) is mainly concerned with its own development, and this despite the fact that as a chair of the AC it also promotes environmental protection measures. This environmental proactivity requires nuancing: although in the AC the Finnish government claims that the "most important" concern Arctic states have to address is climate change (Soini 2018; Interview 2), its Arctic strategy and actions – as illustrated by the Kirkenes railway infrastructure project and its research funding – point to a different conclusion, namely a clear "dualism ... in the relationship between environmental protection and exploitation of the natural resources" in the Arctic (Nykänen 2017: 144; Interview 6). This dualism is expressed in its preference for weak EPI in the EU's Arctic policy.

The pattern that emerges from the discourse and practice analyses is thus that of a multi-level EU Arctic policy, in which the EU level (including the Foreign Affairs Council as collective voice of the member states) displays a preference for a rather strong EPI, whereas at the member state level moderate to weak degrees of EPI indicate a

privileging of economic opportunities, which may to some extent thwart efforts at the EU level. To answer the paper's research question, at the aggregate EU level this pattern currently points to a moderate level of discursive and practical commitment to EPI in EU Arctic policy. This commitment remains however fragile given member state differences.

Conclusion

Against the backdrop of the 'Arctic paradox', this paper set out to investigate the extent to which the European Union has integrated environmental concerns into its emerging Arctic policy, distinguishing between discursive and practical commitments to EPI. It finds that three distinct discourse coalitions and – what could be termed – 'practice coalitions' co-exist when it comes to the extent of EPI in the EU's Arctic policy: at one end of the spectrum ranging from strong to weak EPI, a pro-environmental coalition essentially comprises the EU institutions (and the Swedish Environment Ministry); at the other end, the Nordic countries pay attention to environmental issues to a much more limited extent in the Arctic context, prioritising economic opportunities instead; in-between, a strong coalition displaying a moderate attachment to EPI comprises big EU member states like France and Germany who desire to be players in the Arctic for different, economic interest-related reasons.

This multi-level pattern with an EU-level pro-EPI discourse and action and varying member state-level commitments to EPI in discourse and action leads to the conclusion that the EU's aggregate Arctic policy is currently 'green by omission' but does not represent a "stable and predictable pattern of action" (Stępień 2015: 251). With this policy, the EU occupies the space liberated by its members. It can adopt a rather solid green discourse and engage in largely uncontroversial activities such as research funding, again mostly on environmental issues, as (long as) this does not take anything away from its members. At the same time, given legal constraints and interest conflicts among the latter, the EU's current Arctic policy deliberately omits contentious issues, leaving the national level to deal with those. As this seems to have become widely accepted, discourse structuration (and institutionalisation) regarding EPI in the EU's Arctic policy – in Hajer's sense – may have occurred *ex negativo*, that is, on what the EU *does not say* (and *does not do*).

Against this backdrop, it must be said that the EU does not yet possess a coherent Arctic strategy, and that the substance of its Arctic policy has over time actually been reduced in ambition (see also Raspotnik 2018: 93-122), in particular when it comes to the environment. An – in the official terminology – 'integrated EU Arctic policy' that is to such an extent ambiguous may have little practical value. Choosing to live with the tensions between environmental protection needs and the desire to exploit economic

opportunities by sweeping controversies under the carpet of a 'catch-all' composite policy, the EU currently lacks a compass and risks that its members will not feel bound by commitments to *sustainable* development when 'anything goes' in the El Dorado of a largely ice-free Arctic.

The likelihood that the 'Arctic paradox' will be addressed by opting for a stronger, less equivocal EPI in the EU context depends heavily on the scope conditions that allowed for the emergence of the *status quo*. These are related to institutional factors (especially the legal framework regulating EU Arctic policy), varying ideas about sustainable development and different interests regarding the Arctic. First, the legal context is bound to remain unfavourable in the absence of a (highly unlikely) treaty reform, especially when it comes to energy resources. Second, despite the particular fragility of the Arctic environment, member states are following an ideational stance inspired by the predominant sustainable development logic embodied in the 'Europe 2020' narrative, which maintains that the creation of 'jobs and growth' should be actively pursued in *all* sectors and circumstances. This ideational positioning comes hand-in-hand with strong member state interests concerning primarily energy security. To satisfy their needs for a stable and uninterrupted energy supply, many member states continue to eye the Arctic. Other economic interests are most strongly and comprehensively articulated by the Nordic countries, and related to specific issues such as maritime transportation in the case of the non-Arctic, but Arctic-interested EU members. At the same time, many member states not discussed in this paper do not (yet) have explicit positions on the Arctic (Interviews 5, 6).

Potential for change may lie precisely here, namely by drawing a wider range of actors than those with an immediate (economic) interest in the Arctic into deliberations about the Arctic paradox. Such a debate needs to involve all member states and their publics and focus on the value of the Arctic as a global common because "what happens in the Arctic does not stay in the Arctic" (Russell 2015). Individual interests, including those of sovereign Arctic states, need to be weighed against those of the citizens of the EU and the planet as a whole. This debate must result in policies offering clearer guidance to EU and national policy-makers on how to address the Arctic paradox. This in turn must be translated into an operational strategy indicating what to do and whom to address within the complex geopolitical landscape of Arctic governance. If it was serious about its reputation as a global 'green leader', the EU would – rather than durably settle for a broad and inoperable policy – provide the forum for such a societal debate on its approach *vis-à-vis* the new frontier constituted by the changing Arctic.

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List of interviews

- Interview 1: with Senior EU Official, DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Brussels, 16 March 2018.
- Interview 2: with Official of the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, via Skype, 16 March 2018.
- Interview 3: with European diplomat, via telephone, 4 April 2018.
- Interview 4: with Official of the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, via telephone, 16 April 2018.
- Interview 5: with EU Official, DG Environment, Brussels, 14 August 2018.
- Interview 6: with EU diplomat, Brussels, 22 August 2018.

Annex: Overview of analysed EU and member state Arctic documents

Actor	Author (Year)	Title
Denmark	Governments of Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands (2011)	Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011-2020
European Union	European Commission and High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (2016)	An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic (joint communication)
European Union	European Parliament (2017)	An integrated EU policy for the Arctic (resolution)
European Union	Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union (2016)	Council Conclusions on the Arctic
Finland	Prime Minister's Office (2013)	Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013
France	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development (2016)	The great challenge of the Arctic - National Roadmap for the Arctic
Germany	Federal Foreign Office of Germany (2013)	Guidelines of the German Arctic policy: Assume responsibility, seize opportunities
Italy	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (2015, updated 2016)	Towards an Italian Strategy for the Arctic - National Guidelines
Spain	Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness (Spanish Polar Committee) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016)	Guidelines for a Spanish Polar Strategy
Sweden	Government Offices of Sweden (2011) and Ministry of the Environment and Energy (2016)	Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region and New Swedish environmental policy for the Arctic

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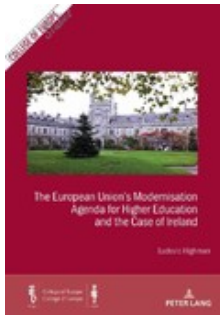
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