



# IF WE LOSE THE ARCTIC

**Finland's Arctic thinking from the 1980s to present day**

Markku Heikkilä



ARCTIC CENTRE  
University of Lapland



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# PROLOGUE

**IN ITS STRATEGY, FINLAND** defines itself as a completely Arctic country, but what has Finland wanted as an Arctic country? What actors have defined its policies and has it always had a policy?

How was the Rovaniemi Process, that kick-started international Arctic cooperation, born? What happened to the Northern Dimension, and what kind of thinking led to Finland's proposal for an Arctic Summit? Why does the government say that Finland is a leading Arctic actor and why does the President of Finland repeat the slogan "If we lose the Arctic, we lose the whole world"?

Have Finland's Arctic actions been steered by national economic interest, altruistic concern for the environment or some kind of combination of both?

Who have made Finland's Arctic policy and what has Finland strived for in international circles?

What did all this look like when it was taking place?

You can find answers to these questions in this book. It tells Finland's Arctic story from the end of the 1980s to the present – a thirty-year-arc.

Most of the content is based on interviews and background conversations held for this book. Some is from scholarly materials, media articles, speeches and reports. There are also a lot of eyewitness accounts. During my professional career I have followed the formation of Arctic and Northern cooperation since their inception, first as a reporter for the Oulu newspaper *Kaleva* and since 2010 as the Head of Science Communications at the Arctic Centre, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi.

The first part of this book is a kind of time capsule. It is an abridged version of my book from 1998: *Arktiset visiot* (Arctic visions), published by *Pohjoinen* (North) – a small publishing house owned by the newspaper *Kaleva*, my employer at the time. In the book I had described what happened in the Arctic and generally in northern cooperation until then, both in Finland and globally. I tried to find and articulate where the ideas originated from and how they developed.

The book could be considered a representative eyewitness account of those years. It has not been available in Finnish for a long time and was never translated into English. A similar book on the initial stages of Arctic cooperation has not been published elsewhere, and the interviews and eyewitness statements from that time could not be easily recovered any more.

For these reasons, this book deserves to resurface and provide perspective at a time when Finland is finishing up its Chairmanship term at the Arctic Council.

The first part of this book uses the 1998 book to tell where and why everything started. Some lines that were irrelevant for the current situation have been omitted in editing and the majority of the text remains as it was. It should thus be read in a twenty-year-old context. The text does not include any afterthoughts or explanations from a contemporary perspective. As most of the original speeches and interviews are no longer available and citations are translated from Finnish, there may be a discrepancy or two between the original and the translated English version.

The second part of the book focuses on the development of Finnish Arctic policy from 1998 onwards, to the present. Thus, the starting points for the two parts differ from one another: while the first focusses on northern cooperation as a whole from a Finnish perspective; the second part is centred towards Finland's actions in the Arctic. The international Arctic activity was so minimal still in the 1990s that it was possible to cover those in one small book. Afterwards the Arctic activity greatly expanded.

The first part of the book does not include references. Since they were not noted in the 1998 book, they have not been added now either. However, the sources have been described in the text. The second part of the book has references to literary sources. In addition, the contents are based on several background discussions that have not been identified in the text.

The end result is a nonfiction book for a general audience that sheds light on Arctic actions and not a scientific work book based on academic research. It is meant to tell the story of Arctic thinking in Finland and make it tangible.

Several people have helped make and publish this book, like Ville Cantell, Timo Koivurova, Marjo Laukkanen, Maija Myllylä, Outi Mähönen, Krittika Singh and Osmo Rätti. Special thanks to all those Arctic actors and experts who have lent their time for background discussions and interviews. They are not separately mentioned in this book, but without them the book could not have been born.

Rovaniemi / Oulu, December 2018

*Markku Heikkilä*

# PART I

ARCTIC VISIONS 1998

**THE ORIGINS AND BACKGROUND OF ARCTIC COOPERATION**

Part I is an abridged version of *Arktiset visiot* (Arctic Visions, published by Pohjoinen, Oulu 1998).



## ”STRATEGIC RESERVE” FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

**IN THE YEAR 1998**, it was estimated that the world population will exceed over six billion. Five billion was reached in 1987, four billion in 1974 and three billion in 1960 – in about forty years the number of people doubled but were using the same space. They needed their own share of food, work and energy.

Population estimates for the year 2015 were between seven and eight billion people. The demographics in the rich northern countries will not change considerably. Most of the population increase occurs in the parts of the globe called the “south”. It is also a political concept, which has come to mean poverty, weakness and a certain kind of threat.

A majority of the earth’s population is born to struggle with an income of just a couple of dollars a day to get food, water and shelter. Some have money to spare. The market for phones, refrigerators and cars has been growing as more and more people want to buy them. Similarly, cities are growing and in some of them the population is higher than the population of all the Nordic countries combined.

All of this also has an effect on the future of the Earth’s northern regions. They cannot separate themselves from the rest of the world. They feel the growing pressure in several ways.

During the late winter of 1996 in Inuvik, Canada, near the oil reserves along the northern coast of the country, thousands of kilometres away from the larger cities, a taxi was sliding along an icy road on a tiny slope. The driver was shaking his head. Six months earlier he had arrived from Egypt to a place with barely any forests, where houses are built on beams because of frost heaving and there is a hotel styled as Eskimo Inn. There a man from the Nile got a job, driving a taxi in a small town with freezing weather.

The next taxi driver was from Sudan. The end of the road is in Inuvik; you cannot go further north.

In Inuvik the taxis are hired by tourists, who come to the North to find exotic locations: open spaces and a hardly any people. The town itself is ugly and smells of oil, but from there you can fly to see “untouched” nature.

Ecotourism is a growing business throughout the Arctic, but it is not what defines the interest of the capital cities in the North. Their interest stems from the financial possibilities, which also might be a political necessity soon.

The planet's forests are disappearing, clean water is running out and we constantly need more and more energy. The rich countries are in the North and the pressure in the South is increasing.

Many answers to the next century's questions can be found if we look to the North. The Arctic region can unite four important actors in economy and politics: West-Europe, Russia, North America and Japan.

There are regions in the North which could secure the energy management of Europe in the next millennia without having to depend on others. The shortest sea route between Europe and Japan is through the European Arctic. Europe could have its own energy without having to worry about the situation in the Persian Gulf i.e oil and gas that have nothing to do with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). It could have its own transportation corridor without having to worry about the crisis in the Middle East or elsewhere.

The only thing missing is for us to actually get something done. Also, Russia and the West should keep cooperating. The alternatives to the Barents Region and northern Russia as Europe's energy suppliers are the Middle East, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, Algeria and Nigeria. It is easy to see which option is the most politically attractive. The stability of Russia might be uncertain, but the instability of the other places is certain.

Europe's own oil reserves have been calculated to last for seven years and gas reserves for twenty. Politicians have already started their own calculations. After the year 2020, it is estimated that the EU will need to import seventy five per cent of the gas required from outside its borders.

This fact is reflected in politicians' speeches.

"In the next century, the Union will, to a major extent, depend on Russia's resources on natural gas. A new gas pipeline through this region could help deliver gas to Western Europe," said Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen in his speech in the Barents Conference in Rovaniemi in September 1997.

"We are talking about a region that is rich in natural resources and has some of the world's largest and strategically most significant natural gas and petroleum reserves," Finland's President Martti Ahtisaari argued at Harvard University in October 1997 to explain the significance of the Northern Dimension.

There are other obvious reasons for the growing interest in the Northern Sea Route.

"Opening the Northern Sea Route could fundamentally transform opportunities for economic cooperation for economic exchange and trade with Asia. It would place the Barents Euro-Arctic Region in a pivotal position in the global economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century," Iceland's President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson wrote in his speech for the Barents conference in Rovaniemi.

"Opening of the Northern Sea Route would revolutionize the region," said Norway's former Minister of Foreign Affairs Thorvald Stoltenberg in the same conference.

The region is being touted as the emerging centre of the world's economy – it does not currently have suitable means of transportation, plans are not followed through and we are talking about a region where Russia and Norway have not come to an agreement about the line of the sea boundary in the middle.

The Western world is depending on a region, which, to put it mildly, has been far from mainstream politics and economy.

However, it is the possibilities described above and hereonwards that explain the interest of world economy and politicians in this sparsely populated region.

"All in all the existing fish and forest reserves, minerals as well as oil and gas make the European North the region with the most extensive and rich natural resources in Europe," is written on the brochure published by Finland's Ministry of Trade and Industry, *The European North – Challenges and Opportunities*.

The ecosystem of the Arctic Ocean is amongst the most profitable in the world, and more than a fifth of the world's log wood reserves grow in Russia's forests. Different minerals are mined, for instance diamond mines have opened in Northern Canada. There is a lot of water and hydropower. There is fish as well, although there is overfishing already.

The most important resource is energy: the oil and gas fields.

"In the long run the Barents Sea and Timan-Pechora regions' oil and gas reserves have a great significance to the economy of the Barents region. In addition, these resources form a strategic energy reserve for Europe as well," said Finnish Barents Group CEO Pauli Jumppanen. The company is co-owned by some major Finnish companies, and is a platform for facilitating the presence of and access to the resources of the region internationally.

It has been estimated that the Russian Arctic has oil and gas deposits corresponding to a billion tons of oil. Alaska and Canada have their own deposits, that are already being utilized.

The estimates fluctuate and there is still some research to be done but overall, the energy reserves of the Barents region and Northern Russia are massive. They are several times higher compared to Norway, the biggest and richest oil producer in Europe, and they pique the interest even when access to petroleum seems to be secured from other sources for the time being.

However, oil is not the key factor here. There is a lot of it, but not "crucially" so.

Gas is an entirely different story. There are large amounts of gas. The gas fields of the Barents Sea and Yamal Peninsula would likely double the known gas reserves of the world, and we cannot ignore that.

Political and commercial questions are a separate issue.

Technically, it is erroneous to speak about the natural resources of the Barents Region when we are talking about the oil and gas reserves at sea. The Barents Sea itself is actually not part of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, because of the sea border dispute between Norway and Russia. The area under dispute is about 15500 square kilometres in size and the oil and gas can also be found there. For understandable reasons, coming to an agreement and utilizing the oil field has been difficult.

Nevertheless, utilization of the oil has not advanced even in areas that are undeniably on Russian territory.

More has happened on land. The Soviet Union and later Russia has been drilling oil in its northern regions for centuries. The production is exported abroad as well, and presently there are foreign companies operating in the northern parts of Komi and the region of Nenets. The leading edge of the western oil industry, i.e. companies such as ELE, Neste, Conoco, Exxon, Amoco, Norsk Hydro, Texaco, British Gas, Nobel Oil has made reservations.

The northern energy is essential for Russia itself for both foreign exchange earnings and energy management. The dissolution of the Soviet Union took the southern oil fields with it, and an important oil pipeline goes through Chechnya, a region that wants independence.

In 1994, the world saw pictures of an oil leak in Usinsk, Komi: thousands of tons of leaked oil polluted bogs, forests and rivers. However, it was not an isolated incident, because there

have been oil leaks for decades throughout the terrain of the former Soviet Union and now Russia. The pipes are old and the safety valves are missing. The cameras just happened to be rolling in 1994.

AMAP, that has surveyed the state of the Arctic environment, shows in its report that the oil leaks are allowed to continue during repairs – if repairs are even made – because it would be more expensive and a huge task to decrease the pressure in the pipes. The more time goes by, the more the pipes dilapidate, because of financial issues.

Public appearance costs money for western energy companies. They cannot afford to act with a “when in Rome” mindset under their own name, in fact the assumption is that international cooperation in the energy business would bring in procedures that are more environmentally friendly and better for the locals. We have not really been able to test that assumption, because even though many companies have a foothold in the business, actual productive investments in Russia have been difficult to make. This is especially the case with the deposits at sea.

“They have been saying for twenty years already that the production will start in five years. And we’re still here,” Pauli Jumppanen said in the Barents conference in Rovaniemi.

In the same event, the executive vice president of RAO Gazprom Boris A. Nikitin announced that production at the Shtokman gas field would begin no later than 2004. The listeners did not get very excited about the announcement.

The western investors have shown signs of their patience getting depleted. The megaprojects are not moving forward in Russia, and foreign companies cannot figure out if the Russians actually want foreign participants.

Taxation and general legislation that would allow foreign companies to join should be put in order. Taxation laws are the biggest hurdle. They also need ground rules, for example, on how to divide the production of the oil fields.

Many companies have the technical capabilities for starting some kind of production. In the beginning of the 1990s, Russia initiated the first significant tender about utilizing the Shtokman field. Foreign companies participated as well, but the Russian Rosshelf won. After that, the situation has not advanced towards practical use. Gazprom, Rosshelf, Neste, Conoco, Norsk-Hydro and Total still have their foot in the door. While substantial research and investigation is underway, large productive investments will not commence before there is certainty.

Most likely, the production would start the earliest in the Petshora Sea.

The chief executive officer of Neste, Jaakko Ihamuotila says that exploiting the large Barents region does not require any technological miracles.

“What is required is the humankind’s will to face and overcome challenges so that we can realise the oil potential of the Barents Sea through development that is sustainable, in harmony with the environment and society,” said Ihamuotila at the conference in Rovaniemi.

He did not specify if repairing Russian legislation is also one of the challenges that humankind has to face.

The Finnish Barents Group has estimated in their report that we cannot expect large projects on the sea areas before the year 2010.

Pauli Jumppanen himself did not estimate timetables for access to the oil and gas fields anymore. Perhaps he got the impression that the Barents Region will live on the existing industries, forest and metal industries, for a long time. However, there is still a lot to be done to

get those properly operational as well. They have strived to renovate the Nickel smelter, but no progress has been made.

Similarly, no progress has been made in the other joint projects unless they get enough Russian funding. There is no shortage of plans: the harbours of Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and Pechenga, railway connections, border crossing points, central heating systems, renovating the industrial plants... Overall, a working infrastructure is a prerequisite for getting the industrial development underway someday.

"The funding of the proposed projects is a big hindrance in their execution," Pauli Jump-panen said in Rovaniemi. "Most of the projects are still in the planning stages." He suggested that they could start with the smaller projects that have industrial and environmental angle. It might be easier to get international funding for them.

In the beginning of Barents cooperation, there was talk about having a special economic zone, where the cooperation between companies would be easier. Those talks have already been forgotten and the development is hinging on Russia's general legislation. The regions' own decision-making powers are limited. The autonomic republics have more power, like in Karelia, Komi and Sakha (Yakutia). Sakha has managed best to negotiate itself some use of their natural resources.

Essentially, it comes down to the decisions made in Moscow, which are only discussed at the higher levels. In other words, it comes down to the central government. The Northern Dimension initiative started by the EU creates pressure for them. It could take decades to get from decisions to actual accomplishments, but those decisions have to be made to start with.

If we start exploiting the new oil and gas fields, there are huge infrastructure requirements: ships, oil platforms, harbours, gas pipelines, storage systems, apartments, transportation, refineries... All of them need to work in the rough northern conditions; they cannot put a strain on the environment and take away living opportunities from the other livelihoods. The requirements are exceptionally high, which in turn raises the costs. No single company has the means to fund them: we have to go back to the government level. Finland is bringing the European Union along, Norway has its own plans and also the American companies. In addition, we have to decide the alignment of the possible gas pipeline: through Finland, through Russia, through where?

These questions affect the national politics and strategies, joint Nordic energy decisions, European energy decisions... If the alternative for Middle Eastern oil is northern gas, many systems have to be changed to operate on gas instead of oil. We need big political and commercial decisions and massive technical operations.

The whole forms a pattern that cannot be solved quickly, but it has to be solved sometime. At least that is what they have said – for years now.

The northern shipping route, or the Northeast Passage, is already being used by some foreign ships. Ships of the Finnish Neste have transited the passage from end to end. The Soviet Union ships have travelled along the route regularly. There has been active cargo shipping of ore, for example, between Norilsk and Kola. The nuclear-powered icebreakers sail wherever they want, all the way up to the North Pole.

However, if the route is really opened up for international traffic, we have to invest in the northern harbours of Russia. We also need to build a completely new fleet. Western Europe, Russia, Japan, South Korea and other Asian countries need to find common ground. The effects to the environment have to be minimised and catastrophic accidents prevented.

But where is the starting point of this new sea route in Europe? In the harbours of Germany or the Netherlands? In Kirkenes? In Liinakhamari harbour in Pechenga, in Murmansk or Arkhangelsk? Which country, which harbour will win?

Development that would have worldwide consequences and after which the northern regions would not be the same is still in its very early stages. This is the same development that is a direct result of globalisation of the world economy. Everything can change: the region that is almost forgotten now can become part of heavyweight geopolitics through energy production and opening of new passages. Of course, that was its role during the Cold War, but in a very different manner. It is also intrinsically tied to the relations and engagement between Russia and the West: they need to be connected or everything will be lost. A new confrontation would spoil everything.

But first, we need to make something happen. Concrete projects have already been planned, but they are not going anywhere. Governments make all kinds of commitments about respecting the living conditions of indigenous peoples, protecting the environment and sustainable development. How to connect all of this together will be one of the challenges in the near future.

The contributors for economic possibilities acknowledge, at least in all of their official statements, that commercial and industrial activity should be executed in tandem with local communities and organisations, and it should improve the living conditions of the locals. Will this happen in practice: that we will not see until we get there.

“There will therefore always be a danger that the promotion of Arctic development will be determined more by southern appetites and systems of power than by northern needs decided locally”, remarks the Standing committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade in their 1997 Report of the House of Commons (Canada and the Circumpolar World).

At the same time when some talk of the principles of sustainable development, others focus on the colonial economy and power systems. At least researchers do not have to fear for running out of material or points of view!

Fred Koo, a member of the Gwich'in native tribes' Tribal Council, summarized indigenous peoples' concern about the common development in the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region in Yellowknife, in the Northwest Territories of Canada.

“We have seen what happens to the environment in other parts of the world, where major corporations, indifferent governments and people have destroyed the land, poisoned the waters and killed almost everything that's alive,” Koo says.

“What happens to the land and animals happens to us. It can be possible to stay alive with food bought from stores and to never leave the city to go to the countryside, but then the spirit in our hearts and our cultural identity dies, and eventually we, as a people, die,” he said.

## THE HOPES AND REALITIES OF THE BARENTS REGION

**KIRKENES IS THE CITY** where Norway ends. For decades, they were missing a cardinal direction. They could not travel east: they run into the border of NATO and Soviet Union, which was almost uncrossable. Once, a long time ago, pomor trade ships travelled from here to Arkhangelsk. At the end of the Second World War the Red Army came, freed the area of Germans and left. After that, the only thing that crossed the border was rumours about the opposite side's intentions.

In the nearby Valley of Paatsjoki River, you could see the far-off chimneys of Nikel that pushed out black smoke. You could feel that something strange was happening in the soil on the Norwegian side as well. When you got to Nikel, you could see that all of the nature had died of pollution.

Kirkenes was a regressing mining and fishing town, geographically the end of the 'West' until in January 1993, around a table in hotel Rica, they made it one of Europe's new centres.

At least that is how many people interpreted it, and that interpretation was not wrong according to Norway's former Minister for Foreign Affairs Thorvald Stoltenberg.

Some years later, in Rovaniemi in September 1997 he reminisced his train of thought.

It was the beginning of the 1990s. The Soviet Union had dissolved, the Cold War was over and the confrontation had ended. Something new was in the making and no one really knew what. This was a moment in time to create history.

Stoltenberg – whose son is also a minister – said that he had been thinking of his grandchildren.

"Grandpa, were you a foreign minister at that time?"; the grandchildren would ask in time. "What did you do to utilize these starry moments?"

He wanted to find an answer to that question: Why not change the North, a region stained with tensions and hardships, to a region of hopes and possibilities? To actively influence history and take advantage of that opportunity. Create cooperation, relations, wealth and peace. To create a post-Cold War era model that could be an example to the whole of Europe, to the regions that are plagued by centuries of animosity. From Barents through the Baltics to the Balkans, building bridges over the deepest dividing line in Europe and envisioning stability and peace for this continent.

There is a vision, which was only five years old in 1998, but whose goals are estimated in decades, like Stoltenberg reminded us.

In the January of 1993, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs from Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, representatives from the Commission of the European Communities, Denmark and Iceland and a number of other important officials gathered in Kirkenes. They signed a document, which came to be known as the Kirkenes Declaration.

“They also stated their conviction that the establishment of closer cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region will be an important contribution to the new European architecture, providing closer ties between the Northern parts of Europe and the rest of the European continent,” says the Declaration.

A day before some three hundred mostly Finnish protestors had arrived outside the hotel. They did not think about questions this declamatory. They were worried about the pictures of the Kola Peninsula smelter, which seemed to spread polluted wasteland all around it. There were as many as four thousand members in a Kirkenes “Stopp Dödskyene fra Soviet” (Stop Kola’s poison fallout) movement. The information about the radiation risk from Kola seemed extremely serious.

The new Barents Region was supposed to bring a quick fix for all this, when the cooperation begins everything would be possible. This started the planning of programmes, setting up taskforces, mapping out needs, having meetings, debating new members, search for funding.

You can see it best from the last fell of Nikel, from a road that goes to Murmansk through Zapolyarny. A few tall chimneys, lights and smoke that seems to penetrate every crack in the bricks. In the darkness of winter, the structure seems to emanate a weird orange glow.

In the summer, the ground is black and in the winter the snow is black. Dried black twigs remind us that once there was vegetation. The nature surrounding the industrial complex is sometimes defined as a “technochemical wasteland”. The first apartment buildings start right next to the factory. In recent years, the Nikel cemetery has become a popular filming subject for TV crews. There are cemeteries in every city in the world, but in Nikel over fifty-year-olds are senior citizens. There are birth dates on the tombstones there should not be.

It was not supposed to be like this. At least not year after year, and especially not in the opinion of the Norwegians who can see the Nikel chimneys from their side of the border. Something has to be done – this was known a long time ago.

Reducing the emissions in Nikel has been one of the most urgent tasks both before and after the Barents Region was born.

September 1989: Finland considers participating in renovating the Pechenganikel smelter in Nikel, Pechengsky District. They are negotiating the financial package and their goal is to reduce the sulphur dioxide emissions by over 90 per cent.

Autumn 1994: The cooperation between Norway and Russia to renovate the smelters in Nikel and Monchegorsk is brewing. The Russian authorities have announced an international tender. Norway has promised to assist with 300 million kroner, if the Russian corporation chooses an environmentally friendly solution.

Spring 1996: The Minister of Environment in Norway announces that the contract on Nikel smelters is done.

Autumn 1997: The smelters in Nikel and Monchegorsk are practically at the same point where they were ten years earlier, before commencement of any talks about international cooperation and when the knowledge of the damaged forest areas was just beginning to reach the West. Not one of the international plans for renovation has been carried out, nor have



any of the promises or ceremonial speeches borne fruit. The protests and movements have tired out a long time ago.

The same is true for the gas reserves of the Barents Region. They have huge potential and many are interested in them, but nothing happens.

What about the big port in Liinakhamari? Nothing. A road from Finland to Murmansk? The construction has lasted over ten years and the road is still just barely drivable. How about the connecting line that would open the Archangel corridor? It'll be ready in a year, they have said for over five years now. Flight paths? Special economic zones? Increased regional decision-making powers?

No point in even asking.

In Norway, they established their own newspaper for the Barents Region, *Barents-Nytt*, with high hopes. It was published in Kirkenes in two languages: Norwegian and Russian. The reporters came from both sides of the border and there were correspondents from several places. The newspaper was published once a month and it had news, reports and interviews. It was a unique display of cross-border cooperation.

In the autumn of 1996, Stein Sneve, a reporter for the newspaper, wrote about the crisis in the Barents Region. Projects were underfunded, the cleansing of Nickel was unclear, there were problems with the visas and customs and the Norwegian police performed raids on Russian tourists.

Soon after, the *Barents-Nytt* died out. The paper lived those two years for which Norway had reserved start-up funding. It never became profitable on its own and the publisher *Sör-Varanger Avis* had no choice but to discontinue the newspaper.

Words like crisis, fiasco and disappointment are beginning to be associated with the Barents cooperation. A lot has happened, but people were expecting more and faster. Investigations, programmes, meetings and small steps are not enough, when everything was supposed to change in an instant.

In 1993, Norway's brilliant foreign policy was doing well, and it did not hurt that out of the interlocutors, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrey Kozyrev was fond of the North and supported all connections to the West, and that the Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs Paavo Väyrynen was from Lapland himself.

When reflecting on the reasons for the disappointment in Rovaniemi in 1997, Stoltenberg said nothing about the main motives behind Norway's initiative. The underlying motive was security and the country's foreign policy, whereas Finland and Sweden joined mostly out of necessity.

This is what the former Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrey Kozyrev wrote in 1994, in a book published in Norway *The Barents Region: Cooperation in Arctic Europe*: "Without prejudice to the importance of our relations with other partners in this regard I would like to point out that – due to historical traditions and geographical factors – Russian-Norwegian relations still occupy a particular place in the context of the Barents cooperation, which covers in a natural way all basic aspects of relations between Russia and Norway."

Peace researcher Ole Tunander accounts in the same book how the Norwegian Foreign Minister's trip from Archangel to Murmansk in 1993 was paralleled in Oslo with those Bjarmia trips that chief Ottar and the Viking Tore Hunn made in 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Norway's historical greatness is found on the distant Nordic waters. The later thriving Pomor trade was also remembered, and in addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Norway des-

perately needed initiatives in the beginning of the 1990s to prevent the country from being side-lined and which could be offered as EU membership carrots to the public.

“The Barents Region project could be translated into a symbolic ‘Greater Norway,’” Tunander wrote.

Birth of the Barents region was also very essentially related to the Europe policies of Norway, especially Oslo. Even though Stoltenberg is seemingly the father of the idea, there are other creative minds in Norway’s ministry. National interest was at stake and previously established Council of the Baltic Sea States had provided an example.

According to Tunander, Norway was in danger of getting politically marginalised. “Nobody seemed to ask about the Norwegian position. It became clear to some civil servants that Norway would had to come up with its own initiative,” he writes.

Oslo wanted to make the country an EU member. At the same time they knew, that especially in the North that was not the case. They wanted to combine these two through the Barents Region.

“We have to combine our European policy in the South with our Russian policy in the North,” the former Minister of Foreign affairs Thorvald Stoltenberg wrote in the same book in 1994, after the Barents Council was born, but before the country’s EU referendum. This was supposed to be a way to make EU appear in a positive light in the North.

“In my opinion, the main challenge for EU in the 1990s is to link the Eastern and Western part of Europe and to involve Russia in European cooperation. The Barents cooperation would seem a useful instrument in this respect. It could provide a basis for a North European dimension to a future foreign and security policy in the EU, a Northern extension of a Moscow-Brussels dialogue, and serve as a political meeting-place between ministers from the five Nordic countries, Russia and the European Union,” Stoltenberg wrote.

The plan did not work and Norway’s wish did not come true. Instead, Barents cooperation stayed as a big part of international politics in Norway. The European Union was not visible in discussions on the area until Lapland managed to get some TACIS and other officials interested in the area. The European Commissioner for External Relations even visited Lapland. In 1997, the Governor of Lapland Hannele Pokka was very happy with the Union’s role in the region.

Even though the EU was one of the founders of the Barents Council, it held a low profile for a long time.

“The EU is getting back at Norway, and in practice Finland has had to suffer because of it. Thanks to the EU’s passive stance, Norway is dominating the Barents cooperation,” estimated the former Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs Paavo Väyrynen in the spring of 1997.

The situation changed in the autumn of the same year when Finland took over the EU channel with its official Northern Dimension initiative. Finland offers the Barents Region as a link to the EU – not just towards Russia but towards Norway as well.

“The region is a bridge between the EU and Russia, but at the same time it is one of the links between the EU and Norway,” says the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Finland in a booklet they published about the challenges and possibilities in the Northern Europe.

The initiative for the Northern Dimension was launched at the end of the year 1997. The Barents Region has a central role in it and their goal is to increase general activity, but that is also something that cannot be turned into action instantly. We are talking about years and, for example, how the Barents Region is taken into account in the 2000-2006 financial solutions of the EU and in the emphasis of the TACIS, Phare and Interreg programmes.

The Governors are responsible for the Barents cooperation within their own provinces and it is no wonder that the Governor of Lapland Hannele Pokka seems to be impatient. We should finally get something started.

“We need big investments to get the wheels turning and we could create a base for new things, for small and medium sized enterprises and welfare of the people,” she says.

Not that nothing has happened. The communication on the Barents Region has become commonplace. People from different fields meet each other and there are meetings and plans, cultural exchanges and projects. The cooperation on the environment section has established conventions and goal-oriented objectives. There is still nothing like that elsewhere in Europe. On the North Calotte, the borders have always been open and now the historical connections to Russia have been opened as well.

However, the area is extensive in size and the passages are still difficult to access and are far apart. There is activity and the region is dynamic, but that is mainly visible in the form of different meetings and connections. Everything that is concrete costs money and the money has to come from somewhere. Devising Barents programmes is considerably easier than implementing them. On a regional scale, Norway has some funds at its disposal, but in Finland and Sweden, everything is dependent on the indulgence of the central government.

In the end, however, all of this only affects very few officials and experts from different fields. The ordinary citizen has not had to face anything particularly ground-breaking. Mainly they could be affected through major investment projects or by getting the trade barriers for small businesses essentially disappear. Then there could also be changes in employment rates.

Northern Russia, Northern Finland and Northern Sweden are plagued by unemployment and they are negative net migration areas. The employment rate in Northern Norway is better and the government is not short on funds. However, in Russia the Arkhangelsk, Murmansk and Karelia regions require investments, which are not forthcoming. Russia also has core regions where the wealth and operations are concentrated. These Northern Regions are not part of them. There were no cranes or construction sites in sight in Murmansk in the summer of 1997.

In practice, the whole Barents cooperation is paralleled in the relations with Russia. Finland, Norway and Sweden do not need the forum in their respective communications.

In 1997, many small businesses that tried to expand from Northern Finland to Russia got to see the difference between practice and ceremonial speeches. Difficulties with border crossings, customs and payments just got worse. It is a challenge to try and improve relations, economics and employment in such a situation.

“The payment policy of regional administrations has gotten bolder. we have come across some pretty outrageous rip-offs,” Pokka said in the summer of that year.

“Administration – and international cooperation is also a kind of administration – has no intrinsic value in itself. We feel that the door must be opened to industry and trade. It is time to create stable and favourable working conditions for all companies in the whole Barents Region. Dreams and reality are, however, far apart today,” Pokka said in the September of 1997 in Rovaniemi, in the conference that she was hosting.

In the same conference, it was also said that the Barents Region is a huge financial opportunity for the whole of Europe. At the same time, cargo is getting stuck on the borders because the papers of small businesses have a wrong kind of stamp.

The trade between Finland and Russia is growing, but in the same conference, the Managing Director of Inerkol Pentti Kellokumpu presented some of his own observations about the everyday life of a small business owner:

“Every cent that you have invested or transferred to Russia should be considered lost money.”

“I do not recommend for small and medium size businesses to operate in Russia because it is very difficult.”

“In the future, we are still expecting those projects that we have been waiting for, for years.”

Establishing the Barents Region does not mean that the controversies have disappeared.

There is a Regional Council that has its own secretariat, which is hosted by different countries in rotation. Regardless of that, Norway has its own Barents secretariat in Kirkenes. The northern parts of Norway get funding that they themselves can use. Finnish Lapland and Swedish Norrbotten are completely dependent on their central governments in their Barents projects. Finland and Sweden look towards the EU for funding, and Norway is out of those circles.

Norway has also been able to afford some risk investments, unlike Finland and Sweden.

The attitudes towards the expansion of the region are a different matter.

According to Hannele Pokka, the Russians were knocking on the doors of the cooperation in the North Calotte already in 1993, but that changed when the Norwegians joined their Barents initiative.

Three northern counties from Norway joined. From Russia there were at first two, then three and eventually four regions, whereas Finland and Sweden only had one. For the town of Kirkenes, the Barents Region has meant a significant change in its status, from an insignificant town to the centre of Barents operations. The area was designated very favourably for Norway.

“Of course we could also have gone with expanding the North Calotte Committee, but when this kind of an international prestigious movement was put in motion, and when Russia and Norway had already agreed on it before even talking to others, this was the obvious choice,” recalls Paavo Väyrynen, Finland’s former Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The project really was between Norway and Russia at first. Afterwards they included Finland, and lastly, Sweden.

In the April of 1992, Väyrynen and Stoltenberg met in Lapland for a two-day skiing trip and discussed a long list of topics between the countries. The idea behind Barents cooperation was not on that list. Instead, there was talk about a need for more extensive cooperation in the North Calotte, in which Russia would also be included. Väyrynen suggested an expert meeting on the topic of the Northern Sea Route. Stoltenberg in turn invited the Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs to Kirkenes during the January of 1993, where Kozyrev was also coming from Russia to discuss the need for regional cooperation. The meeting that was initially fixed for these three ministers, ended up hosting thirteen governments.

Fairly soon after the meeting that spring, Stoltenberg made a public announcement in Norway about the idea of a Barents Council. For the first time, the ministers from Finland and Norway actually discussed it in the autumn of 1992, in an expert meeting about the Northern Sea Route in Tromsø. Väyrynen claims the credit for including the Republic of Karelia in the region. The argument made for including it was that the White Sea is part of the extended Barents marine region. This would benefit Finland, as it would create the possibility of including the provinces of Oulu and Northern Karelia at a later stage.

When the Ministers of Foreign Affairs gathered to sign the treaty in Kirkenes in 1993, all documents and maps had been made without including the Republic of Karelia.

“I had a proper discussion about this with Stoltenberg,” Väyrynen says. In the end, the region was established without Karelia, but an agreement in principle was made to include

Karelia as well. The Republic of Karelia became an official member immediately in the next phase. Later the Nenets Autonomous Area also became an official member of the Regional Council. The region itself was already included, because it falls under the jurisdiction of the Arkhangelsk region.

Instead, expanding the Barents Regional Council to include the provinces of Finnish Oulu and Swedish Västerbotten has been difficult. At one point, there was competition within the countries. However, when Lapland started to visibly support Oulu, the challenge came from Northern Norway: is the centre getting too far south, when we include two large provinces that have capitals with populations of a hundred thousand people.

In 1996, Oulu and Västerbotten eventually became observer members, hoping to become full members in the future. The representatives from both provinces were included in taskforces and other operations. But nothing was certain yet.

The new regions were accepted as members in November 1997 in a Regional Council meeting in Kirkenes and officially in a meeting with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Luleå in January 1998. Nevertheless, just before the meeting in Kirkenes the issue was still fiercely debated in the meeting of the Regional Committee in Arkhangelsk. At that point only the Province of Norrbotten was against the expansion, but in the end it did not stand alone.

Conflicts and gaps in the cooperation are born also because the politically elected bodies or parliamentarians of the regions are not involved. This is also preventing actual decision-making powers from reaching the Barents cooperation. The Regional Council is better at making promises than at acting.

The two-part structure with the council of countries and regional council also created a new kind of competition inside the cooperation. Pokka stated that the regional council became an inside club working behind closed doors, which did not really communicate with the central government.

“I’d say they have gotten to know their partners pretty well,” she says with a laugh.

When Oulu and Västerbotten were accepted as members, many verbalised their desire to add to the dynamics of the area through the provinces’ own resources, universities and connections. A common assumption in Norway and Russia is that this would make Finland and Sweden as countries more interested and invested in the Barents region.

If placed on the map of central Europe, the Barents Region would reach from France to Ukraine. The Republic of Komi that is also trying to be included would add another large area.

It is no wonder that extending the operations to the grassroots level is easier said than done. Building the organization among officials is much easier.

At the end of 1996, the Society for Northern Politics in Finland wanted something to be done: “We should raise the general awareness of the North and make things happen. We should get some politicians, researchers and businessmen to speed things up.”

Different interests met. Many had a similar wish and now there is both will and organizers. On September 15<sup>th</sup> 1997, about two hundred people gathered in the Arktikum building in Rovaniemi to contemplate the hopes and realities of the Barents Region. There were the former Ministers for Foreign Affairs from Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia, who had signed the Kirkenes Declaration in January 1993 – as was Jan Sigurdsson, who was representing Iceland at the time and now was sitting in the audience.

One of them was Andrey Kozyrev, who was establishing the Barents Region as a Minister of Foreign Affairs, and who was elected from Murmansk to the Russian State Duma. He, too, was not happy about the way things were going.

“Probably one of the reasons was over-expectation, which we created,” he said in Rovaniemi. At the same time, the public and governments could not be made to understand how important the issue was. The capitals did not give substantial support and the necessary legislation in Russia was not made.

“On the Russian side, I think, there was also a little slowness on the federal level. First, in appreciation of this window of opportunity, but also a larger problem of the policy of the central government,” he said. “This creates particular opportunity which unfortunately, so far, was not realized by the central government, parliament including.”

The key question to the whole Barents cooperation was what was happening in Russia. When nothing seems to happen, the others get frustrated as a result. When the regional decision-making powers are low, a lot depends on how Moscow reacts. And Moscow’s commitment had not been that strong since Kozyrev was minister. The obligatory and statutory business was handled, but nothing else. The more interested Moscow would be towards the northern cooperation, the easier it would be for the EU to operate through that.

Despite of everything, Kozyrev remained an optimist.

In the late winter of 1997, in a span of a couple of days, he flew from Moscow to Murmansk, took its former Governor Jevgeni Komarov and some businessmen with him, flew to Oulu, arranged some meetings with the help of the Governor Eino Siuruainen, flew to Moscow to pick up more people and continued to Helsinki to the oil and gas industry negotiations.

“I am trying to advance the business. Only that will make the Barents Region rich and give it more possibilities,” he explained in Oulu.

Kozyrev did not even visit Murmansk until he was the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

“I fell in love with the northern people. Not just in Russia, but in Finland, Sweden and Norway – the people are very similar,” he says and is now in his second term as an independent representative of Murmansk in the State Duma.

When he was the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kozyrev advanced Russia’s ties to the West in many ways. Even so strongly, that ultimately it cost him his position. He saw both threats and amazing possibilities in the North.

“One of the pivotal accomplishments of Russia’s Foreign Policy is that they have opened a window. Peter the Great opened windows with zeal, but now we have opened the Barents window,” he says. One of the most important tasks in the near future is to include the EU in the proceedings more firmly: more attention, more capital. This task he gives to Finland.

Even though he cannot yet take pride in concrete accomplishments, his own visions for the next 10–15 years are far along.

“I hope that people will call themselves Barents people, even though they are the citizens of Russia, Finland and Sweden. When someone asks where they are from, they will say that they’re from the Barents Region.”

The whole process can have its ups and downs, but there is no going back.

“No one wants to close the borders. We have gone too far and everyone has too much to lose. This is the new base for Europe.”

“When a person has something to lose, they will think twice. That is why the financial development is so important. It is the best guarantee for the future,” Kozyrev says.

If Kozyrev had been present when the current Ministers of Foreign Affairs gathered in Luleå in January 1998, he would probably have been very satisfied.

The situation had changed and it had happened fast. Suddenly everyone wanted to be there: the Foreign Minister from every member-state, the European Commissioner for External Re-

lations Hans van den Broek, and even the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Lloyd Axworthy made an appearance, as well as the United States Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Strobe Talbott. German Klaus Kinkel sent his deepest apologies for not being able to attend.

All of this even though nothing new or concrete had really happened. None of the “major” projects had gotten off the ground. Different investigations and programmes were initiated, like they had been all along. The ministers did not make any major promises either: the United States announced that they would invest half a million dollars to nuclear waste management – a sum that is not very big considering the size of the country.

But the most important thing was who said it and who was listening. The idea of the Northern Dimension had gotten through to Europe just a couple of months before and the international politics on the Baltic Sea region had gained some new momentum.

In a short time, Northern Europe had become a place for countries to show their flag. Never before had the ministerial meetings on the Barents managed to rally these many prestigious people. Everyone was convinced that the issue is important, everyone was very interested, everyone had sensed a good spirit and no one had any big news to tell.

Everyone assured that their country was hoping that the cooperation would progress. By showing up, the ministers stapled the Northernmost part of Europe as part of the “big” political stage. Diplomacy has value and it is a prerequisite for making something else happen.

“Five years is nothing when talking about advancing major projects. We are going to see a lot in the upcoming years,” Commissioner van den Broek assured.

Statistics Finland has published figures on the financial development in the Murmansk region. Practically every line was pointing downwards.

In 1997, there were talks again about crucially reducing the Nickel smelter emissions. Although this time the solution seemed to be that the Onex bank of Moscow might close it down for good, because they were not interested in renovating it and operating it was not profitable.

That would leave tens of thousands of people on the shores of the Arctic Ocean with nothing. Unless a modern ocean port is built in Liinakhamari, next to Nickel, to receive and transport the oil from the Timan-Pechora region. And if the same place would also get a gas compression station and a processing plant for the gas that comes in from the Barents Sea. Additionally, if they would have a working container port for the Northeast Passage, for refining the gas and so on.

Then Liinakhamari would get thousands of new jobs and it would be one of the hubs of European energy logistics. The investments would be billions of dollars and the need would be obvious – assuming that the utilization of the gas and oil deposits begins someday. The plans and assessments exist already and many parties are said to be interested. The only uncertainties are the timetable and funding and whether the project is even ever realised.

So, Liinakhamari is left as a former small harbour of the bankrupt Northern Fleet of Russia, although now the port is being used by the Coast Guard, blissfully unaware of the fact that it has been promised a great future as the best port in the region in many plans.

This describes well the whole situation on the Barents Region. In various visions, everything is planned to make it one of the core regions of Europe’s economy. However, the reality is resolutely opposing these ideas – at least for now, but not necessarily forever.

## FINLAND BRINGS THE NORTHERN DIMENSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

**FOR A LONG TIME** many researchers and others have judged the fact that Finland does not have a clear northern policy. Where Canada runs the Arctic Council, Norway keeps the Barents Region visible and Sweden invests in the Baltic Sea, Finland does not have a viewpoint or initiative, just the role of an adapting country.

Change was supposed to take place on September 15<sup>th</sup> 1997 at the Barents Conference in Rovaniemi. Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen was going to make a speech that had been prepared for months: a policy address on Finland's Northern Policy, first of its kind.

A room full of people listened silently. Something was going on, but what? The Prime Minister spoke in convoluted sentences using very complex foreign policy officialise, where every expression had been honed for a long time, until all eloquence and rhetoric was gone.

The reception was polite, but a little confused. Lipponen stated that Finland and the EU had the same goals, but was the speech an opener or just a promise of one? Was it aimed at the present audience or for completely different listeners?

How little did we know, what it was really about. That, how important the matter was, was defined by Lipponen himself three months later at the European Union summit in Luxembourg: "This is a turning point in the EU's history." At that point, we could be sure that the idea presented in Rovaniemi would actually become reality.

Nevertheless, not many people in September realised that what was being proposed was a first public corner stone laid for Finnish foreign policy, not to mention that the brightest minds in the country's diplomacy had already been recruited to drive the initiative in the gears of the European Union. And all fifteen member states were asked to understand that bringing the Northern Dimension along would benefit everyone.

"The Finnish government has prepared a strategy paper for the Northern Dimension to be presented to the Union. An action programme is under preparation," Lipponen said in Rovaniemi.

So this was the advertised speech, asked the Norwegian and Swedish reporters, surprised. They had not noticed anything significant.

But it was indeed. Soon that became apparent to everyone who followed Finnish politics, when Lipponen and President Martti Ahtisaari travelled through Europe and America in the autumn. Suddenly the Northern Dimension became part of every speech and negotiation,



and they sought support and understanding for it. Ever since that autumn, there was a whole new element present in the Finnish foreign policy.

You would not do this, if your intention was only to answer the critique of some researchers and regional politicians about the lack of northern politics and initiative.

When Finland and Sweden became members of the EU in 1995, the Union gained a new geographical area. Sweden was content with its interest in the Baltic Sea and the regions north from there were up for the taking; and with them, the EU's only land border with Russia, and a long one at that.

It took a couple of years before this idea got clearer and refined enough to become a vision and policy about how the national benefits in the North can be united with benefits for the EU, and how geography can become a strength.

All necessary bodies, forums and cooperation patterns had already existed. People were well aware of the possibilities in the North. Northern and Arctic visions had been written and many kinds of reports had been made. From the capitals, Ottawa, Oslo and Stockholm had taken turns and been active in the 1990s; the last time Helsinki had been active was almost ten years ago.

It was time to take an active role again. Besides, Finland's Presidency of the European Union that was to begin at the end of the year 1999 was approaching. Then Finland would be busy with all the EU's "big" matters, while also leaving their own mark. What would be more appropriate than looking for it in their own backyard? To show that Finland is not a somewhat secluded country in the far north, but is in the middle of a region filled with new possibilities.

Better still, if Finland could leave a mark that would not be tied only to the fleeting presidency, but be more permanent. According to the EU's principles, the presidency should not be used to promote the country's own interests. Not that Finland would even have time for that. The EMU and other big EU plans would be in a critical stage and take up all of their time. Additionally, there would be a change in their government at the time.

The first visible mark of the new northern member state was short. In December 1996, in the European Council meeting in Dublin, there was a mention in the Final Act about an "activity that reaches from the Arctic Region to the Black Sea."

The leaders of Finnish Foreign policy presented this as a big step towards the North. These couple of words of accomplishment did not really resonate with the bigger audiences – but the final words of the EU summit are not just any kind of statement that is approved when most of the participants have gone home already. These are some of the most hard-core texts in diplomacy, drafted well beforehand and the leaders of fifteen countries and governments go through them in detail. Everyone has to accept every word, which means that every word carries a lot of weight.

When they had finished one sentence, they could build more on top of it.

In the April of 1997, Lipponen had written a letter to the President of the European Commission Jacques Santer, where he proposed creating a strategy for the Northern Dimension of the Union. The response was favourable: Santer promised to bring it up in the summit in December.

In September in Rovaniemi, it was time officially to open the talks. So the speech was made in a fashion that did not cater to the audiences in the auditorium of Arktikum, but someone else entirely. That is how the dragging text was born, which did not try to charm the listeners with fast-paced sentences. Lipponen connected the Northern Dimension directly to

the most sacred values of the EU: peace and stability, safety and wealth. It has to do with the external relations of the Union and makes it a more efficient operator at the world level. It has also to do with internal politics, energy and infrastructure; it has to do with almost everything – excluding the traditional security architecture.

The issues include environmental questions, nuclear safety cooperation, fight against crime, reducing the social disparities, many traffic and infrastructure projects, stabilising the rule of law, research cooperation, the Barents cooperation, the Baltic Sea cooperation, the Arctic council, Russia, Canada, the United States.

Almost everything that has been up in the air in this region is included in the Northern Dimension. All participants make their own arguments as to why increasing attention to and creating some kind of unity inside the EU is necessary.

Not to mention that the North has some of the world's largest reserves of natural gas and oil resources of strategic importance to the Union, Lipponen said. There are other resources as well, for instance the vast forest reserves in Russia, and the accompanying need to utilize these while ensuring activities within the refrains of sustainable development.

The EU benefits from all of this, as does Finland. At the end of his speech the Prime Minister admitted that the benefits to the nation come first.

"We need to enhance stability in this region. Our industry and the whole economy, including our regions, can benefit. Finland will be developed as a business center for the region, with global opportunities," he said.

The benefits may come to Finland, but Finnish leaders stepped up to convince the others that everyone would be a benefactor: the fifteen member states of the EU and countries outside of the EU.

Wherever the President and the Prime Minister went in the autumn, they rallied support for the development of the Northern Dimension of the EU. In the background, the diplomatic corps had their own stake in the business. The government made the necessary official decisions and openings and the Prime Minister's Office had collected an impressive group of officials for the task.

The timing for the initiative was opportune also because the talks for expanding the EU to the East were about to begin, and the Union's interests were getting closer and closer to Russia and the relations with the country were getting more important. Not just the traditional external relations, but also the practical questions about energy, traffic, nuclear safety and so on.

It was not enough that the initiative was justified only with the benefits accruing to Europe.

In October 1997, President Martti Ahtisaari spoke at the University of Harvard in the United States and connected the Northern Dimension to the international structure of the new millennia. The United States and Canada were also to be a part of it.

"Finland has started a project to achieve a unified Northern Dimension policy in the EU. Its main goal is peace and stability and that all the nations in the area can share in the wealth and safety. Developing the Northern Dimension with all the extensive connections and possibilities it brings, would make the EU an efficient global agent as well," Ahtisaari said.

He further argued for the basis behind the idea to his audience:

"Our aim is to bring forth those long-term benefits which the Northern Dimension offers to the whole of EU," he said. Some of the most important oil and gas reserves are in the region and thus trade through the Baltic Sea might increase tenfold by the year 2010.

“The Northern Dimension is not a unique challenge only to Europe but to the entire northern circumpolar region. That is why Finland is seeking support from all of its partners. As a Finn and as a European I want to stress how important it is that Europe and the United States would work together to further all that which unites us in the globalising world,” Ahtisaari declared. The President of Finland was thus offering a European handshake over the North Pole to America.

The summit in Luxemburg was held between 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of December in the Conference Centre of Kirchenberg, amidst office buildings and highways.

The leaders of governments and countries that attended the conference had once again a lot on their agenda. They had to decide what the relationship would be between the countries that start using the Euro, and those that do not: how do we decide about common issues during the conversion to Euro? They had to decide in which order to discuss the new extension negotiations for the EU. They had to think about how to build relations with Turkey. Agriculture is always a hot topic, and so forth.

Again, they had one and a half days to work all this out. Every country had their own important points on the agenda and everyone wanted to leave victorious.

The Northern Dimension is not an issue that would need bouncing around huge aspirations at the meeting table. There were enough of those already. The issue had been set up already during the autumn and even Finland did not need to use energy for defending it anymore in Luxemburg. Before it, yes, and again after.

The result was three lines in final conclusions that had several dozen pages – a mention that did not see the light of day in international media. Still the Finns had a difficult time hiding their satisfaction. In the entire text, only one member of the EU was mentioned by name, and that was Finland. Things like these do wonders to increase the motivation of diplomats. The formatting was done exactly like they wanted.

According to the document, the European Council (or summit) recognised Finland’s initiative which concerns the Northern Dimension in the EU’s politics, and asks the Commission to submit an inside report of the issue at the upcoming meeting of the European Council during the year 1998. That’s it.

This does not say anything about what the Northern Dimension entails, but that was not the intention either. The process was initiated and made the Commission responsible, to the heart of the EU. Someone had to lay the groundwork there as well and the diplomats from Finland were more than happy to offer their services. The influence potential in the subject was obvious.

In addition, the styling meant that very soon, which meant the December summit in Vienna, the concrete content of the Northern Dimension would be added to the summit in the form of a report. Then everyone wondered what exactly it would come to mean. Leaders of all countries have to have understand what is the Barents Region and how it influences Europe. Already the initiative had gotten public praise from Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

The actual political attention in the EU is strictly in the EMU, extensions and corresponding issues, but this process took off very permanently. It was moved also to the Union’s agenda, not just Finland’s.

“This is a turning point in the history of the European Union,” remarked Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen very pleased with the Northern Dimension and everything else in his press conference in Luxemburg. Earlier the EU has reflected on its regional policy in relation to the Baltic Sea, Atlantic cooperation or Central Europe.

“Now we are developing the Northern Dimension and relations with Russia and other northern countries together with fifteen countries,” Lipponen said. He ensured that it is a shared issue with the whole Union and it is not tied to the upcoming Finnish Presidency.

“The Northern Dimension is very far-reaching. The North has two major countries: Russia and the United States. It is important that the European Union develops its own politics for these and is present in Northern Europe. We are talking about the stability and resources in the region, for which the Union will be dependent on. Above all, the natural gas in Russia and also their other resources,” Lipponen said.

The listeners at the time consisted mostly of Finnish media. The word was spreading, however, even though we are not talking about a topic that would get attention in everyday news. In the Baltic Sea States Summit in Riga, in January 1998, Helmut Kohl spoke about the issue on his own accord in his press conference.

We have begun: after the autumn of 1997, the EU has started creating a frame within which they can handle several issues, which geographically reach from the south shores of the Baltic Sea to North America and from Great Britain through Iceland and Norway deep into Russia. That is no small area.

In the Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting of the Barents Council in January 1998, the Commissioner for External Relations Hans van den Broek came to represent the Commission. It was the first time an EU commissioner was part of these proceedings and a clear indication of the growing interest in Northern Europe.

These are actions of higher political bodies, which do not start any concrete projects immediately. However, it is groundwork, shaping the future, which affects how we want things to be in the future.

## FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA TO THE BALTIC SEA AND TOWARDS THE NORTH

**TWO YEARS BEFORE FINLAND** took over the Northern Dimension of the EU, Sweden was moving forward with their own initiative.

The Hanseatic League has again started to appear in the speeches of leaders and researchers of the Baltic Sea, that medieval trade league that had enabled several cities on the shores of the Baltic Sea to thrive. This historic connection has been all but forgotten due to the violent history of this century with the divisions of Europe, until the demolition of the Berlin Wall.

The Baltic Sea, a joint destiny!

The cabinets of Sweden and the inner circle of Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson were reading a map in 1995. Finland and Sweden had joined the European Union, Norway stayed out. Very close to Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Russia were searching a new role for themselves. Former East Germany was being melded together with newly unified Germany. A governing body for regional cooperation had already been established – the Council of the Baltic Sea States, but it had not amounted to much so far.

In the middle of all this, there was one country: Sweden. What country would be more suited to take the initiative to start something on the Baltic Sea? The invites were sent.

The Prime Minister changed and newly appointed Göran Persson got to experience one of the greatest moments of his career at the very beginning. On the island of Gotland in the beginning of May 1996, the Russian Prime Minister, the Chancellor of Germany and the President of the European Commission walked along the streets of Visby, as did all the other leaders of the governments of the Baltic Region. It was an ensemble that could be considered historic – for a good reason – and Persson was in the middle.

It did not matter that the meeting did not actually produce anything concrete that would have been of significance. Symbols are important as well, and you could not give a more visible start to the Baltic Sea.

The Region of the Baltic Sea was supposed to give new political winds to a new Europe as a dynamic, democratic and stable area. The Baltic Strategy of the EU needed reinforcing and developing. “We share a common heritage, we share a common future,” Persson celebrated in his emotional speech. The Spanish had brought the Mediterranean Sea on the map brilliantly with their summit in Barcelona, and now it was the Baltic Sea’s turn.

In the evening, the conference guests were entertained with a medieval tournament. It reminded them of history: the last time Visby thrived was thanks to the Hanseatic League on the Baltic Sea. Although, at the time it belonged to Denmark, which was not brought up.

The President of the European Commission Jacques Santer was ready to take on the challenge. In a speech that was much more tedious than Persson's, he introduced the Baltic Sea project and promised funds – but only what was already promised in the current plans anyway.

They promised to support the EU membership of the Baltic countries and Poland and several other issues were discussed seriously, especially the struggle against organised crime. The taskforce that was established just for that was supposed to report to the next Baltic Sea summit that was planned for 1997, but ultimately held in January 1998 in Riga.

The Barents Region, not to mention the Arctic Region, were not brought up at the Visby conference, and there was no mention of them in the documents, even though parts of the shores on the Baltic Sea on the Gulf of Bothnia are part of the Barents Region.

The Mediterranean Sea on the other hand has started to haunt us when it comes to the European Union and the North. The idea is that when the Union is strong in one region, it could also be strong in another.

Finland, the EU member state farthest from the shores of the Mediterranean, has become active. In November 1997, Helsinki hosted a meeting for Ministers of the Environment of the Mediterranean region. Finland hoped to be taken seriously in matters important to them when they took seriously matters important to the others.

The second paragraph of Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen's policy address about the Northern Dimension of the EU was as follows:

“The EU has developed a multifaceted and in many ways efficient policy on the Mediterranean region over the years. It is very important to the whole Union and not just the members of the Mediterranean to support peace and economic development of the region, which is torn by conflict, but rich in resources and which – also thanks to the demographic development – is getting more political significance.”

The calculation about supporting the Mediterranean region has worked; Finland got some reciprocation to its Northern Dimension initiative also from the South. According to a Finnish diplomat, the hardest part was to get all fifteen member states to understand that developing the Northern Dimension benefits everyone.

However, when these issues are being paralleled, the problem becomes, what exactly is paralleled. The Baltic Sea's southern shores have little to do with the issues in the Barents Region, and the Arctic Region would expand that connection all the way to Canada and the United States.

“The Northern Dimension” has been developed to cover all of this, i.e. three cooperation bodies that are not much in any communication with each other. Except that the Ministers of Foreign Affairs meet in the name of whatever council they happen to go to. On the other hand, the opinions seem to differ on how much the Northern Dimension would be European and how much European-American, and are the Baltic regions part of the North or not.

In the autumn of 1997, the Finnish Institution of International Affairs started a research programme of several years about the Northern Dimension in the EU's joint foreign and security policies. In that programme, the Northern Dimension ends in the Baltics and the Baltic Sea; issues going further north are not even mentioned. That, too, shows how the same concepts can have a very different geographical content.

For Lipponen, the geographical borders of the initiative went from Iceland to Northwest Russia, from the Arctic Ocean to the southern shores of the Baltic Sea, and he also mentioned Great Britain, Canada and the United States separately.

He defined the Baltic Sea Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Arctic Council as the main stages of northern cooperation. In his opinion, new arrangements are no longer needed, these will suffice. In addition, he did not suggest any extra conferences.

Every self-respecting international governing body had held summits in the 1990s. They are a good way to get some international attention and a clear milestone to which to point. And if we are very lucky, they can also be of some concrete use.

Against this background, it is no wonder that the thoughts on the northern regions' summit are also constantly present. Lipponen has not suggested it, but others have. It is only a question of which region we are talking about.

The conference in Visby lingered also in the mind of Thorvald Stoltenberg, who was the father of the whole Barents idea, when he came to Rovaniemi and wondered why the grand goals have not come to pass, at least not with the desired speed.

"We need more political high-level attention," Stoltenberg deduced and referenced both the Visby Conference and the meeting of several prime ministers held in Vilnius in 1997, which brought that attention to the Baltic Sea. Day-to-day work is not enough to keep the momentum on the Barents Region going.

The former Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs Paavo Väyrynen was for a long time, until Lipponen's initiative, the only known Finnish politician who had tried to profile himself through the international northern issues and who had followed them closely. In Rovaniemi, he listened to Stoltenberg's speech with fear: they were taking the words right out of his mouth. Because Väyrynen had prepared with a practical action proposal.

In his opinion, Finland should organise a conference concerning the Northern Dimension of the EU during the Presidency of the EU and that of the Barents council in the autumn of 1999. That conference would be like the Mediterranean conference in Barcelona, it would create the guidelines for the politics of the EU both in the Baltic Sea and Barents Region as well as in the Arctic Region. According to him, with this the cooperation in the Barents Region would get an equal position in the EU with the Baltic cooperation. Earlier Väyrynen had suggested combining the Foreign Minister meetings of the Baltic Sea and the Barents.

"I guess we should get this proposition under some other name than mine, so it might actually pass," pondered this present Member of the European Parliament from the Finnish Centre (Keskusta) party in the halls of the Arktikum in Rovaniemi.

Later in the autumn, the thought about a separate northern summit was deemed "theoretically possible" among the Finnish EU diplomats. Priming a conference like that was not immediately approved, but it was not disapproved either.

President Martti Ahtisaari on the other hand has throughout his tenure proposed the idea of a summit between the EU, Russia and the United States – without much response. Through the Arctic regions, these three would have a direct connection, a topic relevant to all regions and a possible motive to gather all – with this ensemble the topics would not be scarce. The idea of a three-way summit, still being nourished at the Presidential castle in Helsinki, could be held during Finland's EU Presidency.

However, a leading politician's speech can easily shadow the work that has been done previously. Things are usually brewing in the same direction in several places at once.

For example, the protection of the Arctic environment had been going on in different forms from the beginning of the 1990s. The Rovaniemi process was underway, and much else had been done. The European Commission was in part setting up the Barents Euro-Arctic region, and environmental protection was an important thematic area for its joint operations.

Still the EU did not have a clue about northern environmental issues even after the membership negotiations for Finland, Sweden and Norway were done and two of the three countries had joined. The Union did not have any role in those matters, even though there was logical necessity. In this matter as well, some researchers were awake a few years before it became a political reality.

In any case, after Finland joined the EU, the Ministry of Environment of Finland noticed that the North was completely missing from the Union's programmes.

Thanks to the Ministry's Department of Environmental Politics, a handout number 18 was published in the spring of 1997. Handouts do not usually draw great attention and handout number 18 was no exception. It suggested how the EU could consider northern issues in their environmental politics. At that point, there was no knowledge of any initiatives about the Northern Dimensions of the EU.

"Finland is one of the two Arctic member states, and now it has both the opportunity and responsibility to attach Arctic issues to EU's arena and promote the adding of Arctic environmental matters to the Environmental Politics of the EU," wrote the author of the handout Outi Mähönen from the Centre of the Environment from Finnish Lapland. She herself has attended many negotiations regarding the Arctic Council and the Rovaniemi process, as well as the Barents environmental cooperation.

According to the suggestions, Finland should also advance the bringing of Arctic matters to international agreements and environment programmes as well as the Environmental Politics of the EU.

The European Union, on the other hand, should work towards bringing Arctic issues to their own environmental programmes and be an active member in the Barents Council and orient itself towards cooperation with the Arctic Council. The EU could also help Russia in different ways to commit to protecting the environment in their own Arctic Regions and advance the inclusion of the environmental viewpoints, when they decide on their future financial operations.

The handout has not been heard of since. However, when the issues are fresh they will start to advance on this area as well. In the autumn of 1997, we heard this from the Prime Minister of Finland:

"Finland suggested the re-evaluation of the environmental cooperation between the EU and Russia, including the need for a new agreement. The Northern Dimension has to get enough attention, when we are preparing the sixth environmental programme of the Union," said Paavo Lipponen and at the same time urged the EU to have a more active role in the Barents Council and to become a member in the Arctic Council.

The previous environmental programme of the EU was from 1992, when Scotland and the Jutland Peninsula represented the most northern regions of Europe.



## GORBACHEV'S SPEECH LAUNCHES ARCTIC COOPERATION

**IT IS RARE THAT** you are able to pinpoint exactly when and where something begun. This time you can. We needed one speech, held by one person at the right place.

Murmansk has been called the most Soviet city in Russia. It was established at the time of the Czar, but just before the formation of the Soviet Union, which implies that its history is mainly Soviet history. A city was born between the fjord and fells whose harbour is always ice-free and it has open access to the oceans. During the Second World War, Murmansk was a lifeline that attracted both British and American fleets. Then the allies became enemies and Murmansk became one of the most important areas of the nuclear superpower with its submarines and army bases. Open access to the oceans, short flight to America.

The floating fish factories of Murmansk's fishing fleet sail on all the seas in the world, nuclear icebreakers push the passage open to the harbours in Siberia, prefabricated houses were built on top of the fells for half a million people. Industry complexes were established in the nearby ore deposits in Kola.

That history was reflected well on that day in the beginning of October in 1987, when the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev arrived in town.

It was the time of perestroika and glasnost. The collapse of the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union would take pace in a couple of years, but no one could have predicted it back then. Those were the times of policy reform in the Soviet Union and Gorbachev was seen as the dynamic leader of that policy. At least from a foreign point of view. At the same time, the first photographs of the dead forests around the factories in Kola started to emerge in the West and the Soviets themselves had gotten alcohol queues to accompany the regular queues thanks to Gorbachev's alcohol policies.

Gorbachev and the President of the United States Ronald Reagan had already met at a conference in Reykjavik, where the Soviet Union made an unprecedented suggestion of severely reducing nuclear weapons. World politics was clearly experiencing a new beginning – but its shape and nature were unknown at the time. Gorbachev would go down in history as a man during whose term the Soviet Union was dissolved. And he was the one who was going to reform it.

The Arctic areas of the globe had been a stage for the Cold War. The change, if it was desired, had to begin with the Soviet Union. Outsiders could not make it happen. Murmansk and the Kola Peninsula in general were the central military areas.

On that day, Murmansk was to get a great honour from the Soviet Union: the Order of Lenin and the Gold Star medal. The honorary title of Hero City was long-awaited, because no one could deny the importance of defending Murmansk in the Great Patriotic War. The Germans were stopped at the fell, far away from the city and the connection with the allies stayed open.

Rarely, if ever, a general secretary of the party has come all the way up to Murmansk. Gorbachev spoke in a ceremonial event in a great hall, where the edge of the stage was decorated with flowers, in the four middle rows sat the socialites of the city and at the back sat a few soldiers next to a head of Lenin and red flags.

It was a long speech. The journal *Sosialismin teoria ja käytäntö* (Socialism: Theory and Practice), published a quick translation into Finnish on twenty four densely written pages.

The first pages of the speech praise the city's efforts in the war – also remembering to thank the bravery of American and British marines who helped break the Germans' blockade.

Then the speech goes into what it means to be a citizen of the Hero City in this day and age. Gorbachev talks about bringing revolution in an atmosphere of national reform. The positive development in the economy, food industry and housing. On page seven, the General Secretary of the CPSU demands more discipline and the increasing of organization in all production collectives. On page nine, he bemoans the television that the workers had bought which stopped working after a couple of days. And then we get to the fight against drinking: "If we start to fret and give up, the front for perestroika ruptures."

These were times when even in Murmansk vodka was only sold in a small kiosk under the street level. The place was easy to recognise from the line that stood in front of it.

On page ten, Gorbachev complained about the wasteful use of his country's wealth and resources. "Truly I have organized a festive discussion for you, have I not? But in a Leninist way"

Next comes the discussion about the subvention of meat and milk in relation to preserving the living standards of the workers. "I want to ask you, if your thoughts are going in the right direction? (Voices in the ground: Yes they are)."

On page fifteen, the speech criticises the administration of the Severonikel industrial complex in Monchegorsk for not having enough day care centres, and it demands that the Regional and Executive Committees of the Party undertake actions that are more decisive.

On page eighteen, there is foreign affairs finally. The summit in Reykjavik is over – and it was a turning point in the world's history – but we must not underestimate forces that are hostile towards progress and exist in the military-industrial alliance of the West, Gorbachev warns his listeners.

On page twenty, he gets to the North. The General Secretary mentions four names from the neighbouring countries: Urho Kekkonen, Olof Palme, Kalevi Sorsa (the long time chair of the Consultative Committee of the Socialist International), and Gro Harlem Brundtland. Her work in the UN is "greeted".

At the time, Kalevi Sorsa was the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Finland.

On page twenty-one, Gorbachev criticises the increasing military actions of Canada, the United States and NATO in general in the High North areas next to the Soviet Union. And then says something completely unexpected: "The Soviet Union is in favour of a radical lowering of the level of military confrontation in the region. Let the North of the globe, the Arctic, become a zone of peace".

The negotiations for decreasing the military actions in the North should be started, the General Secretary suggested, and that he was ready to meet the others half way. What followed next was a group of suggestions that were completely unheard-of in a region that was full of nuclear warheads and submarines:

First, the Soviet Union is ready to undertake far-reaching actions to make Northern Europe a nuclear-free zone. Second, the country salutes the initiative taken by the Finnish President Mauno Koivisto to limit military actions in the seas of Northern Europe. Third, the Soviet Union considers it very important to utilise the natural resources of the Arctic in peaceful cooperation. Fourth, they consider it very important that the northern countries cooperate in the field environmental protection. Fifth, along with the normalisation of the international affairs they could open the Northern Sea Route for foreign ships.

“The Soviet Union proposes drawing up jointly an integrated comprehensive plan for protecting the natural environment of the North”, Gorbachev said on page 23, the second-to-last page of the speech. On the same page, there was a suggestion about a conference for the Arctic countries, where we could coordinate the scientific research of the Arctic and discuss the matter of establishing an Arctic science council.

“We are ready to discuss any counter proposals and ideas”, he promised. “The main thing is to conduct affairs so that the climate here is determined by the warm Gulfstream of the European process and not by the Polar chill of accumulated suspicions and prejudices”.

We do not know how many listeners in Murmansk were still awake at this point. However, people elsewhere were wide awake.

One and a half months later, on 16<sup>th</sup> of November, an article was published in the newspaper of the Social Democratic Party of Finland, *Demari*, in which the Minister of Foreign Affairs Kalevi Sorsa – who was separately thanked in Gorbachev’s speech – suggested Finland as the bridge-builder in the Arctic research cooperation between the East and West.

In Finland, in both the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Ministry of the Environment the speech of Gorbachev was left translated on the desks of the officials.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland was not and is still not especially known for activism on environmental issues. Now, the speech and especially its latter part was being read diligently. It seemed that a Finnish led initiative might be able to achieve something. In the end, they circled the part of the speech where the General Secretary spoke about the protection of the environment. That was the subject that seemed the safest one from a political standpoint.

Some time passed and the idea was refined. A Finnish initiative was born, first tentatively to probe the reactions of others and then as an official proposal.

Naturally, there were other underlying factors as well. The speech Gorbachev delivered did not disappear into vacuum, but both in Finland and Canada as well as in other countries all the discussion and proposals related to the Arctic Region were nascent at least in the research circles. Suddenly the initiatives were in demand, and that is what the Gorbachev staff must also have realised. The speech had some far-reaching political speculation about the thoughts that had already started to emerge sporadically.

For example, in the summer of 1987 in Kuhmo, Finland, Finnish researchers Lassi Heinen and Jyrki Kähkönen held a “summer academy”. It was one of the first forums, where thoughts about the demilitarisation of the Arctic Regions were in the air. People from Moscow were also in attendance.

The reasons behind Gorbachev's initiative were not extensively researched anywhere, as far as we know. However, in later stages Moscow did not take initiative in the matter anymore. Apparently, they started to get otherwise occupied with the developments in the Soviet Union.

Instead, there were people in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland that knew the time was right. Besides minister Kalevi Sorsa the high officials were also aware of the situation. The accomplishments of the OSCE from the previous decade was still at the back of their minds. In addition, the environmental issues in general were starting to rise on the agendas of international politics.

The process that was officially started by Finland in the beginning of the year 1989 became the first state level initiative about the Arctic regions. In the early stages, it was referred to as the "environment OSCE". They called it the "spirit of Rovaniemi" referencing the first conference location in the same way as the Conference for Organization and Security Co-operation of Europe was referred to as the "spirit of Helsinki".

The connections with the birth history of the OSCE were not that far-fetched. The OSCE, the major achievement of Finnish diplomacy in the 1970s, had also first been cultivated in the Soviet Union. Later, the process refined by Finland started to live its own life and is still living today.

"Finland is a politically apt country to make the initiative about the cooperation," said the ambassador, Esko Rajakoski who had lead the negotiations on behalf of the Foreign Ministry, in September 1989 in Rovaniemi, at the first real meeting of officials who prepared the environment protection cooperation.

Rajakoski himself was making the preparations, and in 1988 he toured the countries of the Arctic regions in preliminary rounds. When the answers were favourable enough, the Finnish government sent a letter in the January of 1989, where they suggested that the environment protection conference for the Arctic Region should be organised in Finland as soon as possible. Foreign Minister Sorsa and Environment Minister Kaj Bärlund stepped up in the same connection.

The timetable was delayed, it was especially hard to get the United States in – now and also later when the Arctic Council was established – and the Ministers could not meet until June 1991. Nothing too radical arose. The result was recommendations, not international agreements, and, for example, the questions about nuclear power, nuclear weapons and military actions in general were mostly left aside. No fast concrete actions about the Arctic environment were agreed upon. The only accomplishment was the so-called "small steps" in politics.

The initiative would not have started to thrive, however, if there had not been a more extensive demand for it. The time was right, the concrete need existed and the cooperation was not hinging on the lifespan of individual governments. There was a desire for some international action between governments in the Arctic Region.

Nevertheless, it is a little ironic that even in later discussion the credit for the initiative has been given to the political rival of Sorsa, Paavo Väyrynen. At the time, when Väyrynen was the Minister of Foreign Affairs, he was hosting the first meeting of Ministers in Rovaniemi in 1991. However, the actual groundwork had been laid before that, the government had just changed and Sorsa had stepped down from the Ministry a little earlier.

The Soviet Union was dissolving.

"The table was already set," Väyrynen himself admits.

Because the project succeeded, at least in the sense that the cooperation was started, other people deserve credit as well. According to a Canadian researcher, the Environment Protection Strategy text was mainly drafted by Canadian officials and it strongly reflects the Canadian way of thinking. The Canadians said they were going to make a similar initiative, but the Finns beat them to it.

Nevertheless, the Arctic Environment Protection Strategy (AEPS) is still called the Rovaniemi process and its birth is still linked with Finland. However, it has not occupied any major political spotlights. The other meeting of Ministers was held in Nuuk, Greenland in 1993, and it is characterised as an "interim meeting". The next one was in Inuvik, Canada in the spring of 1996, when the meeting was marked by the anticipation of the Arctic Council. The last meeting of Ministers was in Alta, Norway in 1997. Only there did the ministers agree on some kind of joint appearance on international forums, but by then the Rovaniemi process had ended.

When the lifespan of the AEPS as a self-governing system ended and its contents were incorporated into the Arctic Council at the Meeting of Environmental Ministers in Alta, the minister from the Finnish government did not attend to see the end of the old Finnish Arctic initiative.

## CANADA IS SEARCHING FOR ITSELF AND THE ARCTIC COUNCIL IS BORN

**IT WAS A GOOD** two years after the speech of General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev about the northern parts of the globe in Murmansk: “A genuine zone of peace and fruitful cooperation.”

Finland had already made its initiative to start the environment protection process of the Arctic countries.

At the same time, the idea of some kind of international cooperation between the Arctic regions had begun in Canada. For Canada, a country that was constantly searching for its own identity, the North would have something to give, in fact what was genuinely theirs.

In 1987, a researcher named Fred Roots, who is respected in his field in Canada, had proposed political cooperation between the governments of the Arctic countries. In 1988, the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee and the Canadian Institute of International Affairs had together published a report called “The North and Canada’s International Relations”. It revived the notion of a council, which would operate on the Arctic regions.

In the November of 1989, the Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was visiting the Soviet Union. On 24 November, he arrived in Leningrad – the old capital, the heart of the revolution, that had lost the fight for power and might with Moscow.

Even though Leningrad was big, it was just a big provincial city. Usually foreign visitors stayed in Moscow, in the centre of Soviet Union’s power. Now the city had something that was perfect for the Canadians: the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute, which is a centre for researching both the North and South Poles.

It was a place, where the Canadian Prime Minister wanted to perform. The speech was long, but the core of it could be summarised in one sentence:

“Why would we not eventually have a council for Arctic countries that would coordinate and advance the cooperation between countries?”

That is all that was needed. The Finnish initiative for environmental protection cooperation already existed, but now, building on the discussion initiated by Canadian researchers, the Canadian Prime Minister reiterated the need for a more comprehensive forum.

The issue had become part of the official politics and it answered two needs at once: it turned domestic attention towards the indigenous northern tribes – who had had an impor-

tant role in the Canadians' plans from the beginning – and second, it launched an initiative that could elevate the profile of Canadian Foreign Policy.

A year after Mulroney's speech, in November 1990 the Minister of Foreign Affairs Joe Clark promised that Canada was prepared to maintain a small secretariat for the Council. When the Ministers of Environment gathered in Rovaniemi in June 1991 to agree upon the cooperation for environment protection, the Canadian representative made an official proposal for establishing the Arctic Council.

Until then the matter had progressed rapidly, but then slowed down.

In the beginning of the 1990s, Canada put a lot at stake. An authoritative panel was established and it composed a framework report with suggestions about the founding of the Arctic Council. It was led by a Professor of Political Science Franklyn Griffiths from Toronto and Rosemarie Kuptana, who later became the President of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC). Mary Simon, the President of ICC at the time, was also in attendance, a woman who everyone involved in these matters would come to know.

The need is real. The time is right. Founding an international Arctic Council has its challenges, but none of them are insurmountable, declared the report made by the panel in May 1991.

The text outlined the future missions and structures of the Council. The participation of the indigenous peoples in the territories of eight countries was clear from the beginning. Similarly, they wanted to include the regional governments who represented other northern citizens. The representatives of the regional governments took part in the official proposal made by Canada in 1991, but at some point during the future negotiations, they were left behind.

Environment, society and economy matters were proposed as core operations, but at the same time it was believed that to be efficient, the Council's work would also have to involve international peace and security issues.

We cannot rule out any issues that are important to the international Arctic, was said in Canada's official proposal in Rovaniemi.

The report holds a lot of elements and phrases that would become known later.

The knowledge and experience of the indigenous peoples has to be connected directly to the work of the Arctic Council, as a guarantee that it will promote sustainable development of the region, the report reminded.

In the light of later experiences, some of the predictions in the report were downright prophetic. It proposed that during the establishment of the Arctic Council the critical questions would be participation, decision-making and the mandate of the new governing body.

Exactly these questions were faced after the mid-1990s, when the Council became a timely issue again. Regional governments were left out of the list of participants and the inclusion of the indigenous peoples was hard-fought. Negotiations about the practices, or the decision-making, were going nowhere even a year after the Council was founded, and the content of the work is still a big question. Military issues were thrown out immediately; the United States did not even consider opening the discussion.

Canada made the initiative in 1991, but other participants did not share the country's enthusiasm in the least. The report assumed that the preparations would be finished the next year and that in spring 1993 the heads of state could sign a constitutive contract. The first general meeting would be held in the spring of 1994.

It wasn't. The matter did not get under way.

In the spring of 1997, the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade made a thorough report: “Canada and the circumpolar world: meeting the challenges of cooperation into the twenty-first century.” Which, among other things, analysed what went wrong.

According to the report, the Nordic Countries were focused on the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) in the beginning of the 1990s, and the United States had been against extensive cooperation the whole time. Thus, Canada could not get any political support and even their enthusiasm diminished.

Nothing happened, until the governments changed in both Canada and the United States. The administration of President Bill Clinton re-evaluated the country’s Arctic politics and now saw space for wide Arctic cooperation. In Canada, the government led by Prime Minister Jean Chretien reformed the country’s old initiative and at the same time appointed Mary Simon as the new Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs. One decision, two messages: Canada as a country strongly commits to Arctic cooperation and takes indigenous peoples’ issues seriously. The representatives of the indigenous peoples have rarely received mail from ambassadors, not to mention responsibility in leading important negotiations for the country.

In February 1995, President Clinton arrived to the capital city of Ottawa on a visit to the neighbouring country. The meeting bore fruit. The United States announced that they agree to participate in the negotiations that aim to establish the Arctic Council.

The Nordic Countries showed their support as well. The political background had thus been confirmed and the negotiations could really begin – which did not mean that they would be easy.

The officials in charge of the Arctic matters started, from meeting to meeting, to prepare the founding of the Arctic Council under the leadership of Canada, which practically meant that of Mary Simon. A deadline was set for April 1996, by the time the meeting of the environmental ministers of AEPS is held in Inuvik, Canada. That did not work, and the constitutional meeting was moved to September to Ottawa.

One could really praise what happened on September 19<sup>th</sup> in 1996 in Ottawa.. The northern parts of the globe participated, for the first time, in international cooperation that was not restricted to just one sector. The diplomacy of several years culminated here. Northern Europe, Asia and America found common ground. The indigenous peoples became politically stronger than ever before. Eight countries made history on the northern side of the planet in a way that would not have been possible ten years ago. Unforeseen possibilities were now available.

All that, and still nothing seems to hold up. For once, the whole was not greater than the sum of its parts. The Arctic Council might have made history by being founded, but that’s about all it did.

It was supposed to be a meeting of foreign ministers, that would create the first and only regional cooperation arrangement, directly involving the territories of the United States, Russia, and Europe (with and without the EU). The major powers of North America and Europe were in the same boat.

Except that there were only two Foreign Ministers present, from Canada and Iceland, if we do not include Finland’s Pekka Haavisto, the Minister of the Environment, who, at that meeting, attended as “the Minister for Foreign Affairs (International Development)”, but who was a bit far from the orientation of International Development. Others who had been sent to



attend the meeting were different kinds of deputies. No one had thought to mention to any governing bodies of the EU that something that also concerns them was happening.

In addition, it was supposed to be a meeting, where the indigenous peoples would get a position in international politics that they had not had ever before. And they did, but despite of that the representatives of the three participating organisations seemed very sullen. Their position had been worsened at the last second of the negotiations and now they had no chance of signing anything alongside the countries. Not even the arrival of Pekka Aikio, the President of the Sami Parliament of Finland helped the situation even though contrary to his normal attire, he had appeared dressed in a dark suit and tie: he had lost his suitcase somewhere along the way and you can't really get a traditional Sami outfit from Ottawa!

If the angel of history was looking for the meeting, she must have gotten lost on the way. At least, the rustle of her wings has not been heard in the side building of the House of Commons where the Canadians had organised the signing. It was an everyday meeting hall without any access control, there were random speeches, signing and that's it. This was one of the biggest achievements of Canadian diplomacy, although with some reservations, because the country's main newspaper *The Globe and Mail* did not write a sentence about the achievement the next day.

Otherwise, it was a pleasant day. Warm and sunny and there were familiar people in the crowd, with whom you could go to a terrace before moving on to some of the amazing museums in Ottawa.

The meeting came and went, but it did not end there. It was neither the beginning nor the end but more like a timeout. The Arctic Council train had managed to go from the train depot to the departure station, but it was immediately parked aside to wait for some tug assistance. The staff could not decide where we were going and how fast.

Clifford Lincoln, who was a very prestigious member of the House of Commons in Canada and closely involved with Arctic cooperation, held a short lecture on the history of the Arctic regions at the conference in Ottawa. The Dene people had lived in the area for thirteen thousand years, the Inuit for twenty four thousand and nature had remained unchanged, he reminded.

"Until we came from the South and in under hundred years the environment was polluted, the waters were dirty, the sky was blurry. It is the inheritance we pass on," Lincoln depicted. "Next instead of the northern rivers we have to drink water from plastic bottles, we are not allowed to use fish and we have to warn about eating the caribou."

"I hope that we have learned our lesson now, and want to make things better", he said.

The Arctic Council had been filled with hope about how people want to do better. They want to protect the environment and improve the conditions of the indigenous peoples – while wanting more oil, gas, diamonds, minerals, wood, fish and shipping routes. All at the same time and all in a region with increasing political and economic significance. Whether combining all of that is possible or not, the movement has already begun.

The question is how much this council, envisaged as an umbrella organisation actually contributes to the movement.

The ceremonial meeting of the ministers for foreign affairs was practically a low-profile deputy ministerial meeting. The Arctic Council was established as a "high-level political forum" with a declaration, which does not bind anyone to anything. The financial arrangements were still open, as well as the contents of the work. The ministerial meetings take place only every two years.

This is not quite the way it was supposed to be. In its first year, the Arctic Council did virtually nothing, because the content of work had not been chalked out. However, this does not apply to the included AEPS programmes, which continue as usual. The environment protection work is running like it always has, nothing else is. The issue has been fought over in the negotiations lead by Canada, specifically Mary Simon, but they did not seem to agree on anything, and the next deadline, the meeting of foreign ministers in the autumn of 1998, was approaching.

The progress has been hindered by the United States, they do not seem to know what they want and thus do not seem to want anything. When people want unanimity in the results, there can be a discussion and agreement about the matter. The enthusiastic statements about the importance of Arctic cooperation by the Canadian government have decreased as the start for more efficient operations has been hindered.

Something started to happen in the Canadian House of Commons at the time the Arctic Council was founded. The Canadian Committee on Foreign Affairs got the task to figure out Canada's role in the "circumpolar world", and they took the task seriously. The members of the Committee travelled the length and breadth of the northern parts of the globe and travelled to Russia and the Nordic Countries as well as Great Britain, and listened to politicians, researchers, businessmen, environmentalists, representatives of indigenous peoples and officials. As a result, in the spring of 1997, a report was published, which in itself will not be part of the country's politics, but which is an authoritative addition to the discussion.

In recent years, Canada had become aware of the importance of the country's connection (especially that of the western part) to the important Pacific Rim.

"The diversification of Canada's international interests must not mean neglecting our own central, and likely increasing, geopolitical importance as a polar rim nation bridging North America and Eurasia," the Committee concluded.

It is precisely this connecting role in the Arctic Region that has been emphasised in many visions from Europe. According to Canadian politicians, circumpolar cooperation should be connected to the long-term process, with which Europe and North America integrate with each other.

The report speaks of Canada's unique opportunities in the region and demands that the government of Canada get to business again. And not just the government: an ever increasing number of citizens should also acknowledge that the country needs to be aware of the crucial importance of the circumpolar world to the aims and missions of the country's foreign policies. The government should form a strategic vision, with which this could be realised.

According to the members of the House of Commons the Arctic Council itself cannot do much, unless there are complementary actions, with which the countries in the region can bring the Arctic matters to the front both worldwide and at a regional level. Other forums such as the Barents Council, the Nordic Council and the Northern Forum should be complemented.

"There is a leading role to be played by Canada in forging closer ties with other Arctic states with similar interests," the Committee believes. At the same time, the Arctic matters should be presented to bigger forums by Canada, for instance to the United Nations and to the G7 meetings of leading industrial countries.

The importance of preserving the living conditions of the indigenous peoples, environmental protection and the problems of sustainable development are emphasised in this re-

port as well. The main motive identified by the Committee on Foreign Affairs of Canada is the potential that this former “hinterland” has: a worldwide importance to economy and environment as well as world peace.

“Southern and indeed global interests in the circumpolar region may be expected to increase in the next century. Although the Arctic is no longer a pawn of Cold War strategies, it has great potential geopolitical significance in terms of issues of environmental change, indigenous rights and sustainable human development, given also immense natural resources endowments and consequent pressures to develop them. Building adequate frameworks for circumpolar cooperation may therefore be essential to avoiding future international conflict scenarios,” said the report.

The other state of North America, the United States, has presented a less enthusiastic front.

For a long time, the United States has been reluctant about the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS). When they finally joined and the cooperation began, weak and non-binding, the reluctance was transferred to the next step, which was the Arctic Council.

In the autumn of 1994, when the Clinton administration came to power, there was a turn of events. Washington published guidelines for the country’s Arctic policies. They included six main principles: the protection of the Arctic environment and preserving the biological resources, exploiting the natural resources and sustainable economic development in the Arctic regions in an environmentally sustainable way, strengthening institutions between the countries in the region, inclusion of indigenous peoples in decisions that affect them, strengthening scientific research and answering to the needs of safety and defence resulting from the Cold War.

The practical result of the last point in the guidelines was that the United States did not want to discuss military issues in the Arctic cooperation at all.

In general, the founding of the Arctic Council became possible due to the programme. However, in the content negotiations the Americans have usually followed their own policy, which has exasperated others. Even though Washington has clearly increased its interest in the Baltic Sea and Barents Region, it seems to want to keep the general role of the Arctic Council very diminished.

This has been interpreted to reflect the policy disputes inside the US foreign service and uncertainty about the kind of role Alaska would have in the cooperation. It is not customary for the country to include their states in Foreign Affairs. Alaska is the only Arctic State of the United States, but there haven’t been representatives from Alaska in their delegations – there are Alaskan indigenous peoples’ representatives in Washington’s team but they have not been allowed to simply represent ‘Alaskan indigenous peoples’ in Arctic cooperation meetings. Contrastingly, most of Denmark’s representatives come from Greenland.

The United States has been the only country that has not attended the parliamentary meetings of the Arctic countries.

The United States would rather keep the Arctic Council as a forum, where they can keep a low profile and make non-binding decisions on environmental matters. This is also reflected in an interview by R. Tucker Scully, the country’s lead delegate to the Arctic Council, for *the Arctic Bulletin* magazine of WWF in the summer of 1997.

According to Scully, environmental protection is the main theme of the cooperation in the future as well. The Arctic Council does not have to make any binding decisions, just demonstrate to the participating countries when specific actions are necessary. A permanent independent secretariat is not required; the country that has the chairmanship can offer servic-

es and if some other country wants other activities at the time, they are freely fundable. In any case, financial contribution by the United States depends on whether its decision-makers and local people see the Arctic Council's work as significant and primary for the United States government.

The United States has offered to be the Chair of the Arctic Council for the next two-year period, which would start with the meeting of the foreign ministers in the autumn of 1998 in Iqaluit, Canada. During the first half of Canada's chairmanship, we did not even get to content matters, – mostly due to the obstruction by the United States – the time was spent on arguing about procedure.

Not that the leaders of the United States are completely unenthusiastic about Arctic matters; for example, Vice President Al Gore and the Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen have discussed the matter a couple of times. At the Barents Council Meeting of the Foreign Ministers in January 1998 in Luleå – where the United States is not a member, but an observer – the country raised its profile by sending the Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, an expert on Russia and the Baltics.

Talbott arrived right after the United States and the Baltic Countries had made a new charter and redefined their relations. Washington had started to wave their flag more visibly on the Baltic Sea, and Talbott personally brought it to the North and all the way to the Barents Region. He did not promise much, but he spoke eloquently, was present and brought his country visibly into the mix. There was no doubt that the heavy league of United States politics was interested in what was happening in Northern Europe.

At the last second, the Canadian Minister for Foreign Affairs Lloyd Axworthy also registered for the same Barents Council meeting. He did not come so much to wave his country's flag in Europe as to get high-level support for getting the Arctic Council off the ground. The European Commissioner for External Relations Hans van den Broek was one of the negotiation partners. They had talked about bringing the EU to the Arctic cooperation, among other things, but the answer had not been convincing at first.

"I don't know. I have yet to make a decision. I have to look into it," van den Broek answered evasively in a briefing to a question about the EU's role in the Arctic Council. Just moments earlier, he had described the future of the Barents cooperation with enthusiasm.

## NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT SUCCESS

**IT COULD VERY WELL** be Kautokeino or Alta. Or Ottawa, or Yellowknife, or Inuvik, or Iqaluit, or Kuujuaq, or what have you.

A couple of times a year they meet again. It is a small circle, and they are all familiar with each other. Some of these people sit at the table negotiating for their countries both in Barents and Arctic cooperation matters. Sometimes someone gets to join a different kind of circle: to represent their country in Antarctic matters. Any polar region will do.

Usually, they can sit at their meeting table in peace, like before the Meeting of Environmental Ministers in Alta. The reports have to be read through, the statements need polishing and the smallest common denominator found for every situation. The mass media is not interested in them. Sometimes, rarely – very rarely – it might happen, that a high-ranking politician from a country notices them. Then matters often get rolling, like during the time when the Prime Minister of Canada and the President of the United States exchanged a few words about the importance of establishing the Arctic Council.

After that, we finally started the process to found it after years of discussion – which does not mean that it would have been easy.

Depending on the conference, they have appeared as SAO (Senior Arctic Official) or SAAO (Senior Arctic Affairs Official). Themselves included, not many people know the difference between the two – if there is any.

In addition to the main members of the delegation, there are other members as well, usually from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment as well as from another governing body that is closely related to the issue. On top of that, there are observers, organisations and others, altogether a few dozen participants. These are people who know everything there is to know about these matters – and after a decade of experience that is quite a lot.

The delegation's responsibility is to cover all the actual meetings. The governments might give directions and inspect the texts, but in the end, it is up to delegates to finish the documents. This is work far from the currents of mainstream Foreign Affairs. NATO, EU, UN and the like travel through different routes. The declamatory visions about the Northern Summits and the integration of the EU, Russia and the United States are far from the conference halls where they spend blood, sweat and tears to get to an understanding about the practices of the Arctic Council.

Sometimes a country becomes enthusiastic and elevates their profile, but after those moments, things get back to normal. Generally, it requires a lot of work, a lot of research and the

preparation of speeches and reports and in return there are meagre resources: little attention, few people and few rapporteurs.

In addition, there are all the different programmes, taskforces, and other separate meetings. Someone has to attend, prepare and host those as well.

At the same time, alongside with AEPS reports and other Arctic bureaucracy papers the officials go through texts that highlight the enormous challenges of the Northern Regions and possibilities in economy, environment protection and getting Europe, Russia and the United States together. Also the importance of sustainable development and the status of indigenous peoples.

The day those texts start to become reality, many things change.

But that change begins somewhere else than in the conference halls where the negotiators try to move forward section by section as per their instructions. No more do they envision declamatory ideas but solutions for the problems right in front. This is called finding consensus, and even though the circles that are interested in international Arctic diplomacy are small, at times, progress can be slow. When majority decisions are not made, there is a need to find the solution that suits everyone.

Before the Arctic Council was born, in practice this meant that for example, an ambassador level discussion would last several meetings about the essence of the letter *s* in the English language. That letter had a part in delaying timetables and it became the only big letter in Arctic cooperation.

To understand the essence of the letter *s*, we need a very good understanding of English language grammar, international law and the history of indigenous peoples. Not forgetting the internal politics of the United States.

The question is whether we use the plural or the singular form in English: *indigenous people* or *indigenous peoples*. Using the plural form opens up many interesting possibilities. Then these peoples are actually peoples and not just any kind of native people, and that means that they can have a legal right to present demands in their own name.

And that is exactly what they want. These peoples do not have any doubt as to whether they are peoples or not, and most of the countries in the North do not have a problem recognising this (practical applications are a different matter). However, for the lawyers of the United States there is an extra *s*.

The United States sees itself as a melting pot of peoples, Canada as a mosaic of peoples. The distinctive difference is a matter of principle. However, also in the United States reservations, there are Native Americans who have their own views, and lately they have started to have expert lawyers.

Thus, most of the year 1996 was spent fighting over the letter *s*. The opinions of the neighbour to the south especially did not please the Chairmanship country Canada, whose delegation was led by the former President of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) Mary Simon. Nevertheless, this resulted in a second footnote in the establishment declaration of the Arctic Council: "The use of the term "peoples" in this Declaration shall not be construed as having any implications in regard to the rights which may attach to the term under international law."

At the same time, the United States decreased the role of the indigenous peoples in the Council, lower than what the others were prepared for.

The first footnote also exists due to the United States, and it guarantees that the cooperation stays in the sidelines when compared to the country's national interests: "The Arctic Council should not deal with matters related to military security."

But all this was before the Council was established. Now that it is up and running, the big question is what it is going to do.

The correct answer is: not much, before the SAO/SAAOs have gathered in Alta, Ottawa, Yellowknife, Iqaluit...

The Council was born somewhat empty-handed. It was agreed that it would be a high-level forum, which can handle all kinds of joint matters, especially sustainable development and environment protection.

The problem is that you cannot discuss the contents of the sustainable development programme, before properly defining it. And you cannot discuss that before the Council has approved the Rules of Procedure of their meetings. Compiling them was the first task of the Council.

A year after the Council was born those rules were still not devised. For example, the meeting of Arctic officials in Ottawa in October 1997 ended with nothing to show for it. The problem was to decide what organisations could be accepted as observers in the meetings and whether that requires consensus or not. A matter that does not seem too dramatic on the outside jammed the entire meeting, which was already frustrating according to many followers.

The progression on the matter was hindered by one country's opposing opinion. The country was – once again – the United States.

Reconciliation had been made both with respect to financial arrangements and regarding the secretariat: will the secretariat of the Council be permanent, so that the operations have a clear continuity, or should it change along with the chair country. Because the issue is decided by consensus, the policy that won outlined that the secretariat should change. In part, this guarantees that the Council does not become very visible. Most of the governments in the region have shared their reluctance in making financial commitments.

Many other diplomatic moves were being made behind the curtain, for example how the Chairmanship of Norway in the AEPS reacted to Canada's chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

All of this is naturally not visible to the outside audience, but it can create long and exhausting meetings.

The actual meetings of the Ministers were agreed to be held every two years. Next time the meeting of the Foreign Ministers (or their representatives that the ministers send after taking a look at the map) is meant to convene in September 1998 in Iqaluit, on the Baffin Island of Canada.

There the entire Council was meant to be "reborn". Before that, they had to come up with the Rules of Procedure, and before that, figure out what to do with the observers. Only then would they be able to discuss the contents itself – in practice the sustainable development programme. Time was running out.

The concept of "sustainable development" is a sort of magic word, which encapsulates all the possibilities and conflicts of Arctic cooperation. It is an overlaying principle, meant to brand all operations in the Arctic Regions. Many scholars on the field have written numerous books, articles and reports on the matter throughout the 1990s.

However, turning theory into practice is an entirely different matter. Sustainable development takes you to the root issues: at the same time, we should protect the environment, exploit the natural resources, promote trade and benefit the local communities and indigenous peoples.

When the region has an enormous potential for financial abuse, a particularly delicate environment, a mainstream populace that wants financial actions, indigenous peoples protecting their own living conditions and different political needs of different countries, how do we create common rules for all this?

The sustainable development programme is more or less related to that question, and the Council needs to approve it. The work is in early stages, because the negotiators are stuck on completely different issues. Almost all the conflicts that could arise in the future in the Arctic Regions and overall the nature of cooperation itself culminate in that work.

We would have to reach a compromise that can be adapted to international circles. Sustainable development is the code word, which is related to everything that relates to the economy and the environment at the same time. In addition, it involves talented pressure groups, lawyers and lobbyists. Just before and after the Kyoto Climate Conference the international environmental agreements are once again especially sensitive issues.

They are looking at the basics for a solution, understanding that sustainable development includes the three dimensions of the environment, economy and society: protecting the Arctic environment and the sustainable use of the natural resources, financial development in general and separately in Arctic communities and with indigenous peoples, and ensuring their social and cultural well-being, health, education and communication.

When a concrete programme is put together from these construction blocks, it is not a walk in the park.

Canada invited a gathering of the first visible meeting – during its Chairmanship of the Arctic Council that started in September 1996 – to Whitehorse, Yukon for May 1998: a broad seminar themed on sustainable development.

AMAP. CAFF. PAME. EPPR. TFSDU. IPS. Every ten months, about ten officials get together in some Arctic town's conference hotel to read documents that are filled with abbreviations and hidden meanings that the outside world knows nothing about. Different deadlines are approaching and work is piling up. Even though you never hear from the meetings, it does not mean there aren't any tough negotiations or pressure.

Nevertheless, part of international politics is that when matters require solutions, they are brought to bigger tables. Assuming that the governments are actually interested in them. As it stands now, Arctic cooperation is pretty far from the expectations that the ceremonial speeches have bestowed upon it.

"The Arctic Council, established last year in Ottawa, is a new forum that needs to be properly built up. It is the only northern forum where the United States and Canada participate. It would be only natural to have the EU among participants, too," Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen said in Rovaniemi in September 1997.

There is a lot at stake at the next meeting of the Foreign Ministers. It should become clear in the meeting if the Arctic Council is ever going to get moving from its starting position on the side rails, where it has got stuck. Passengers are waiting for the check-in handling agents.

Otherwise, the passengers have to take different routes to their destinations – those who manage to leave in the first place.

Besides, a part of the Arctic Council is constantly going strong. The part that did not even belong in it at first. The Rovaniemi Process is no more, but all of its environmental protection programmes are still going on. We just need to open up the umbrella, under which all of those operations were moved.

However, even though the AEPS works, it, too, has established its own small world – which is mostly turned inwards. A researcher for the Norwegian Polar Institute Håken Nilson has evaluated the actions in the 1990s and observed that the political control and support coming from higher up is rather limited. There should be clear rules for the AEPS programmes and the Arctic officials should give directions for the operation – the officials who have time and time again gotten stuck in the procedural meetings without actually getting to the contents.



## A MORAL OBLIGATION FOR HUMANITY

**IT WAS AT THE** Keflavik airport in Iceland on a Sunday morning in the autumn of 1997. The country's President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson was supposed to take a flight to Finland and Rovaniemi, where a Conference about the Dreams and Realities of the Barents Region was about to start. Only a couple of weeks earlier Grímsson had made a state visit to Finland. He was taken to Vaasa, to inaugurate one of the biggest bridges in Finland.

Now he had a different agenda. He was going to make a speech himself, but also spend a couple of days listening closely to what the others had to say. With this, Grímsson was – according to him – supposed to emphasize the importance Iceland sees in the cooperation of the Barents and Arctic Regions, and how important it deems the strengthening of development and dialogue in our part of the world.

He never arrived at Keflavik. His wife got ill and the trip was cancelled. At the same time, cancelled was the speech that was supposed to combine matters in an unconventional way. Or at least in a more eloquent manner.

“The Barents-Arctic regions provide the Northern European countries with significant opportunities for cooperation, both amongst ourselves and with Russia, the United States and the European Union – cooperation endowed with regional, national and global dimensions,” he was going to declare. The President was supposed to paint a picture of his home, in the middle of action and possibilities, and not in some peripheral oblivion:

“The end of the Cold War and the dramatic transformation of the political and economic landscape in Europe have brought the Barents and Arctic Regions into a key position, influencing strongly the success and stability of the new Europe and the important Russian-United States relations.”

The development of the relations in the Euro-Arctic Region can still improve the relations between small and big European countries, EU member states and outside countries as well as the members of NATO and the outside countries, Grímsson was going to say.

According to him, cooperation between Russia and the United States and the dialogue within the Barents and Arctic Council can help these important countries to find new and positive ways to develop their relationships. The Nordic Countries on the other hand can bring their best qualities – open dialogue, friendship and a non-formal approach – to be part of this cooperation and function as a role model for the new regional institutes. The active participation of the European Union in Barents and Arctic Regions deepens the understanding between the member states about how encompassing the European institutes should be in other parts of Europe.

In this respect, the Icelandic message was a political vision, envisioning the opening possibilities with eloquent words, a plea for a transatlantic cooperation through the North. It was not an official initiative; the president does not have that kind of power in the political system of Iceland.

However, they can have other kinds of influence. The speech was built in with more ideas than usual. Even fate-like overtones, concrete worry for the future of his country and the whole planet.

The economic, scientific and cultural cooperation, energy projects and communication systems of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region can, according to Grímsson, strengthen the region's stake in understanding the fundamental global problems – climate change and ozone depletion. That, in turn, can advance the world's endeavours to prevent the threats to the whole civilization and biosystem.

No small task for the Barents Region: saving the entire civilization. And there was more to follow.

When Russia and the United States come together through the Barents and Arctic Councils, they will find new ways and approaches for establishing good relations. In addition, that allows them both to actively participate in the development of the polar regions, which, for one, significantly affects the future of the environment of the entire world.

This way as well the fate of the whole planet is placed on the hands of the Northern Region's cooperation.

“The environmental significance of the entire Arctic Region, and its links to the European, American and Asian continents, is so critical for the Earth's biosystem as to make intensified cooperation between all states and regions in our part of the world both a moral duty and an obligation towards fellowmembers of the human race,” Grímsson had written.

Back in the day, when the Arctic Council was founded, the Minister of Environment of Canada Sergio Marchi held that the environment of the Arctic Region is the first warning sign for the entire planet. He used the words “early warning system”, which refers to the Distant Early Warning Line set up in Northern Canada and Alaska warning about a surprise attack from the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

However, Grímsson was thinking about his own country as well as the planet. He trusted the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which states that average global temperatures are rising quickly. By the end of the next century, the sea level can rise by 15–95 centimetres. The changes in temperature can further bolster the ozone depletion in the northern regions.

The result: “Our children's generation would have to deal with colossal problems resulting from this transformation of the oceans.” Iceland is an island, which is directly and violently affected by the destabilising ecosystem of the oceans, for example.

Nobody really knows what results from ozone depletion. However, the strengthening of the ultraviolet radiation can severely damage living cells. In the long run, it might bring fundamental changes to the diversity of species in the Arctic ecosystem.

In June 1997, in a Meeting of Environmental Ministers in Alta, the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) left a short document for the ministers and officials, where they noted that the ozone depletion in the North had been exceptionally high in March 1997. In the Arctic Regions, there is a lot of life both on land and in the sea.

“The immediate concern is the effects the increased ultraviolet radiation is going to have on people's health and the ecosystem of the Arctic Region. Despite the fact that lately the

ozone in the stratosphere has depleted, nationally and internationally there has not been enough effort to research the effects of UV radiation on the Arctic Regions,” said the President of the IASC David J. Drewry.

The IASC has composed a proposal to establish a network of international research centres for UV radiation. Because we are not able to understand the effects on health and the ecosystem, lack of this knowledge also prevents us from doing proper risk assessments. The matter is urgent, because valid research data on what the situation was like before the increased radiation is not available for long.

According to the proposal, the research stations should be set up in different parts of the Arctic Region, in places where it is possible to research both the terrestrial ecosystem and the marine ecosystem. To research the health effects they should also be near such population centres where there is registered information on the health of the population, and where both indigenous peoples and the majoritarian population live. Existing research centres could be exploited.

There would have to be approximately five research centres. The base funds for each would be around a million dollars and annual operation costs would be around half a million dollars. The IASC hopes that the centres host countries as well as private and public foundations and the Arctic countries together would fund them.

No decision has been made about starting a research project on the effects of ultraviolet radiation.

“It is a shocking fact, which reflects the direction of modern scientific research, that at present no international programs are focusing on the development and application of climate models for predicting future changes in the Arctic,” President Grímsson had written in his speech.

If the sea level rises due to global warming, it will dramatically affect the living conditions also in the North. Furthermore, winds and ocean currents might change, which will be felt in the temperatures, humidity and seasonal variation.

This part about the change in ocean currents in Grímsson’s speech was the only reference to that possibility, which can affect life systems in entire Northern Europe. There are theoretical models, which indicate that global warming can badly disturb the forming mechanisms of the Gulf Stream. That is the phenomenon about which you cannot say anything else for certain except that without it entire Northern Europe would be covered with ice and northern societies as they are, would cease to exist.

Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC), as the system that creates the Gulf Stream is called, has shown some signs of weakening during the last few years.

“In my opinion the consequences of climate change and ozone depletion for the Barents and Arctic region make it of paramount importance that global research and cooperation should be given top priority by the institutions that the nations and the communities have created in this part of the world,” Grímsson had thought.

The speech that the President was writing for Rovaniemi was largely based on that environmental knowledge that had accumulated due to the Rovaniemi Process.

One of the most important sources he used was the flagship document of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), which became public in Tromsø, Norway in June 1997, a week before the meeting of environmental Ministers in Alta. This was a report on the condition of the Arctic environment, delivered by the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), which was founded at the first meeting of environmental ministers in Rovaniemi 1991.

Other working groups were also established in Rovaniemi and at the following conference in Nuuk in 1993, which follow their own programmes and make their own reports. For example, the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) is developing a circumpolar network of protected areas, the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) is developing directions for marine activities, for instance oil extraction operations. The Emergency Prevention, Preparedness & Response (EPPR) specialises in addressing the environmental impact of oil and gas accidents and additionally the Task Force on Sustainable Development and Utilisation (TFSDU) has invested in evaluating the environmental impact.

In practice, all these Working Groups mean long-term and determined consideration of the matters, to the extent the usually scarce resources allow. A common knowledge base behind the decisions is getting to be quite extensive. For example, due to CAFF, we are able to examine the nature reserves and protection of species in the entire Arctic Region at once, and in the framework of the AEPS the Finnish Ministry of the Environment and the Environment Institute have compiled instructions on the environmental assessment of the Arctic Region.

But for the greater audience, the most visible achievement is the AMAP report, a big full-colour, hundred and eighty pages long book, which has been translated into different languages and to which has been added the newest and most comprehensive information on the conditions of the Arctic environment: basic information of the region's ecology, its inhabitants, different sources of pollution and transboundary pollution, acidification and climate change. According to the report, the Arctic Region has some notable local sources of pollution, the worst one in Norilsk, Siberia, but the whole region is exposed to global changes.

Majority of Grimsson's text about the environment is from the climate change portion of the AMAP report.

The northern latitudes are susceptible to change according to the report and the changes are coming. Melting ice and warming water raises the surface level of the ocean. The winds and the ocean currents are getting faster, southern species are replacing the northern ones, the vegetative stage in the lakes lasts longer, fish populations grows faster, the human communities either adapt or don't. The ozone holes are sometimes around forty per cent; the snow cover adds to the ultraviolet radiation, sunlight might become dangerous to flora and fauna.

Building materials, especially plastic, dilapidate even faster thanks to the increasing UV radiation.

Information is needed, but it does not exist.

"Researching the direct consequences of the UV radiation requires immediate attention, especially when it comes to eye injuries, the immune system and skin problems. We need estimates of the contaminants, which might be the result of the abnormalities caused by climate change to the atmosphere and the ocean currents, rising sea levels and sudden extreme weather phenomena," the AMAP researchers write.

Actually, one of the reasons for lack of information is the Rovaniemi Process itself, which took off limping and restricted. It had to consider the so-called political realities i.e., it had to steer away from awkward issues and be non-binding. Even though the AMAP report includes them, at the beginning the issues of global environment such as climate were completely absent from Arctic cooperation. The argument was that they are being handled by the UN. In 1992, Rio de Janeiro did host a massive United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development, but there the northern regions were not presented separately. Simi-

larly, the environmental impact of military actions was absent in the Rovaniemi process. Nuclear safety in the northern areas is a very important issue, but in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was also a sensitive question.

Since then the political allergies have subsided noticeably, although not entirely.

The President of Iceland was supposed to bring this entire package of environmental concerns to the political stage at the same time when he would have highlighted the importance of the Barents cooperation for international policy and bringing the interests of the EU, Russia and the United States together. This kind of convergence of politics, the economy and environmental protection is rarely heard, especially from a head of state.

And we did not hear it in Rovaniemi either, because Grímsson never arrived and he never gave the speech. However, it was published on paper after the statements in Rovaniemi were published together as a book.

## THE NORTHERN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES STEP FORTH

**THE INTERNET HAS COUNTED** for days and minutes for a long time now. 1<sup>st</sup> April 1999 is getting closer.

For the small town of Iqaluit in Baffin Island, for the five thousand odd citizens and about two million square kilometres of Northern Canada it is not just any day. That day the Northwest Territories will be separated in two, and the eastern area, about the size of Greenland, will become a new territory called Nunavut, “our land”. Iqaluit will become its capital the same day.

At the same time, the continent of America makes post-Columbus history. For the first time, the power will be relinquished back to those from whom it has been usurped for centuries, more or less with violence.

Now they do the opposite. Nunavut becomes a territory inside Canada, governed by the Inuit. When we also count Greenland, the Inuit have two large autonomous regions, where they themselves decide on most of their issues. This is something completely different from what the indigenous peoples have had in the past. On the Arctic regions the Inuit are political agents who cannot be dismissed – actually, they govern a lion’s share of the entire Arctic land mass. Nunavut and Greenland together make up a fifth of the land mass of North America.

In Nunavut, however, power is not given to the Inuit, but to the inhabitants of the area. In practice, it means the same: the Inuit have an eighty five per cent majority out of the twenty six thousand inhabitants and according to the rules of majoritarian democracy, they are responsible for the administration of the region. In addition, the Inuit will get a direct ownership of a three hundred thousand square kilometre area – and they become the biggest private landowner in North America.

The negotiations with Canada’s government lasted twenty years, but in the end, the wish of the Inuit came true. They reached their goal without violence, with resilient negotiations and in a way that is reflected in different parts of the world. In Australia for example, the government has followed the process with concern and their indigenous populace has gotten help for their negotiations directly from the Inuit. The first inhabitants of Australia even want some of their rights back, as do the Māori.

The northern example is a good precedent. On top of that, Nunavut is being created during the UN's decade of indigenous peoples, which adds to the power of the example.

The Canadian government has chosen a different kind of approach than its southern partner, the United States. There are some dark moments in Canada's history regarding the indigenous peoples, but now the country sees itself as more of a mosaic, where the minorities have a possibility for life, rather than as a melting pot like the United States. At the same time, of course, also in Canada the living conditions, education and health of the indigenous peoples are significantly weaker than that of the majority population. Unemployment, alcoholism and social problems are common. Rights to the land are debated all over Canada, and usually it is harder in the more populated areas, essentially the South. Different self-governing proposals have been presented and Quebec's aspirations to become independent are adding pressure in the same direction.

Among the indigenous peoples of Canada, the Inuit are in a special position, even though their culture had suffered immensely from the 1950s through 1970s, because of urbanisation and the pressure of becoming Canadian, i.e., they were in the cross hairs of two completely different lifestyles.

One of the reasons for the rise of the Inuit is that they live in an area that is particularly demanding and does not attract other permanent residents. The other is that for a long time now, the Inuit have been able to get organized and are determined to fight for their own rights.

This is agreeable with the government of Canada: being active in the North could mean a combining of internal and external policies. Both policies in the northern part of the country are reflected in the appointing of Mary Simon as Canada's Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs in 1994. There is no corresponding position in any other country.

Simon, who for long has been responsible for the negotiations behind the Arctic Council, has previously held a position as the President of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC). She is from Kangirsualujjuaq, Quebec. In the 1960s, she worked for Inuktituut radio under the national Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, CBC North.

Simon holds her own background in high regard while participating in the negotiations of the Arctic Council.

"It gives me perspective and understanding of the Arctic cooperation, which is needed to create an umbrella organisation like this," she said in an interview in the Arctic Parliament's Conference in Yellowknife in the spring of 1996.

"We also have to see the connection between the environment and development issues and how the development could be happening in a more stable base."

The ICC was born at the end of 1970s to unite the Inuit of Canada, Alaska and Greenland. The connections were extended to Russia as soon as it was possible, which meant the year 1988.

"It is our goal to strengthen the Inuit connection, promote international, economic, political and social rights, bring more self-sufficiency and guarantee the cultural growth," describes Rosemarie Kuptana, the President of the ICC in 1996 as the tasks of the organisation. Providing information about the fatal consequences of transboundary pollution is one of the central international tasks and suits the work of the Arctic Council well.

The Inuit do not mention independence.

"We cannot advance by force. The Inuit have a right to self-determination, but we want to stay a part of Canada," Kuptana says.

From an economic perspective, the livelihood of Nunavut seems almost impossible. The traditional way of life alone is not sufficient nowadays to maintain you and, for example, when sealing was stopped by the campaigns of industrial countries' animal protectors, many Inuit communities were faced with nearly complete unemployment. The Canadian government supports them with millions, but they cannot rely on that money alone. However, it is not guaranteed that Ottawa will always be this lenient.

The Canadian Inuit have tried to create a base for their own livelihood. Their own newspaper *Nunatsiaq News* has been published since 1975 both in English and with the Inuktitut syllabics, which consist of weird circles, squares and triangles – at least to the outsider's eye. The internet and modern data communication technology are in constant use, as conference trips are very long and tedious. In addition, the Inuit have their own IT company, a northern fashion store chain and an airline, *First Air*, that operates throughout the northern regions and that has become the third largest airline in Canada, right after the big companies *Air Canada* and *Canadian Airlines*.

The money from land claims agreements has been channelled to business activities. Mining is a possibility for getting income.

Nunavut does not have any more international jurisdiction as any other part of Canada, but it is clear that establishing it will strengthen the position of the Inuit in Arctic cooperation even further – simultaneously strengthening the position of other indigenous peoples.

However, Nunavut is not the only case where power has been restored to the indigenous peoples. The autonomy of Greenland was also about the Inuit, and in some ways perhaps even more politically charged.

After being the colony of Denmark, in 1953 it became an equal part of the monarchy. When Denmark became a member of the EC, the negotiations did not take Greenland into consideration. In the 1970s, a political movement was born that led to the withdrawal of Greenland from the European Economic Community and Greenland's wide autonomy. This has manifested such that Greenland is in charge of its affairs except foreign and security policy matters, financial policy, exploitation of oil and gas deposits and some features of general legislation.

If their financial situation would allow it, Greenland would probably try to go further than autonomy. Even the Faroe Islands have a political independence movement. Of the fifty five thousand inhabitants of Greenland, eighty five per cent are Inuit and the number of Danish people has been in decline since the autonomy. For the majority of the island, the name is not Greenland but *Kalaallit Nunaat*.

In the 1990s, acknowledging and respecting the indigenous peoples has become the politically correct thing to do, and the Arctic Council is the first international governing body that has taken their participation seriously right from the beginning. Even in the Rovaniemi Process, their words carried weight, but their position was that of an observer-like with other organizations.

The "Permanent observer" position in the Arctic Council for three organizations representing indigenous peoples is more what indigenous peoples have ever had anywhere, but it is also less than what was proposed at first in the negotiations. Thus, the participating organizations were rather sour when the Council was born in Ottawa in September 1996: representatives from eight different countries signed the act while the representatives for the indigenous peoples were sitting separately, in the sidelines. The actual table did not have a place for them and their flags were not flying.



The United States had especially stomped on the position of indigenous peoples – while others somewhat supported them – they had made clear that the organization is between countries, not peoples. The opportunity to sign the founding document had been taken from them at the last minute. Only a month before the conference in Ottawa, the Inuit decided to join. Because in the end, the document gives them the possibility to make their voices heard.

The ICC, the Saami Council and the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North do not represent all indigenous peoples in the area. The Arctic Council left an opportunity for others to join as well. They have to represent one people, who live on the territories of several countries, or several peoples living on the territories of one country. In addition, the number of indigenous peoples organisations needs to be lower than that of the participating countries, so lower than eight.

It is still not certain if other organisations will join. The Indians living in the northern regions are so far without representation as well as the Aleuts. Possible future participants are the Nenets and Komi, the Aleut and Athabascans, the Dené and the indigenous peoples of Yukon and the Qwich'in from Canada and Alaska.

Expanding the permanent participants list, as well as including the observers, is a question that is still taxing the negotiators of the Arctic Council. The delegations of the United States and Canada have had members from these “outsider” peoples for some time now. Finding a consensus on the matter between the countries and the current three organisations is not going to be that simple.

To the Saami people from the Nordic Countries, participating in international cooperation mechanisms goes hand in hand with their increasing self-awareness. Getting position similar to Nunavut is still far away for these people living on the territories of three countries, but a similar endeavour exists.

In August 1997 in Jukkasjärvi, Sweden, the Saami Parliament of Finland, Sweden and Norway published their first ever joint political programme, which has self-governance at its core. The Russian Saami people did not participate.

The visions of self-governance stem from the ongoing International Decade (1994-2004) of the World's Indigenous peoples declared by the UN.

“The right to self-determination of peoples is an internationally accepted principle that the member states of the UN are obligated to promote and to protect. The Saami people have demanded and demand, like many other indigenous peoples, that the right to self-determination belongs also to the indigenous peoples of the world and that is why the world community need to accept them,” says the Programme of Actions.

In the Saami territory, the Saami people should be granted the right to regulate their culture, communities and their own territories. They would get to decide themselves how to govern, regulate and control their own matters.

“We have to evaluate if it is possible to define the borders of jurisdiction and decision-making powers between the Saami people and the countries,” the text says.

The goal of the Saami parliament is that the Saami people would really have the right to decide on their future, and this model would serve as an example for other indigenous peoples. Financially they reference the indigenous peoples' programme that the UN approved, which states that the member states are obliged to offer proper resources to the institutes, organisations and communities of the indigenous peoples, so that they can promote their own plans and act according to their own objectives.

A self-governed region for the Saami people inside three countries is essentially a high-level political demand both inside the countries and internationally – especially since the Saami people are a minority in most areas. At the same time, there are to be addressed the very difficult questions, for example land rights: do the Saami people have rights to also control, and not just use their old lands.

In practice, however, declaring their plans for self-governance raised little attention at first, and the capitals did not really notice. The declaration was, at least at this stage, more symbolic. Nevertheless, it reflects the direction of the discussion. Inevitably, it will bring many different conflicts with it.

In Norway, campaigns opposing the Saami people have already fished political points. In Finland, on the other hand, there have been disagreements about who counts as a Saami and who does not. The issue is related to voting rights in the Saami parliament elections and thus to the use of power. This discussion would also not exist without the more extensive whole, increase of identity and proprietary jurisdiction and search for their own rights instead of the previous oppression.

The plan of Rio Tinto Zinc company to start mining operations in the North brought forth an opposition from the Saami people, even though the governments of Norway and Finland had nothing against the company's arrival. This shows the contradictions, which are not indifferent for Arctic cooperation: on whose terms does development happen? Through defining sustainable development, an answer should be found.

In the work of the Arctic Council, the Saami people in the own right have had a position as the only indigenous peoples in the Nordic Countries and Western Europe. They participated already in the preparations of the Rovaniemi Process.

The Arctic Coordinator for the Saami Council, Leif Halonen, who represents the Sami people in the Arctic Council, admits that participating has elevated their status.

“For the first time in the history of the world the indigenous peoples sit and make decisions with the governments. Everywhere else they're just observers,” he says.

Exploiting natural resources is one of the issues that especially interest the Saami people.

The most efficient way for the Saami people to have an impact would be in preparations. The only problem is the same old: money. The conferences are often far away and expensive, and they are short of financiers.

In Copenhagen, the Indigenous People's Secretariat (IPS) that works under the Arctic Council and is funded by Denmark released a report on the amount of funds made available to the indigenous peoples from governments and how much they would need.

“If the governments are serious about bringing indigenous peoples into the operations, they need to secure proper funding for them, not just to attend conferences but also for the preparation work,” the report states.

If there is no possibility for background work, there is no use in assuming that the knowledge of the results of Arctic cooperation or its existence in general would spread among the peoples, beyond a few activists.

The Inuit have received funds mostly from Canada and Denmark. The Saami people received direct funding from Norway only in 1996. As a result, the Saami people have had to skip conferences and the overall coordination has been weak.

If there is an increase in the organisations for indigenous peoples, the need for government funding grows as they do not have their own sources. And if getting funding is hard now, it will not get easier after new participants arrive.

The Inuit and the Saami people have one common advantage: they work in open communities, where it is possible to, for example, organise communications. They are able to recruit multilingual and educated representatives who have an understanding of how international operations work.

Many things are different for the indigenous peoples of Russia. Their representative organisation the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) has headquarters in Moscow. It includes about thirty peoples, and only eleven of those could fall within the definition of Arctic indigenous peoples.

Canada and Denmark have helped representatives with travelling expenses to the conferences, but there have not been funds for preparation and background work. In addition, the Inuit and the Saami people represent only one people, whereas RAIPON represents multiple.

Thus, the voice of the indigenous peoples in Russia is the weakest, even though the problems there are the biggest. Rough industrialisation, oil and gas lines have ruined many traditional habitats and made old livelihoods impossible. Minority policies have only worked on paper. Many peoples are in a weak position, have lost their traditions and cultures. In general, ways for them to get heard are few. As such, Arctic cooperation is an important platform and perhaps if the knowledge of Canada's policies and practices regarding indigenous peoples would spread in Russia, it might be an encouraging example. However, it would also require that the bases for Russian law would hold.

The AMAP report on the condition of the Arctic environment is hard to read with regard to the indigenous peoples of Russia. The natural resources have been exploited completely ignoring the fate of the peoples and their culture. The economic crisis of the twentieth century has led to a decline in the service connections and unemployment. The health situation is poor, mortality rate is high and life expectancy is way less than average. Alcoholism is common and the risk for tuberculosis is high.

AMAP has included statistics on the indigenous peoples living in sixteen regions in Russia: the Saami people, the Enets, the Nenets, the Khanty, the Nganasans, the Dolgans, the Evens, the Evenks, the Chukchis, the Siberian Yupik, the Yukaghirs, the Selkups, the Chuvans, the Koryaks, the Kets and the Mansi. Relatively speaking, most of these peoples live in the autonomous region of Taimyr, where they constitute sixteen per cent of the population. In these statistics, the Komi, for example, do not count as indigenous people.

"The future of the indigenous peoples of Russia is unclear. The Russian Federation has composed some laws about minority protection, but applying them in practice is going to take time and effort. One of the hopes is that the traditional practices combined with economic operations like reindeer herding and fur farms can bring some possibilities," the AMAP report says.

The former President, a Khanti writer and a member of the Duma, Jeremei Aipin participated in the conference that established the Arctic Council in Ottawa in 1996. He delivered the most pessimistic speech at the conference.

"The changes in market economy have hit hard the people of the North," Aipin said.

"The drillings of oil and gas companies, clearcuttings, gold and diamond mines on our lands have given nothing to the indigenous peoples. The peoples in the northern parts of Russia are on the verge of destruction and extinction," he said and hoped that the Arctic Council finds ways to survive the "colossal" exploitation of the natural resources.

“The stronger a country is, the more they have taken from their indigenous peoples,” Aipin summed up his own experiences. The lifestyle of the Khanti has not survived the storm of enormous gas lines, environmental destruction and Russification.

A concept that has come along in the last few years on the Arctic Regions and which also reflects the change in attitude towards indigenous peoples is “traditional ecological knowledge” – in other words the knowledge of nature that the peoples have cultivated through thousands of years of continued culture.

This got high-level recognition with the establishing of the Arctic Council: the signing countries said in their declaration that they recognise the value of the traditional knowledge of the indigenous peoples and take it into consideration. Similar mentions are rarely seen in international agreements.

Adapting it into practice is a different matter. The cultures whose lifeline is a deep connection to nature, have to naturally know how to live in balance with it. Modern economic exploitation has a completely different premise. Combining these two once again creates the question of what is sustainable development.

However, traditional knowledge offers a good base for observations about the effects of climate change and ecological changes in general: has the behaviour or occurrence of animals changed, are the weather conditions different from before.

In practice, this part of the agreement is meaningless as well, unless there are resources to gather and apply the traditional knowledge. Nevertheless, some degree of coordinated work has already begun.

In November 1996, about fifty representatives from Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Northern Russia gathered in a seminar in Inuvik, Canada, to consider the saving and adapting of the indigenous peoples’ knowledge. The seminar made a long list of recommendations, and the most urgent ones were to save the knowledge of the elders of the communities, and record and transfer it for the young. The oldest generation is quickly disappearing everywhere, and with them invaluable knowledge from the time before modernisation made a big change in our lives.

Step by step, traditional knowledge is getting its own permanent role. It has already been taken into consideration in Arctic documents; for example, it is part of the guidelines on evaluating the environmental effects in the Arctic regions. Its position has been recognised in larger forums as well, in part thanks to the Arctic initiative. Traditional knowledge has, for example, become a part of the international biodiversity agreement.

However, once again there is a long way between what is happening in the international agreement negotiations and what the reality is, for instance among the smaller groups of the northern peoples of Russia.

Organisations that represent regions are not part of the Arctic cooperation. In the Nordic Council, the autonomous regions of Åland, Greenland and Faroe Islands are included, but the Saami people are not. In the Barents Regional Council on the other hand, a group of Northern provinces and areas were included. The Saami people are not members of that council either, because they do not have their own administrative territory with borders.

As a result, the regional level is missing entirely from official Arctic cooperation, even though it was included in the first drafts. In some statements, a broader committee has been proposed, where all willing members could participate.

As it is, a majority of the northern people are left out from direct participation in Arctic cooperation. For example, in the North Calotte, the Saami people are a small minority of all

the inhabitants. Overall, in the Nordic Countries and Russia, the northern areas have a larger urban population and industry centres as compared to North America.

The Finnish delegation to the Arctic Council meeting in Ottawa included a representative from the Province of Lapland, but usually regional level representation is omitted.

The Northern Forum, which represents several – but not all – administrative regions in the north is an observer in the Council. The regions cover land areas from North Korea and China as well. The representatives of the Northern Forum use the floor in the meetings to declare that they represent those who actually live in the North and thus demand a better standing.

However, this forum is not representative, and includes the regions' governors or other regional administration officials. Even though it was one of the first governing bodies that covered the whole northern region, the so-called official bodies have had a hard time dealing with it.

In a sense, on an international or global scale, the Northern Forum is a rare example of transboundary regional cooperation that is not dependent on decisions from the capitals but was born through the regions' own initiatives. Alaska has shown considerable activity in its operations.

"I think it would be useful, if the Arctic Council included representatives from different regions," says Hannele Pokka, the governor of the Province of Lapland and also the deputy chair of the Northern Forum. "The only argument I've heard, is that the Northern Forum is too extensive."

At the same time, Pokka admits that it is the extensiveness of the Forum that makes it very difficult to have cooperation at an Arctic scale. In practice, cooperation is happening on a smaller scale (geographically): between the regions surrounding the Bering Strait, between the United States – or Alaska – and Japan and the cooperation of the European Arctic regions.

"It has been challenging to achieve projects that would cover the whole area," Pokka says. Instead, through the forum the different regions like Lapland and Yakutia have gotten some degree of commercial contacts.

## SOUTHERN POLLUTION HITS NORTH

**SOMETHING WEIRD IS HAPPENING** and the peoples from Northern Canada have noticed it.

“Water is not as clear as it was when I was a kid and it tastes different,” says the Chief of the Dené people Bill Erasmus.

It is March 1996 and the place is Yellowknife, the capital of the Northwest Territories in Canada, on the coast of the Great Slave Lake. Erasmus talks to the Meeting of Parliamentarians of the Arctic in an administrative building whose walls are covered with text in all the seven official languages of the territory: English, French, Chipewyan, Slavey, Dogrib, Gwich'in and Inuktitut. Some of the texts have been written with syllabics that consist of triangles, circles and squares.

Erasmus and his people know those regions with a different name: Denendeh, The Land of the People. A land that was unchangeable for thousands of years, but is no longer the case.

One of the speakers in the conference was Gary Bohnet, a spokesperson for the Métis nation, a charismatic individual who later in the evening walks through The Gold Range bar like he owns it and shakes hands left and right.

During the day, however, they both have something serious to say and a serious audience.

“Fish tastes different. The skin is thinner and the livers are darker and bigger. The caribou are leaner as well and the taste is changing.”

“The weather is changing as well. There is less snow and the surface of the waters is significantly lower. And the weather is not stable. One day it is warm, the next day it is cold. It affects the animals and us.”

“Our people have to deal with pollution. It is something that never happened during our elders' generation.”

Bill Erasmus does not mention that some generations ago the Dené people had to deal with the white people. That was also something, of which the elders had no experience – and the lifestyle of the European civilisation is the main reason behind the clean water fish becoming suddenly poisonous.

Yellowknife is a small town of fifteen thousand people with administrative bodies and mining companies. From a white man's eyes, it is far from everything, but for the Dené people it is in the middle of unforgettable homeland. On the huge area of the Northwest Territories live only sixty thousand people. They do not have any sources of pollution worth mentioning – if we ignore the arsenic near the gold mines, the uranium pollution in the uranium mines of the second world war and oil drilling. The diamond mine is not yet open.

The national statistical agency of Canada has excelled. Among other things, they have calculated that in the entire northern regions of the country there are 47 351 people belonging to indigenous tribes. A significant amount of their nutrition comes from nature, one way or another.

For the Indians, the Inuit and the Métis it was quite a shock to notice that the food they get directly from nature might be polluted. And they do not need to look for the culprit.

In 1992, the Canadian Métis were told that the fish they eat regularly has too much toxaphene, an organic compound, in their livers. The fish was no longer safe to eat. The compound is an insecticide that was banned in Canada in 1980 and in the United States in 1983.

“How could it appear in the northern nature in 1992,” asks Gary Bohnet.

The compound accumulates in the food chain of the water systems and ends up in the fish’s internal organs like liver. Transboundary pollution can happen from a thousand kilometres away. Toxaphene is still evaporating into the air from the southern cotton fields of the United States. In Mexico, it is still legal to use it and the same is true for Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary. Using different environmental toxins and pesticides without care in Asia or South America can cause harm on the other side of the Polar Circle.

“It comes with the air currents and ends up in our lakes and rivers. We are victims,” Bohnet says.

Over ten years ago, it was noted that PCB was found in the blood of an Inuit community member, and it went over the critical level of 63 per cent in under 15-year-olds. Around the Hudson Bay, the women had five times more PCB in their breast milk compared to the women in the southern parts of Canada.

The Canadian government has approached the local communities with campaigns, videos and pictures. Confusion has still been unavoidable. If one fish is inedible, what about the others? Why can you eat fish meat, but not the liver? How about all other foods? High concentrations have also been found in the caribou.

Excessive fears about all traditional foods began to emerge.

“We have to talk more about the benefits of our traditional foods,” Bill Erasmus says.

“We have to get the trust of the people back. The benefits of the traditional diet are far greater than the risks of the unknown.”

“Diet is an important matter. We want to protect our way of life in every possible way,” says Gary Bohnet.

For the Inuit, giving up on their traditional diet would mean not just giving up on their traditional way of life, that still exists, but also malnutrition, heart disease and diabetes. The benefits of breast-feeding are far greater than the risk of exposure to pollution. However, the recent report by AMAP about the state of the Arctic environment explicitly shows that, for example, mothers’ PCB concentration levels clearly affect the birth weight of children.

Permanent organic compounds and heavy metals can be found in nature that looks untouched. The city of Nikel in Kola, Russia lives next to a smelter with heavy pollution. Nevertheless, the mothers that give birth there have less mercury, cadmium and zinc in their blood than the comparison group in northern Quebec and Greenland. And what accumulates in humans, also accumulates in animals.

The Nordic countries remember how the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl led to restrictions on the use of reindeer meat and to picking berries and mushrooms. In the 1960s, the nuclear tests in Novaya Zemlya caused the radioactive element levels to rise also in the bodies of northern people.

Transboundary pollution, ozone depletion and climate change are matters that can't simply be addressed in the Arctic. Awareness about the special features and sensitive systems of the Arctic region has arisen over the last few years.

Even in the famous environmental conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, Arctic regions were not mentioned.

Things are changing in that regard as well.

"Our relationship with the land, the sea and the animals is the basis for our culture. Hunting, herding, fishing and gathering define who and what we are. Now that pollution has become a part of this relationship, we try to make decisions that affect our physical and cultural well-being," said the representatives of three indigenous peoples in a joint statement that was left alongside the AMAP report in 1997. At the same time, they demanded that the governments from the Arctic region should work together in the negotiations to limit transboundary pollution.

They should be able to transmit the results to the local level and research must continue despite of costs and other challenges, so that real threats to the Arctic environment and its inhabitants could be recognised, the organisations demand.

According to them, researching the polluting compounds can also help to find reasons for unnatural behaviour and physical abnormalities that have been observed in the local fauna.

Since the early summer of 1997, the time was right for the governments as well.

In the Meeting of Environment Ministers in Alta, the eight countries of the region stated that they are working with "determination" so that an "early" agreement on removing or decreasing permanent organic compounds could be made. "In addition, we give our full support to the negotiations that aim to create a similar agreement about heavy metals and nitric oxides," the ministers declared. The negotiations are carried out under the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

At the same time, we arrive from the Arctic family to the international negotiations that touch on global financial interests, and where issues about northern regions are only one part of the whole.

Nevertheless, the Arctic Region has arrived on the agenda of international environmental politics.

Right after the meeting in Alta a follow-up conference to Rio was held in New York and most countries had made promises in Alta. We heard some remnants of these promises in New York and the Arctic countries gave a joint statement for the first time. The AMAP report worked as good background research for all of this.

It is an entirely different matter that the results of the New York meeting were quite stale and there is a clear dispersion in international environmental politics. The Rio agreements did not affect almost anything, in the United States a strong pressure group opposes all additional restrictions and the rising standard of living in China adds to the stress to the atmosphere. Besides, the list of urgent environmental matters that require a solution from unwilling governments is endless.

Before the worries of the Dené people affect the Mexican farmers' behaviour, there is a long road ahead. Even though, the United States, Canada, Russia and the Nordic Countries have promised "determined" actions and "full support".



## RESEARCHERS WANT TO INFLUENCE POLITICS

**FIRST A MEETING IN** Ivalo. Then by bus on the old Arctic Ocean Highway built by Finland before the war to Nikel – a road that Russia rarely opens for traffic. From Nikel to spend a night in Svanvik Folk High School in Norway and then through Skolt Saami village Sevettijärvi to Inari's School and the matter at hand: lectures, academic discussion, relaxation and a long night in Inari before starting again the next morning.

They are all here: Oran R. Young, a known name in the business from Dartmouth College, United States – a bearded man, who has an affection for divisions and fourfold tables in his presentations. Sanjay Chaturvedi is the only Indian researcher of northern matters. David Scrivener, a British research scientist from Keele University, who focuses on politics and environmental cooperation in the Arctic. Jyrki Käkönen has led northern research at Tampere Peace Research Institute in Finland for years. Lassi Heininen is a man who organises this and many other things and searches northern policy options for Finland.

Many others are also in attendance: economy researchers, students, journalists. Since 1991, the Calotte Academies have brought a ragtag group of people to Inari and all over the Calotte region to discuss where we are and what we could do. They create an informal environment far from the capitals: fuelling free discussion and brainstorming.

In 1997, the Calotte Academy was organised as a common research forum in the Arktikum building in Rovaniemi, at the same location where alignments about northern issues were going to be made in a high profile meeting between politicians, businessmen and researchers a few months later. The busy schedule of Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen was planned by the minute. Still there was time for a face-to-face meeting with Oran R. Young. In the 1960s, Lipponen had also studied at Dartmouth College, where Young is now leading northern research and focusing on the role of sustainable development.

The matters are related and there is a fine line between research and action.

It is actually pretty easy to see why many researchers seem to get hooked.

Let us take an area the size of a continent that had practically no joint operations just a little over ten years ago. Then it all started: limited environmental agreements, general environmental agreements, limited regional cooperation and joint agreements about the entire area...

Let us take an area that is sensitive in nature and has a huge amount of resources that the industrial society is going to need before long – and that are hard to get both politically and technically. Let us take an area which is almost closed off and which actually might offer the shortest route between Europe and Asia. Let us take an international forum that is in the sidelines of politics, where we suddenly realise that the EU, Russia and North America are participating and bringing all the possibilities with them. Let us take a conflict between the capitals and regions, nation states and locals, between indigenous peoples and others. Let us take the emerging political processes, whose essential contents are still undefined and which can be influenced. Let us take a region, where we clearly have room for new international initiatives.

The list of scientific publications, seminar lectures and ongoing research is long, but many of the same names operate in the same fields.

In the framework of the Arctic Council, an idea has been brewing of an “Arctic University”, a network of research institutions in many countries and whose research agenda would concentrate on the environment, culture and economy of the Arctic regions.

Actually, scientific research of the Arctic regions has been organised for a long time. The need for it was unofficially discussed already in the mid-1980s and Gorbachev’s speech in Murmansk gave it some momentum.

By 1990, the process was ready to the extent that the IASC (International Arctic Science Committee) was founded. National organisations from all eight Arctic countries were included and more was to come. In 1996, there were sixteen member countries including China, Poland and Switzerland.

The purpose of IASC was to encourage and promote international basic and applied research in the Arctic Region. Conferences, research projects and reports have been made. The permanent secretariat functions in Oslo and is funded by Norway. The organisation has an established role: among other things, it is an observer in the Arctic Council.

Even though IASC is interdisciplinary, its focus is on natural sciences. Researching the effects of climate change is one its main projects. Researches from other branches of science (for example, health) and social scientists have also organised.

The Institute of Arctic Studies at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, led by Young, is the leading research institute of Arctic social sciences in North America. In Canada, the research is conducted by many parties, without a clear centre. In Europe, research on the field is concentrated at the University of Lapland and its Arctic Centre in Rovaniemi, at the Peace Research Institute at the University of Tampere, at the universities of Tromsø and Umeå, at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute in Norway and the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo, among others. Research in natural sciences is conducted at many places. Practically every northern university and research institute do research that is related to the region in one way or another. The University of Oulu, for example, devised their special “northern strategy” at the end of 1997.

Oran R. Young has combined the underlying elements of research and politics in the most visible way internationally. He has produced many background papers and attended different meetings and conferences.

“I think we need to think carefully about fostering a dialogue between the world of research and the world of policy, the world of science and the world of practice. I think we need to think carefully, within the context of the Arctic Council, about how to make mutually beneficial links and relationships between the scientific or the research community, including those

who are concerned with traditional ecological knowledge, and the world of policy. I think there are very interesting opportunities. The time, in many ways, is ripe to do this,” Young said when he was being heard by the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Canada.

Young himself has long pondered the roles, interests and goals that the different actors in the Arctic Region have, and what they can and cannot achieve there. For example, he has found three “compartments” for the Arctic Council: promoting the sustainable use of living resources, bringing sustainable development to large-scale industrial activities like in the oil and gas sector and working internationally with issues that affect the northern regions – transboundary pollution, climate change, ozone depletion.

There is always room for coincidence as well. Towards the end of 1997, particularly Finland’s activity in northern matters increased and as luck would have it, Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen has studied where Young teaches.

“Among the many things that link our countries, there is interest in the Arctic and other northern regions, including northwest Russia, with their massive natural resources,” Lipponen said when he visited Dartmouth College in June 1997.

However, Young is by no means the only researcher wanting to link research and political decision-making more strongly together. Finland is a prime example: the research circles debated the need for an initiative long before the political leaders started planning it. The Finns even got organised to better influence the matter.

The circles in Finland are not very large, so the researchers and others interested in the issues found each other easily. In the beginning of 1990, they were faced with a conflict: according to the researchers and some other prominent figures in the North, a lot was happening and opportunities were opening up, but Finland did not seem to be using the opportunities, or even investigating them.

In 1994, a group of researchers and experts from all over the country as well as regional players in the north working with northern issues founded the Association for Northern Politics to promote research and to get to influence matters themselves.

The underlying factor here was a long scientific tradition.

Towards the end of the 1980s, the Arctic regions started to be recognised separately. The Tampere Peace Research Institute started a research project in 1987 that focused on the alternative development, sustainable development and safety of the Arctic Regions. The project was led by Jyrki Kähkönen, who himself has been interested in the possibility that the peripheral regions could have spontaneous activity, among other things. In the end, the funding came from American sources.

“When the old conflicts are left behind, there is a great opportunity to bring new cooperation politics to the Arctic Regions, politics which brings considerable advantage to all the inhabitants of the area,” Kähkönen wrote in 1993 in a book published in Dartmouth *Politics and Sustainable Growth in the Arctic*.

The project in Tampere set off the Calotte Academies in Inari and similar meetings. Another location was Kuhmo, where summer academies have been held almost every year since 1987. In fact, Heininen and Kähkönen wrote texts in Kuhmo in 1987 (just before Gorbachev’s speech) suggesting an international agreement on the regions’ military and economic use and the demilitarisation and proposing complete denuclearisation of the Arctic.

The newly founded Northern Politics Association united both this legacy and other activity on the field. The association has organised seminars, discussions and published articles –

although not with a very high profile. In summer 1995, an idea of a multidisciplinary research project that would investigate Finland's northern policy options was born. The project was launched in 1996 and in addition to Finland, research institutes from Russia, Sweden, Norway, Canada and the United States are also connected to it.

The problem was that investors for Finland were not interested in funding research on policy options for Finland. Timetables and objectives had to be eliminated and until autumn 1997 besides the regular budgets of the research institutes, money has only come from Lapland.

In a traditional academic way, Finland also has competition between the research institutes. The Finnish Institute of International Affairs that operates in Helsinki launched its own project in autumn 1997. The project concerns the foreign and security policy perspectives of the Northern Dimension of the EU. The focus is on the Baltics and the Baltic Sea, but conceptually it merges with Finland's Northern Dimension initiative. There were no problems in funding this project.

Finnish researchers had been discussing how the North would relate to an eventual EU membership long before the government officially became active. All the way up to the autumn of 1997, there was criticism about the fact that there was no organised northern policy.

The 1990s criticism of Finnish northern policy and the lack of Finnish initiative was justified. At the time when the political leaders of Finland only mumbled incoherent sentences, Norway, Canada and Sweden were all very active in their own fronts: the Barents Region, the Arctic Region, the Baltic Sea. In the autumn of 1997, Finland finally took on the role that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Norway had planned some years earlier. Similarly, Norway had to now deal with the issue of staying outside of the EU and trying to influence from there.

However, statements coming from the decision-makers of Finnish foreign policies about the importance of the Northern Dimension are new in a sense that now they come from the mouths of leading politicians. Heininen and some others have come to the same conclusions many years earlier.

"The Northern Dimension does not shut out the cooperation with European countries. On the contrary: Europe can be entered through the north as well. For Finnish Foreign Policy, this is an important note, because an open-minded cooperation in all directions is natural and necessary, whether Finland joins EC or not," Heininen wrote in 1994 in a book called *Pohjoinen Suomen politiikassa* (The North in Finnish Politics). Already during the year 1993, he had proposed in an article that the focus should be directed from south to north and making the northern action strategy part of Finnish Foreign Policy.

"Making Finland's national and northern policy a central part of our country's foreign and Europe policies could be a current goal, because of the changes in the world and in Europe," he stated in his 1994 book and again proposed that the northern cooperation perspective could open up opportunities for Finland and Finnish Foreign Policy.

"Seems that Finland has clearly not noticed that the road to Europe – and Brussels – runs through the north as well," researcher Pertti Joenniemi wrote in the same book, which was published before Finland joined the EU.

A certain parallel to the Northern Dimension and Finland is the Arctic Council, where the idea was first developed amongst Canadian researchers before it became an objective for their national foreign policy. In Norway, however, the Barents initiative was launched from the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## FROM MILITARY SECURITY TO COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY

**ON 6 FEBRUARY 1996**, someone knocked on the door of Alexander Nikitin in St. Petersburg in the early hours of morning. The Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation, FSB, had come for him.

A couple of months earlier, on October 5th in 1995, the FSB was working in Murmansk, Severodvinsk and St. Petersburg: there were raids, searches and interrogations. Several documents and computers were confiscated from the office of Norwegian environmental foundation Bellona in Murmansk.

However, primarily the incident has become known after Alexander Nikitin.

Bellona is a Norwegian foundation that has been very active in Northwest Russia. They focus especially on mapping radiation risks. In 1992, the foundation reported on the nuclear disasters in Ural, near the Mayak reprocessing plant. In 1995, they published an extensive report on the sources of radioactive radiation in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk. In 1996, they did a report on the situation of Russia's northern fleet and the radiation pollution it was causing.

That was the report for which Nikitin had gathered information at Bellona's Murmansk office. Everything was, as Bellona assures, based on public information and documented sources. There was no secrecy, no espionage.

Nikitin had joined the group a couple of years earlier. He was an ex-navy captain, who later had worked for the Department of Nuclear Safety in the Ministry of Defence.

The report published in English, Norwegian and Russian thoroughly explains the situation of Russia's northern fleet and its nuclear powered ships, model by model, reactor by reactor. The same goes for the disposal methods of radioactive waste, dismantling of the nuclear powered ships, shipyards and accidents. It included maps, charts and photographs. The report does not really evaluate the condition of the fleet or military power.

"Detailed information leads to clear and productive conversation. Rumours and imprecise information cause unnecessary fear and anxiety," the representatives of Bellona write in their prologue. "This is not only true when it comes to Russia, but applies to all countries that have concealed vital information on the dangers of radioactive pollution to general health or the environment."

The Russian Ministry of Defence did not agree. Their experts looked into the materials that were confiscated in the raid and stated that six of the eight chapters in the report contained state secrets.

When Nikitin was apprehended in the beginning of February, he returned from the arrest only in December. After that, he has been in a sort of city-arrest, without permission to leave St. Petersburg.

The charges were espionage and revealing of state secrets. Bellona started a vehement campaign, after which Nikitin got an impartial attorney (instead of FSB's chosen attorney) and got out of isolation after ten months. Overall, a lot of conflicting information was circulating and the outcome is unknown. At the end of 1997, the charges are still in effect, there is no information of a trial and the defence has shown several breaches in of domestic Russian and international human rights legislation. The case has gotten international attention at Amnesty International, the European Council, among others, and it has deteriorated the relationship between Russia and Norway.

The Russian copies of the report, 1505 in total, were confiscated at the customs in St. Petersburg – after which Bellona released it for free distribution on the internet. After October 1996, Bellona employees have not been able to get visas to Russia. The argument is that they concentrate on human rights, not the environment.

Bellona's interpretation is that FSB has conveyed its message through their actions: 'do not even try to dig into their military issues.' According to the Norwegians, the case can complicate international cooperation in nuclear safety matters and prevent outside funding.

The official, inter-governmental Arctic cooperation has not discussed Nikitin's case. And neither has the Barents cooperation. The issue has been between Norway and Russia and other forums have been sought from the European Council and European Parliament.

The issue has not passed without leaving an imprint. In a way, it was a sign of the end of an era.

In the summer of 1997, one reporter from Murmansk had glued a big drawing on his phone that looked like an ear.

In the middle of the 1990s, it was discovered that getting visas for Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish reporters to the Barents Region and Russia in general had become more difficult. It applied specifically to journalist visas; tourist and business visas were given to journalists as well. Communication got even more uncertain.

Opening the NMT and later GSM cellular networks in Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and Petrozavodsk made communication abroad easier. It especially helped those who were visiting Russia.

At the end of 1997, customs authorities at the airport in Murmansk started to confiscate cell phones from visitors. They could get it back, if they found a permit (costing 150 Finnish markka) which allowed them to use the phone. The decree had been in effect since 1994, but now the customs started to apply it in practice.

Matters like these are not necessarily a sign of any assertive politics. They can as easily mirror the issues in jurisdiction and decision-making. Nevertheless, they affect the dimension of safety, which has to do with interaction and communication between citizens. At the very least, they make it difficult to maintain an illusion that everything is getting easier.

Even with what happened to Bellona, issues on nuclear safety cannot be kept away from the agendas. Distinguishing the use of nuclear materials in military and civil use is impossible.

The centre of focus is Russia's nuclear power stations, the decommissioned reactors and those still in use on ships and submarines, reactors that are submerged in the ocean and the storage of low and high-level nuclear waste. Most of Russia's northern fleet is dilapidating because of lack of money and maintenance and those shortcomings affect the nuclear material as well.

There are problems in storing and post-processing. Russia has planned a new large underground storage for radioactive waste in Novaya Zemlya. Low-level waste has been stored in a ship at the coast of Murmansk, dozens of used reactors and other radioactive waste has been dumped directly overboard into the ocean.

There have been dangerous situations at the nuclear power plant in Kola, for example there was a severe blackout. The employees at the plant have not gotten their paychecks. The plant itself is considered to be prone to accidents.

The risk of a serious nuclear catastrophe is always present. An accident in the Kola power plant would affect the lives of everyone in Northern Europe, just like Chernobyl. The nuclear reactors in the fleet are smaller, but there are many of them: according to the calculations of Bellona, 270 in total. Of all the nuclear reactors in the world, 18 per cent – almost a fifth – are in the Northwest region of Russia.

An accident in one of them might not affect neighbouring countries, but could cause many problems regionally.

Novaya Zemlya has been and still is a nuclear testing area in Russia, if the nuclear test ban falls apart. In Kola, ore mining has been advanced with underground nuclear explosions. Radioactive water might have leaked into rivers from the post-processing plants in the Urals and from there it could have gotten to the northern oceans and rich fishing areas.

No wonder the outside world has taken the nuclear safety issue very seriously. It is directly related to the neighbouring countries' own interests. Several investigations have been conducted and cooperation projects started. Countries like Finland, Sweden, Norway and the United States have participated. The risk is still far from over.

Considering all this, reports on the condition of the marine environment have been somewhat surprising: even though the risk of nuclear disaster is always present and even though dozens of used ship reactors have been dumped into the ocean, the overall situation is good. There is less pollution than in the Baltic and North seas, where the radiation amounts are higher.

Researchers have found many potential threats, but they have also discovered that many of the fears have been greater than the real situation. In spite of the reactors that have been dumped to the ocean floor, the marine environment in the Arctic is relatively untouched, and pure. The general impression of Russia being the root of all evil is also false: on the Barents Sea the biggest source of radioactive pollution is the Sellafield reprocessing site along the coast of England, from where the ocean currents have brought pollution to the north.

When Russian researchers first introduced this conclusion, it sounded like a typical political statement from the Soviet Union. This one just happened to be true.

Despite Chernobyl, the number of people affected and percentage of radiation in human bodies is smaller than in the 1960s and 1970s, when nuclear tests were made in the atmosphere. Nevertheless, the vulnerability of the Arctic Region is reflected in the fact that even though the fallout is the same, people in the north can be exposed to manifold amounts of radiation compared to people in the south. Nuclear safety in the area is still considered alarming.

Military matters should not hinder investigating issues such as these officially. Knowledge of the existing conditions has greatly increased in the 1990s. However, even though the end

of the Cold War made wide international cooperation in the north possible, its legacy has not fully faded from the region.

In the Arctic Council negotiations, the United States made sure that military issues would not be a part of Arctic cooperation.

When the Council was being established in Ottawa, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia Sergei Krylov was the only one to bring up nuclear threats in the north. Krylov thought that the issues around radiation safety would be difficult to avoid in the future.

The United States representative Timothy Wirth admitted the concern, but made no concessions: "Our eyes can see more than our stomachs can eat. This is a political issue we can't do anything about," he said.

Quite remarkably Norway, Russia and the United States entered into a separate agreement between the three countries to investigate the environmental effects of military action in the Arctic Region in Bergen 1996. This agreement was made completely outside of the other negotiation processes.

Militarily speaking, northern regions are still the armament fields of the great powers despite the eased tensions.

"The Arctic part of Europe is still one of the most visible repositories for weapons of mass destruction," notes Arto Nokkala, a researcher at the Tampere Peace Research Institute, in a paper he wrote for the Calotte Academy in 1997. The paper is part of a future research report about the options for the Finnish Foreign Policy.

"Unlike in central Europe, here the Cold War did not end when the other party retreated one thousand kilometres, especially when it comes to military structures and forces capable of using nuclear weapons," Nokkala states.

Despite demilitarisation, nuclear weapons still exist in the Kola Peninsula both on land and in nuclear submarines. NATO can also bring nuclear weapons to the north, which could be launched from aircraft or submarines. The United States has maintained their readiness in the northern regions, including their bases in Iceland, Greenland and Alaska. Even though there is no active conflict, both the United States and Russia are prepared for the possibility of being on opposite sides again someday.

Thanks to the Cold War, the north also has a number of operational military bases and resources and even more has been transferred from other areas. Northwest Russia belongs to the Leningrad Military District, whose military importance has actually increased rather than decreased – although the lack of military funds, the reluctance of people of drafting age to join and the dilapidating equipment weakens their performance.

The movements of the Northern Fleet are also limited because of the lack of funding and maintenance. At the same time, the risk of accidents has increased, including those that could possibly cause radioactive fallout.

"The current military assembly in Northern Europe is only suited for a possible new conflict between Russia and other countries or coalitions," Nokkala writes.

Military action can also be seen on a practical grass roots level: for example, the road connection from Kirkenes to Murmansk is not open every day of the week. Foreigners have travel restrictions to many cities like Severomorsk or Severodvinsk.

The new northern regional cooperation does not really affect issues like these. However, it does have a clear connection with security issues, if they are understood more broadly than in just a military sense.



At the same time, northern cooperation is a testing ground for how security can be promoted in a more comprehensive way. Nowhere else does regional activity over Cold War borders extend so far.

A researcher at the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs Kari Möttölä remarks in a background paper he wrote for the Yellowknife parliamentary meeting: the concept of security also includes the preservation of humankind and the biosphere, the physical and social environment – all aspects of human life really.

In the Arctic region, the main goal of regional security is to lower the political and economic gap that separates Russia from its northern neighbours. According to Möttölä, in northern human rights matters the special issue is the preservation of the identity of the Arctic indigenous peoples. The northern policy of the EU and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) tie the Arctic Region to the integration, globalisation and modernisation happening worldwide.

Behind these big words is the simple fact that increasing interaction and respect towards minorities' rights increases the safety of the region's population.

"The Barents cooperation is an example of how comprehensive security works in the Arctic Region. In the minds of the whole OSCE and Europe it was a very advanced model on regionalisation," Möttölä wrote for the Yellowknife meeting. According to the researcher, the Barents Council is a tool that promotes safety by supporting reforms and bringing personal and environmental safety to the political agenda.

The founders of the Barents cooperation had approximately the same idea in mind.

"We wished to build peace-promoting and confidence-building structures by linking the northernmost parts of Nordic area in a new cooperative region. Just as the EC cooperation was established in the 1950s in order to build confidence between the hereditary enemies Germany and France, so we wished to establish a network of positive contacts across the East-West border in the North that could promote growth and affluence and make future conflicts less likely."

This is how the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway Thorvald Stoltenberg described the discussions that were in the background, when he was setting up the future Barents cooperation in the spring of 1992 by agreeing on a meeting in Kirkenes with Finland's Paavo Väyrynen and Russia's Andrei Kozyrev.

These issues were also on the table when the Arctic Council was being established in Canada.

"The Arctic Council should strengthen peace and safety in the Arctic Region by other than military means. It is important that non-military cooperation of the Arctic countries provides a chance to create a climate of trust and a feeling of community, where we can also address the military issues directly and effectively."

This quote is from a 1991 report that was devised in Canada by the panel that deliberated on establishing the Arctic Council.

The parliamentarians of the Arctic countries on the other hand wanted to use the opportunity in the Yellowknife conference declaration to change the course from isolation and conflict to cooperation and the safety of the environment and the society.

Similarly, Finland justified its Northern Dimension of the EU initiative with lofty words: "Its main objective is peace and stability that all nations can share in terms of prosperity and security," said President Martti Ahtisaari when he spoke at Harvard in October 1997.

And we must not forget the Murmansk speech of General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, which put this all in motion.

“What everybody can be absolutely certain of is the Soviet Union's profound and certain interest in preventing the North of the planet, its Polar and sub-Polar regions and all Northern countries from ever again becoming an arena of war, and in forming there a genuine zone of peace and fruitful cooperation”, he reasoned his initiatives in these words.

All these visions have gotten under way and yielded some results. According to them, there should already be a multiple zones of peace and interaction in the North. The actual reality tends to be less than what was hoped for.

For example, if the Barents cooperation mainly leaves us feeling desperate, it might give rise to unending accusations and doubt, which will ultimately prove negative for the entire northern region.

The key question is whether the cooperation between Russia and the West is usually marked by cooperation or doubt. Closing all borders would effectively close all possibilities in the north that were only opened after the Cold War ended. In practice, they have only been open for about ten years.

This issue is also present in political and economic initiatives.

“It is clear, however, that if Russia turns inwards, its position in the world does not get stronger, but weaker. That is why it is necessary that Europe and the United States make a conscious effort to tie this Eurasian power to international cooperation – and this requires sustainable peace and stability, which benefits all of us,” Ahtisaari said at Harvard.

In practice, in most cities in Northwest Russia, statues of Lenin still exist and the local and regional leadership is filled with old faces, who have learned to be doubtful of the West for decades.

Making internal reforms is going to take time and the grass roots connections are more important than ever. However, it is not possible for people with an average income in Russia to have many international contacts. Economic interaction is important for contacts and trust, and it requires permits and legislation from higher up. Getting those permits is always difficult.

It is not clear which orientation inside of Russia will win in the future. That will ultimately decide if any of this is going to work.

On the other hand, interaction beyond borders has increased and diversified slowly but steadily. In the Christmas of 1997 for example, all tourist records from Russia to Finland were broken. Separate holiday trains and charter flights from the East to Finland were a phenomenon that could not have been even dreamed of a couple of years ago.

# THE ONLY ARCTIC ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANISATION

**EVEN THOUGH WE ARE** talking about a region the size of a whole continent, the social circles are small. From meeting to meeting, we keep seeing the same faces. The officials from the delegations sit in the first row of the round tables and behind them are the observers: Poland, the Netherlands, the UN Environment Programme, the UN Economic Commission for Europe, the Northern Forum, the Arctic Science Committee, the Nordic Council... All are more or less representatives from official governing bodies.

Then we have the “ad hoc observer”, WWF. The only non-governmental organisation, and the only governing body that needs to take permission to attend every time, and thanks to them others outside the small circles are able to find out what is going on. Their statements in some matters have not always suited the other participating nations.

Wherever the meeting is, someone from this organisation is always present. Through them, the public always gets an analysis of what’s happening inside.

At one point, WWF got into a disagreement with Iceland on fisheries. During a ministerial meeting in Alta, WWF pummelled Norway’s Environmental Policy. As the governments speak, overgrazing by reindeer is causing more damage to the soil in Finnmark than the fallout from the Nikel smelter and it is turning Finnmark into an Arctic desert, they said.

This statement was devised in Oslo, the capital of Norway, where the headquarters of the Arctic Programme of WWF is located.

However, as much as nations speak about cooperation and establish councils, the quarterly Arctic Bulletin by WWF is the only regularly issued publication that concentrates on the whole Arctic Region. Although it does have a symbiotic relationship with other countries the funding comes from Norway – sometimes also Finland – their Ministry of Environment. For the time being the publication has been free, but keeping the money flowing is all but guaranteed.

In the October 1997 issue, the head of the WWF Arctic Programme, German Peter Prokosch, was excited.

“I often wonder if all these meetings, statements and paper work have any meaning,” he wrote.

“However, there are several cases where environmental conferences, recommendations and intergovernmental agreements – that are often launched in the field or through the initiative of NGOs – have helped nature to recover.”

Then the matter at hand was about geese, whose future was looking brighter again. And the fact that the Arctic countries finally showed signs of unanimity in global environmental issues and that environmental protection seems to be staying as the core element of stable Arctic cooperation has not diminished the satisfaction either. The headline of the leader was “Not just bad news from the Arctic Region!”

The headquarters of the WWF Arctic Programme is in Oslo, in crowded offices near the centre of the city. Correspondents and local offices are found in all the countries in the region, and if needed they are backed up by an international conservation organisation that has 4.7 million members and an established public relations wing.

The entire Arctic project started in 1992, after the countries had held their own meeting in Rovaniemi. WWF was already operating in the North, for example in Siberia and the Taymyr Peninsula. Now they are independently working on jointly coordinated projects in all the Arctic countries. They focus on conservation areas, protecting certain species, preventing exploitation of natural resources, mining, pollution, tourism...

“Right after Rovaniemi, we felt that we are the correct organisation,” Prokosch explains. “Events were in motion, the Soviet Union had opened up and there were true circumpolar possibilities.”

Through that, the project was launched and Prokosch moved to Oslo.

“We are the only organisation that covers the whole Arctic Region,” he reminds us. Internationally, however, WWF has more pressing regions that take most of their attention: for example, in the tropics, nature is getting destroyed faster, rainforests are logged, species are dying. In the North, there are possibilities that we have lost elsewhere. Because nature is still strongest there, where there is least human activity. The North actually has a considerable significance for the entire planet.

“The Arctic Region has special characteristics that are invaluable to the rest of the world,” says the brochure that describes the WWF Arctic Programme. “It is the biggest remaining wilderness area of the northern hemisphere. The Arctic has recently been recognised as an important indicator of the earth’s situation and climate change. A majority of the area is in its natural state, which makes it an even more important scientific and environmental research subject.”

“We hope that in the future the Arctic is an exemplary region where we can show that a concept like sustainable development – whose contents are quite unclear, however – might actually work,” Prokosch says.

According to WWF, Arctic regions do not have similar “development pressure” as other regions, few people live there and it should not be impossible to consider the environment in our actions more than in other regions of the world.

In Russia the damage to the environment has been the greatest and it is also the region WWF is most interested in.

“If we look at that specific region, there is plenty of opportunity to change the mining, oil and gas industry to be less detrimental to the environment,” Prokosch believes. The political development of the country might bring its own obstacles, however, but if the western companies and financiers start operating in the area, WWF wants to make sure that they obey the

western standards as well. That would also be a huge improvement: we remember the severe oil leaks in the Komi Republic.

He urges people to go to the regions of Yamal or Taymyr to see how many roads and pipes there are that are not even needed in oil production.

In 1989, there was a lot of excitement about environment protection in Russia. Still even now, the government of the Republic of Sakha has committed to turn over a fourth of their massive region to a conservation area. The autonomous region of Taymyr has already conserved twenty per cent of their own region.

Russia in its entirety is a completely different matter. It is futile to wait for a Minister of Environment from Russia at Arctic meetings of environment ministers for the simple reason that there has not been one after 1996. The interest of the government is in other matters and the interest for nature conservation has clearly diminished in Moscow.

“It is very alarming,” Prokosch says. Russia is the region in the North that needs activity the most.

On the other hand, the Arctic Region in its entirety is the only region in the world, where international cooperation has been branded by environmental issues and that seems to continue.

Not everyone wants this to be the case.

“We do not want to prevent all economic activity either. We just want to see the correct ratio between the economic activities and environment protection and we need to have a discussion about how we can achieve that.”

“Nevertheless, because the Arctic is a different region, it has great potential to act as an example for other regions. We want to make sure that this potential is used,” Prokosch says.

According to him, sustainable development means that the natural resources are used in such a way that the future generations may enjoy the same opportunities that we have had. But that is easier said than done.

“If we delve deeper into sustainable development, it becomes very complicated.”

“The Arctic has great potential to have large areas completely protected and still leave natural resources for the locals,” he believes.

## THE NORTHERN PARLIAMENTS WANT IN

**IN MARCH 1996** IN Yellowknife, Canada, the desire to be active was strong. It had already been two and a half years since the first meeting between the parliaments of the Arctic Countries in Reykjavik. The first meeting had been called and hosted by the Nordic Council. Now the parliaments of the Arctic countries had their own permanent committee to run things. The Nordic Council was still one of the supporters of the committee, but not its host.

A programme had been organised in the Northwest Territories that covered nearly all matters: sustainable development, environment, pollution, indigenous peoples, general Arctic cooperation and security questions. The background papers and proposals were exceptionally comprehensive and of high quality. The scene was set for the parliamentarians.

The first disappointment came when people saw who had come and who had not: no one from the United States was attending. Session season in Washington or not, the absence was noticed.

“We have flown for hours to be here. When we got here we noticed that no one from the neighbouring country, the United States, had had time to come,” said the Russians.

The Speaker of the Parliament of Sweden, Birgitta Dahl stopped by in Yellowknife. Some other names that were known in their respective countries were also present. This forum did not really feel like a place for leaders to elevate their own political profile. There were parliamentarians from seven countries, but some of them seemed lost. Even some of the speeches raised confusion.

Alexander Kozyrev from Russia had just come from the diamond mines in Yakutia, where he had seen “western technology that caused massive devastation to the environment”, from which they should move to safer Russian technology. According to him, even the presence of the Russian fleet is sustainable, because the fleet had been there for over two hundred years.

The speaker represented Zhirinovsky’s party.

However, for those who wanted it, the meeting offered a unique opportunity to get direct knowledge on Arctic matters. The timing was deliberate. The Parliamentary Meeting was followed by an AEPS environment meeting in Inuvik, during which the Arctic Council was originally supposed to be established. They were meant to receive a message from the parliamentarians. A long statement made by many countries’ parliamentary representatives highlighted the position of the indigenous peoples in many ways, demanded political dialogue, wanted international control for all nuclear material use, asked for the decrease of greenhouse gases, wanted the European Union and the Nordic Council of Ministers to join and so on.

The founders of the council never got these regards, however, because the council was not established in Inuvik.

Icelandic Geir H. Haarde, the chair of the standing parliamentary committee, is burdened with the continuation of the cooperation even between meetings.

In Yellowknife, he considered that one of the main goals of the committee was to give support to the founding of the Arctic Council. The best way to guarantee general support for the initial actions would be to get a structure that would allow the parliaments to participate.

This support could be secured through dialogue between the governments and parliaments, and the standing committee could become the parliamentary dimension of the Arctic Council. All Nordic countries have given their strong political support, he said, and the Nordic Council has offered frameworks for the committee's work.

Haarde hoped that all attendees would bring the matter up directly with the ministers and negotiators in their homeland.

In September, when the Arctic Council was in the process of being founded, it was noticed that none of those expectations had come true.

Around that time, Haarde spoke in a seminar in Arendal, Norway. His words were harsh:

The founding statement of the Arctic Council has been thwarted and it does not give an adequately ambitious basis for the Council. The Council is born with a declaration, not an international agreement. It does not have its own budget but it is dependent on voluntary funding by governments, which does not equal having a good foundation. Without permanent headquarters and staff, the Secretariat will become too weak. When the space between the meetings of ministers is two years, the political guidance of the programme is not strong enough. Scientific work is not given enough emphasis.

Furthermore, the standing committee of the parliaments does not get any formal position than as observer and all references to it were omitted from the text. Haarde did not blame anyone and did not even remind people that representatives from the United States were not in attendance.

Nevertheless, they were not going to throw in the towel.

"The standing committee is firmly going to continue as an active participant in Arctic issues and have a political influence on the work of the Arctic Council as much as possible," Haarde said.

"Part of successful international cooperation and global managing is active dialogue between the governments and parliaments," he continued.

"When it comes to the Arctic Council, however, the standing committee is convinced that the Council's actions and goals would be achieved if it had a parliamentary dimension."

In this regard, there is still room for improvement, Haarde believed.

While we wait for that, the cooperation between parliaments continues in its old form. The conferences continue: in Yellowknife it was decided that the next meeting would be hosted by Russia and the city of Salekhaard. The city is located at the mouth of the Ob river on Siberia's side of the Urals. In there, Arctic parliamentary cooperation cannot expect much more coverage than that in the local news in Salekhaard. On one hand, the hosts wanted the meeting there, on the other, this exact setting represents the actual Arctic environment in Russia, and in a place like this, an international meeting is more remarkable and memorable than in large cities.

By funding the operations of the Secretariat, the Nordic Council has made the cooperation between parliaments possible. The connection also comes through the parliamentarians; parliamentarians from the Nordic Council delegation have attended Arctic meetings.

Throughout the 1990s, Arctic cooperation has been a part of the agenda in the Nordic Council and Council of Ministers meetings – not a particularly noticeable part, but an integral part nonetheless. It has been kept separate from the other new dimension of the 1990s: Cross-Border Cooperation, which allows the NC to work in the Baltics, St. Petersburg and the Barents Region.

As long as the matter has been on the table, there has been talk about the need for better coordination in the cooperation between the Nordic and Barents Councils. The Nordic Council Information Office in St. Petersburg also has the responsibility to keep an eye on the northern regions of Russia. The official standing of that office was unclear for some time, which made it hard for them to work efficiently.

In summer 1997, the new Cross-border Committee of the Nordic Council visited the Kola region for the first time to meet with the local Duma members and others. The meetings were marked by some level of confusion on both sides about what was going on. While the idea and authority of the Northern Parliamentary Cooperation had not become clear for the hosts, guests were surprised to hear complaints from the ex-communists of how things were better before.

However, the dialogue was supposed to continue. But how, that was a different matter.

The Arctic regions in a broader sense are not part of these cross-border operations. Based on the recommendations of the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Parliamentary Meeting of 1993 in Reykjavik a separate hundred-page report was released in 1995 on the cooperation in the Arctic regions. It was supposed to guide the decisions that the Nordic ministers would make in future.

In 1992, at a Nordic Council session the parliamentarians encouraged the governments to take “the initiative on comprehensive Arctic cooperation at the government level”. Among other things, the report tried to ascertain what that joint Nordic Arctic policy could be. The task was not easy.

The “comprehensive” cooperation should cover the entire Arctic Region, the report determined. However, Svalbard, for example, has an internationally agreed special position under Norway and thus should be excluded from the cooperation. An agreement like the Antarctic Treaty is simply not possible in the North, because the region has fixed settlements and established state borders.

The writers of the report came to the conclusion that the “comprehensive” cooperation could exist only in the framework of existing governing bodies and through the development of concrete sectors in the Nordic circles, Barents Council and elsewhere. Because the Arctic Council did not exist back then, the report welcomed the Canadian proposal and recommended that the Nordic Countries give it their joint support, which they did. In addition, the report considered it necessary to connect the European Union to the process, which did not happen.

Thus, the idea of a general Nordic policy for the Arctic regions was fragmented into several sections.

Other parts of the report went through various sectors, existing governing bodies, environmental cooperation, research and so on, and pondered how the joint Nordic view could be enhanced in them.

“The most important task for the governments is to find an organisational solution which can enhance the coordination of different operations,” the Council of Ministers report determined.



This “organisational solution” was called Arctic Co-operation Programme. It began in 1996 and it tries to coordinate and elevate those matters that the Nordic Countries agree on, like the question of the indigenous peoples, health, environment and Polar research. The programme has a specially hired coordinator.

Through their established forms of cooperation, the Nordic countries have a chance to propose meaningful joint statements to improve the cooperation in the northern regions and the Arctic, for example to save the Arctic Council from getting stuck in fruitless negotiations. Statements like these have not been seen, however, or at least they have been politically unnoticeable.

## TOWARDS TRANSATLANTIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION

**TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION. A BOND** between Europe and America: essential but not always obvious.

When you look at the map, the shortest route between these two continents goes through the North. Planes do not fly there by accident; Europe and America are closer together there. Did the Vikings not go to North America long before Columbus and his followers?

Could we not do something about the situation now?

Yes, probably.

If the schedule had held, in spring 1997 and probably in Helsinki, the board and management of the TransAtlantic Society would have convened for the first time: leaders of large companies, government representatives, high-level officials and assorted people from the media and elsewhere.

They would have had one goal. To promote the conditions that make business in the northern regions possible. The TransAtlantic Society would have been able to promote trade between the Arctic countries and more widely between the United States, the Nordic Countries, Canada and Russia – and not just promote trade but also to tie their fates together. A Northwest Business Centre would have been founded to help with the practical issues and offer the best possible expertise.

A new society would have been established to speed up affairs. In autumn 1997, the Rovaniemi Barents conference saw first signs of what the idea could mean in practice: politicians, economists and researchers in the same event exchanging ideas unofficially, without the burden of official negotiations.

In Rovaniemi not much new was created, but the goal was to have more of the same in a more organised manner.

The schedule and the final model are still a mystery, but the thought itself is still alive. Behind it is Guy Lindström, the General Secretary of the Finnish Delegation to the Nordic Council – a man who has been organising the parliamentary cooperation of the Arctic countries and who sat as a Nordic Council observer in both AEPS and Arctic Council meetings, both open and closed.

In the course of the 1990s, the possibilities and obstacles were visible in those meetings. The governments proceeded carefully with consensus, trapped by their official policies. The

commitment of high-level politicians was minimal. The representation for economists was non-existent. There was no forum for real economic cooperation. Nor was there a place where we could freely examine the big picture and the possibilities of the Arctic Region. Matters were moving along sector by sector, conditionally, slowly.

In August 1996, just before the establishment of the Arctic Council, Lindström wrote down a draft of his ideas. Wherever possible, he tested the waters and searched contacts from the Nordic Countries, Canada, the United States and Russia.

“Canada, Russia, the United States and the Nordic Countries have several joint interests, which make it important to develop various initiatives into a process which will lead to an increased economic cooperation between the northern parts of the world,” he wrote in his draft.

“Enormous possibilities and difficult challenges especially in the Arctic Region require stronger connections between business and political leaders in the entire region, so that we can create the necessary conditions for new economic projects.”

“To promote this process, a new private organisation, the TransAtlantic Society, will be established,” Lindström wrote.

The aims of this organisation would not be small. First was this:

“To promote the infrastructure in Russia and the Arctic Region in a way that would advance trade and the distribution of globally important resources like oil and natural gas, as well as regionally essential products like coal, minerals, fish, timber and hydropower.”

The second aim had to do with economic possibilities, which would arise when the North-east Passage is opened to year-round traffic.

Thirdly, we would be organising and developing transport, telecommunication, energy transfer, banking systems as well as new roads, railroads, border crossings and flight connections especially between Northwest Russia and the Nordic Countries.

In addition to all this, living conditions would be improved and rural development, health-care and education would be promoted.

At the same time when we would speed up large-scale economic activity, the new society would be well aware of the discussion that has been held earlier around environment protection, sustainable development and the position of indigenous peoples. It could go no other way without getting criticism from several entities.

“The possibilities of sustainable development in the Arctic Region would be researched in close cooperation with indigenous peoples’ organisations, local and national governing bodies, businesses and international organisations concerning Arctic activities. The goal would be to create income for the local population in a socially and environmentally acceptable way,” says the part of the draft that concentrates on basic principles.

The society should also promote the development and use of environmentally friendly, sustainable technology in Arctic and sensitive natural regions.

Furthermore, the configuration of the society is such that it would promote mutual understanding and closer cooperation with Russian, Nordic and North American businesses.

In addition to the goals, Lindström has also considered the structure of the TransAtlantic Society.

At the top would be a small board of directors. Below that would be consultative board. Members could be companies and also private persons from the regions: from business, government, high-level officials, academic communities and the media. The memberships would be based on invitation.

“The society works in close cooperation with governments and international organisations,” Lindström wrote.

“It takes the decisions and recommendations of national and international governing bodies into consideration while coordinating work in different sectors like with the environment, infrastructure, health, education, cultural exchange and economic integration.”

In practice, the work would be done by organising a few high-level seminars a year that would have the world’s leading experts as speakers. The society would also publish a newsletter, directed to business needs. Participation would not take long, but would bring an opportunity to meet the most important people from business and government of the North Atlantic and Arctic Region. A network of new possibilities would be born.

The goals determined by the TransAtlantic Society would be promoted by a commercial centre called the Northwest Business Centre. It would also handle the governing and daily tasks of the society. The centre would manage clients’ commissions by offering the world’s greatest services in their field.

The economic and technical risks in the region’s actions are notable. As well as political obstacles.

“Russia’s internal development requires large amounts of western funding. Prominent Arctic projects are expected to launch during this century. They are based on investments, which are internationally funded. The execution is, at least on some level, based on technology that is still unknown today,” Lindström wrote.

“Certain obstacles exist that delay the development of economic cooperation in the northern regions of the world. Especially the problems in Russia have to do with lack of funding, the unclear ownership of natural resources, insufficient legislation, high taxes and tariffs, unstable practices in export and commercial operations as well as safety risks. The Northwest Business Centre offers expertise that is needed to overcome the current obstacles.”

According to the planned schedule, this Business Centre would have been in operation already in 1997, after the establishment of the TransAtlantic Society.

Those schedules did not hold. Finding support that is extensive and committed enough proved anything but fast or easy despite of Lindström’s efforts, but there was enough support to keep the basic idea alive.

At the Rovaniemi Barents conference in September 1997, several different interests met. Researchers wanted to meet politicians, economists wanted to meet each other and politicians, politicians had a new initiative to introduce and they all wanted to finally speed things up.

“The Barents Region is an enormous economic opportunity for all of Europe, like this seminar has stated several times. Without the activity of the people living in the region, the Barents Region does not get the attention it should,” said the governor of the province of Lapland Hannele Pokka when ending the event.

“We, the conference organisers, have come to the conclusion that the important Barents development questions cannot be left to one meeting, one conference. We have formed a plan to bring forth an unofficial Barents forum, which would include business executives, politicians and representatives from the science community and governments. It would be a kind of “round table discussion”, meetings that would be held around once a year and where development and prospects of the Barents Region would be evaluated,” Pokka continued. Even though she was only speaking about the Barents Region, the discussions could cover the Arctic Region more broadly.

So, we did not get exactly what Lindström had visioned a year earlier, but something similar. At least a base from which to take off. Or possibly several bases.

The speeches from the Rovaniemi conference were published as a book in December 1997. In the introduction of that book, Lassi Heininen had categorised up to seven different processes that seemed to have been launched or gained speed at the conference, starting from the Northern Dimension of the EU and ending with the circumpolar research on “Arctic university”.

One emerging possibility was to form an unofficial Barents Region “business council”. Another was to assemble a round table which would have politicians, officials, businessmen, researchers and representatives from the indigenous peoples gathering yearly and building bridges between them.

We are currently clearly in a phase where different ideas that have been deemed essential are seeking their ultimate realisation. We are developing a more sturdy cooperation and bringing people from different fields together, one way or another.

At the Rovaniemi conference, Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen said in his speech that the cooperation of the northern regions is already sufficiently organised. No new arrangement is necessary, neither are new economic arrangements. The existing means and channels should just be exploited more efficiently.

However, he was talking about the official governing bodies between nations. The forum Lindström had suggested would not be one of them, even though it was envisaged to be international. Its establishment would not require official negotiation sessions, governments would not exactly be committed to it, but it would require the presence of government representatives to succeed and to be convincing. Funding would also be required, but it would come from business: companies would need to buy their membership.

After that, we would have an administrative body, which could operate assertively and try to affect matters they are interested in. It would not be a competitor for the Arctic Council: the intergovernmental council operates on a general level; it cannot start to speed up economic endeavours – although, it will not speed up much of anything unless the United States decides to stop pulling the brakes. The council is required, but its current weakness shows the limitations that official intergovernmental activity has. It is tied to the political will of all participating countries and they rarely go together.

We would also have an administrative body, which resembles a closed undemocratic lobbying organisation from the outside. Or an international Arctic non-profit chamber of commerce, a high-level debate club, or something in between.

One more Arctic vision, full of possibilities in every direction, and we cannot say anything certain about its actualisation either. Behind it is also the economic potential and geopolitical re-evaluation.

Balancing different interests and agents is getting really sensitive. One Saami person who read the draft of this book wrote after reading it:

“Oh boy, how politicians, officials and researchers are in an Arctic hysteria, so many new forums and they want to establish more when the old ones do not work or bear fruit. Does anyone remember that the region’s indigenous peoples’ rights to the land and water are mostly unclear – that is what everyone is after!”

There is still one alternative to all good intentions, if the cooperation in the northern regions does not get under way properly.

This option is competition – fighting over natural resources, power, military standing and trade routes. Fighting over land and resources between Western Europe, Russia, Canada and the United States.

Competition, when the current feeble agreements and propositions are just feeble agreements. Sustainable development – what is that? Indigenous peoples – who cares? Cooperation with America – in our backyard?

Maybe not a cold war, but conflict between the trade blocs. Or a limitless race towards the last natural resources caused by the idea of international free trade. Or a region that stays as the backyard of eight countries, eightfold periphery, without the possibility to affect change.

All of this would negate many hopes and visions. The northern regions would only be a place that has natural resources to be exploited, no matter the consequences. For the mainstream it would be a regressive secluded land, the indigenous peoples would have no say in the matters.

A magnetic North Pole exists. As the turn of the millennium gets closer, as the Earth gets forever smaller, its northern regions are become an ever increasing magnet that draws attention to itself. It is like a continent that we have not yet conquered, and it is close. The big question of the beginning of the new millennium is how we are going to conquer it. Pretty words, agreements, intentions and plans have been put on paper. They can either stay on paper or become reality.

Many things are happening under the northern sun. The sun, whose rays are starting to burn.



# PART II

”THE LEADING ARCTIC ACTOR”

**YEARS 1998–2018 IN FINNISH ARCTIC POLITICS**



## PROLOGUE

**THIS PART GOES THROUGH** Finland's Arctic actions and especially policies after 1998. This creates a whole, as it covers the development of Finland's Arctic thinking from the 1980s to the present – the entire duration Finland has had a proper Arctic policy.\*

International Arctic development is included where required in order to understand Finland's actions.

For the period 2017–2019 Finland is the Chair of the Arctic Council. The Arctic has become a part of the mainstream both in world politics and in the domestic discussions and policies in Finland. The rise of the Arctic explains why the Barents Region and the Northern Dimension – that were once so very important to Finland – have been partly forgotten: they exist, but they are not heard of on the outside.

Finland's own goal is ambitious. In its Arctic Strategy update in 2016 the goal was defined as: *“The Government's objective is to ensure that Finland is a leading actor in international Arctic policy, both within the EU and globally.”*<sup>1</sup>

The very first Arctic Summit was a real possibility during the Chairmanship term.

Even though a lot has changed at the surface, Finnish discussion from twenty years ago has many similarities to the present. One of them is projecting their economic wishes on the Arctic Region. The targets have changed, the nature of the conversation has not.

In the 1990s in the Barents Region major energy projects in Russia featured heavily. The grand visions for the North in the 2010s are tied to global logistic networks and especially to Asia. What has been common for all decades are discussions about matters that do not have readymade concrete decisions but that are still believed to change the entire picture of the economy.

The importance of sustainable development is also a common thread. The relationship of economic development to balanced environment and the living conditions of indigenous peoples are often mentioned in speeches.

Balancing these two main motives – the economy and the environment – has dominated Finland's Arctic discussion and actions throughout the years.

\* A longer arc of Arctic history can be found in the book *Footprints in the Snow – The Long History of Arctic Finland* by Maria Lähteenmäki (Prime Minister's Office Publications 2017)

## WHAT THE GOVERNMENTS WANT

**THE ORIENTATION OF FINLAND'S** Arctic views can be found in the country's ever-changing government programmes, from short and declarative texts to long and detailed catalogues. The Foreign Policy section has been drafted very carefully, because it is essential for a small country like Finland that is located next to a great power. The North and Arctic issues were specifically linked with Foreign Policy in the government programmes, when they made it that far.

During many decades in the 1900s, there was no separately declared place for the North and the Arctic in Finnish Foreign Policy. Then they became a recurring topic for government programmes. The turning point can be traced to the end of the 1990s, when the Northern Dimension was on the rise. From that point onwards, the focus has remained the same while the governments have changed. The political background of the government has not had a significant effect.

The main rule of the last few decades has been that the composition of the government lasts for the entire four-year term. The Prime Minister might have changed in between and some parties might have transferred to the opposition, but the basic structure that came to be after the election has not changed. All governments have been multi-party system majority governments and all established political groups have held governmental responsibility in turn.

The government programmes reflect the situation of Finland's neighbouring regions and the connection between the European Union and the Arctic, initially through the Northern Dimension for quite some time and then without it. No Finnish Arctic initiative has been born guided by a government programme, however. A working connection between government policies and the actual Arctic politics has been built only in the recent years.

The government of Prime Minister Harri Holkeri (National Coalition Party) was in power from April 1987 to April 1991. During that time, Finland – technically, the Minister for Foreign Affairs Kalevi Sorsa (Social Democratic Party) – happened to make a significant foreign policy initiative on the environmental cooperation of the Arctic Region. The government programme did not even mention it, and actually could not have mentioned it, because the initiative was launched only after the speech of Mikhail Gorbachev in Murmansk in October 1987 and it was not yet known when the government term started.

The government of Holkeri was a grand coalition. The framework consisted of the National Coalition Party and the Social Democratic Party. It was the last government when Finland

still had the Soviet Union as its neighbour. When the government ended, the dissolution of the Soviet Union was well under way, the Berlin Wall had been taken down and Europe was in the midst of great turmoil.

Something related to the North could have been expected from the programme of Esko Aho's (Centre Party) government that started functioning in April 1991, because the Rovaniemi Process had already started and one of the first tasks of Environment Minister Sirpa Pietikäinen and Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen was to get ready for the meeting of Arctic countries' Ministers of Environment in Rovaniemi. Nevertheless, the long-standing tradition of government programmes did not allow the inclusion of a new area yet, even though that would have been easy to accomplish when drafting the programme. Arctic issues could already be seen between the lines: *"The Government will enhance communication in the Baltic Sea, with the Baltic countries and other neighbouring regions of Finland to increase cooperation and stability in the region. The environmental cooperation will specifically focus on reducing the pollution coming from our neighbouring regions."*

The pollution from neighbouring regions probably referred to the Kola Peninsula. The transboundary effects of this pollution on Finland, especially East Lapland also in the form of damage to forests were a major topic of discussion at the time.

When the right-wing government of the 36-year-old Aho started, the Soviet Union was still existing. When it ended, our neighbour was Russia and Finland was a member of the European Union following a referendum. Finland had had a very deep recession and an economic crisis. The world and reality can change completely in a short period of time, and the will of the Finnish governments cannot affect it. The government's job is to appropriately react to the changes.

The first government of Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen (Social Democratic Party) started in the new EU member country in 1995 and regional foreign policy strictly stayed near the Finnish borders. The deep gap in living standards between Finland and Russia was considered a risk, a new prevention tool was created: a neighbourhood policy: *"The Government considers it essential to improve the bilateral relationship with Russia, the Nordic Countries and the Baltics. Finland's neighbourhood policy will support the efforts to solidify the parliamentary democracy and market economy as well as to improve the state of the environment."*

The Barents cooperation had already started, but it wasn't, and still isn't worth mentioning in a government programme. Prime Minister Lipponen announced his Northern Dimension initiative in 1997, again without the guidance of a government programme.

The first cabinet of Lipponen was called a rainbow government, because it included parties from the right, left and centre: the Social Democratic Party and the Left Alliance, the National Coalition Party, the Green League and the Swedish People's Party of Finland – practically all significant parties except the previous government's party at the Centre. This government decided that Finland will join the Economic and Monetary Union of the EU. The same government composition continued after the elections, which is very exceptional in Finland.

Only the second cabinet of Lipponen (1999-2003) wrote the Northern Policy as part of the government programme, and it has stayed ever since. At this point, the northern policy was formed through the Prime Minister's own pet project, the Northern Dimension: *"The Government will actively operate to strengthen the Union's politics in the Northern regions of Europe and in relation to Russia. The Government will advance the full implementation of the EU's Northern Dimension policy focusing especially on energy cooperation, nuclear safety and protection of the Baltic Sea."*

After that, Finland has officially had eight different governments until 2018, but in practice just five, because three times only the Prime Minister changed while the rest of the government continued as it is. All have been multi-party governments with alternating compositions, and responsibility has fallen on every party elected to the parliament. Every government programme has included the North or the Arctic, which shows deep national consensus and continuity.

At first, the focus was on the Baltic Sea and the Northern Dimension, i.e. in Finland's neighbouring regions, which is reflected in the government programmes of Anneli Jäätteenmäki (Centre Party, 2003) and Matti Vanhanen (Centre Party, 2003-2007): *"The Government will be engaged in efforts to develop the EU's Northern Dimension, to improve the wellbeing of its citizens and environmental protection, and to increase the effectiveness of labour markets in the Baltic region." (...)* *"Finland will play an active part in development of the Northern Dimension in the external and cross-border policies of the EU in accordance with the new Action Plan for the Northern Dimension, and seeks to increase multilateral funding for the Northern Dimension. The Government will support development of a new policy on countries that share a common border with the enlarged Union, based on extensive cooperation. It will also pursue closer cooperation with the Baltic States, soon to be Member States of the EU, the Nordic countries and Russia, with a view to enhance broader practical cooperation in the framework of the Northern Dimension, especially in labour-market issues, safety at sea and projects related to the environment, social welfare and health, transport and energy."*

The government of Jäätteenmäki formed around the Centre Party of Finland and the Social Democratic Party. The relationships between the heads of the parties were so poor, however, that the leader of the Social Democratic Party Paavo Lipponen did not join the government but became the Speaker of the Finnish Parliament. Jäätteenmäki on the other hand had to resign after just a few months because of a political scandal and she was replaced by the Centre party's Matti Vanhanen, who won the next elections and formed a new right-wing government with the National Coalition Party, the Green League and the Swedish People's Party of Finland.

The second cabinet of Matti Vanhanen started in 2007 and ended as Mari Kiviniemi's government (2010-2011). The North was still connected to the Baltic Sea and its neighbouring areas in the general foreign policy, and it clearly needed to be more concrete:

*"The Government advocates strengthening of the importance of the Baltic Sea region within the EU and will endeavour to streamline the structure of the regional networks of cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region and in the northern regions. (...) Finland's cooperation with its neighbouring regions will be reformed. The key areas of cooperation will be the environment, nuclear safety, social welfare and health care. The Government will work actively to strengthen Finland's role in economic activity and expertise in the northern regions."*

The EU portion of the programme focused on the Northern Dimension: *"The Government will continue active promotion of the Northern Dimension Policy on the basis of joint documents of the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland, the Political Declaration and the Framework Document. Finland will participate in the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) and the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing (NDPHS). The Government will continue to work for the establishment of a partnership in the field of transport and logistics."*

During that centre led government term, Finland devised its first Arctic Strategy. There is no mention of it in the programme, because the idea was born later during actions. Howev-

er, it is also missing from the statements from 2010, when the Prime Minister changed, even though the idea already existed at the time.

The six-party government of Jyrki Katainen (National Coalition Party) started in 2011 and in the final year it was the government of Alexander Stubb (National Coalition Party) until 2015. The government negotiations were extremely arduous, because the rise of the populist Finns Party had confused familiar politics. The government was combined from both left and right wing parties, and as a result of the government negotiations, a 90-page programme which had a record amount of details, was devised. All parties except the Centre that had suffered an electoral defeat and the populist Finns Party that had won the elections were included.

In that programme, the EU policy and foreign policy were combined and the North was placed under “The Baltic States and neighbouring regions”. The section still started with the Northern Dimension, but for the first time, the Arctic was mentioned by name. The programme showed the different interests of different parties: it tried to find a balance between improving the economy and protecting the environment.

*“Finland emphasises the Northern Dimension cooperation and the development of associated partnerships. The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region plays an important role in systematic use of regional cooperation mechanisms. (...) The Northern Dimension offers an efficient forum for Baltic Sea cooperation with countries outside the EU, the Russian Federation in particular.*

*The Arctic region is a focus of considerable economic and political interest. Climate change and increased exploitation of natural resources increase environmental risks in the Arctic region. On the other hand, the Arctic region offers significant opportunities for Finland. The Government will advocate the use of Finnish expertise in the Arctic region. Implementation of Finland’s Strategy for the Arctic Region will be intensified. Cooperation between the states in the region will be increased to make more effective use of the region’s business opportunities and to prevent environmental risks. In mining activities and when exploiting the region’s natural resources, ecological sustainability and the rights of the indigenous peoples must be respected. Finland’s aim is to enhance the EU’s Arctic policy and have the EU Arctic Centre established in Rovaniemi.”*

The Arctic paradox, i.e. the combination of accelerating climate change and the growing economic possibilities was thus brought all the way to the government programme. The possibility to establish an EU Arctic information centre at the Arctic Centre in Rovaniemi was also written in the government programme. It was exceptional, because usually concrete, isolated projects were not highlighted in this manner.

One of the first acts of Katainen’s government in 2012 was to devise a completely new Finnish Arctic Strategy to replace the one from only two years before. Again, this idea was not explicitly written in the government programme.

After the next elections, a new base for the government was tested. Now the winner was the Centre Party that took along the runners up Finns Party and the almost as big National Coalition Party.

When the three party government of Juha Sipilä (Centre Party) started in 2015, the programme returned to a shorter and more declarative form. The programme included both an overview of the current situation and a SWOT-analysis, and the Arctic had been positioned as a possibility: *“Being part of the EU’s internal market and a neighbour of Russia presents opportunities for the Finnish economy. Finland’s geographical position enables good connections with Asia and responsible exploitation of the Arctic regions.”*

Deviating from all the previous government programmes, the EU and Foreign Policy matters were now found at the end of the programme. For the first time, the Northern Dimension had been completely omitted and the Arctic was the answer when it came to the EU. The combination of economy, environment and sustainable development was also visible in this programme:

*“Development of Arctic cooperation should be elevated as a key priority of the EU’s external relations, and EU input is required in promoting Northern projects. (...) Finland will be active in making effective use of the Arctic region and in Arctic cooperation. In all activities in the Arctic region, the requirements set by sustainable development will be taken into consideration.”*

Even though the approaching Arctic Council Chairmanship was well known during the government negotiations, it is not visible in the government programme. The Arctic railway is also completely missing from the programme, even though raising its possibility has been one of the most prominent Arctic initiatives of the government term. Although, in relation to the Arctic railway, there has been discussion of the EU’s efforts and connecting the northern traffic projects to the European TEN-T network, which is consistent with the programme’s views.

In 2016, Sipilä’s government commented on Arctic issues in detail and raised awareness in the work of the Prime Minister’s Office when updating their Arctic Strategy .

The idea of an Arctic Summit and how it could be tied to the reducing of black carbon emissions is becoming a most significant international Arctic initiative of this government period. This is not mentioned in the Government Programme – and it is, first and foremost, the initiative of the president, not the government. In fact, it is the first Arctic policy initiative that has been added to that agenda by the president of the country.

The principle of the government programmes is that they sum up only known key policy matters. That is why the strongest long-term Finnish policy is to connect European Union into the Arctic. For a long time, the way to achieve this was through the Northern Dimension of the EU. However, things did not go quite as planned.

# THE LONG SLIDE OF THE NORTHERN DIMENSION

**TWENTY YEARS AFTER THE** Northern Dimension initiative was born, the father of the initiative, Paavo Lipponen, still holds speeches to maintain it. Essentially, he is the only one still talking about it in public. Almost everyone else around him has disappeared. Lately, the Northern Dimension tools have been dug up again, when speaking about reductions in black carbon emissions. Nevertheless, we are still far away from what was planned in the past.

“The Northern Dimension is the most significant matter that has been achieved between the EU and Russia,” assures Lipponen at the Arctic forum held in the House of the Estates in Helsinki in April 2018.

You can get a clear picture of the original vision by looking at the speech by Lipponen at the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region in Rovaniemi in August 2000.<sup>2</sup> In it, he delved into the Northern Dimension specifically from an Arctic point of view.

His speech described a transatlantic northern cooperation in which, according to Lipponen, the EU, the United States and Canada had already agreed to participate. The speech stated that the European Commission was strongly behind the Northern Dimension and so was Russia, of which Lipponen had assurances from both the President and the Prime Minister. He described how the energy supplies on the Russian part of the Barents Region have a strategic significance to Europe and how the developing forestry cooperation binds actors together in the Arctic, Barents and Northern Dimension regions. Russia’s transport system can be connected to the trans-European networks and the Arctic Council should also discuss infrastructure projects.

Lipponen also hoped for a permanent relationship between the European Commission and the Arctic Council, which would be a natural continuum to the Northern Dimension initiative. In the same speech, Lipponen announced that Finland would start organising international Northern Dimension forums.

Visions were grand in the year 2000. Under them, the Northern Dimension connected the European Union to both Russia and North America and the Arctic window of the Dimension was wide open. Extensive energy and resource projects were up for grabs and transport infrastructure would be built.

In reality, the Northern Dimension initiative was on its way to trouble, which would force us to rethink its structure in the span of a few years. However, it was also on its way

to bringing about some concrete results, especially pertaining to the environment and nuclear safety.

At the end of the 1990s, the MNEPR agreement<sup>3</sup> about nuclear safety in Russia's northern regions was a matter that genuinely interested governments in the Nordic Countries and the EU as well as in North America. The collapse of the Soviet Union had also led to the collapse of a nuclear safety architecture and the risks of the situation were great and substantial. Similarly, international negotiations related to the issue were hard and multi-dimensional, because they included very complex issues relating to technology, funding and responsibilities.

The agreement on Russia's nuclear safety that was negotiated in Arctic and Barents forums among others was connected for the relevant parts with the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) and the funding mechanisms created for it. One of the most prominent environmental acts of the Arctic Region has been cleaning of the Andreev Bay (near the Norwegian border) of radioactive waste. The abandoned Soviet era naval base for nuclear submarines was in terrible shape and the risk of a radioactive accident was at hand. We started preventing it with international cooperation. The first load of spent nuclear fuel headed for reprocessing in June 2017. The same agreement made it possible to stow the problematic nuclear waste storage vessel Lepse to the dock for proper processing, away from the centre of Murmansk where it had been anchored.

Altogether, this has been a project of many years and has consisted of many different financial contributors, some of them part of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership. The largest international contributor is Norway. Several other countries took part as well, including Finland.

These acts to improve nuclear safety deserve an honorary mention as concrete environmental acts for the Arctic Region. Nevertheless, they are rarely mentioned in Arctic discussions. One possible explanation is that these operations are not related to the Arctic Council or the operations of its bodies, which take up the core of Arctic discussion and conferences. The cooled down relationship between Russia and the West has also changed attitudes on both sides.

The Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership has achieved a great deal, especially in handling the sewage around St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad. Thanks to the wastewater treatment plants, the Baltic Sea is in a significantly better condition than before, at least when it comes to wastewater load.

The focus of the Northern Dimension has shifted to the Baltic Sea and that has removed it from the Arctic view. The economic sanctions have also played their part. Since 2012, no new Environmental Partnership projects have been launched in Russia. Old ones have been moving forward, however, and in 2017 Finland lobbied for starting new, small and independent Northern Dimension projects in the EU Commission. The proposal was being accepted at the end of 2018.

These projects have special significance particularly for the Kola Peninsula, which hosts a considerable number of polluting thermal power plants.

Cleaning the Baltic Sea is as an example for tackling black carbon emissions in the near future. In short, the idea is this: first we cleaned the sea with the Northern Dimension actions and next we clean the air.

However, the Northern Dimension has had some issues with its reputation. Even though the economic sanctions after Crimea were felt in the Northern Dimension actions, they were not that strong even before the sanctions.



In terms of effectiveness, the initiative was on the wrong track already back when Lipponen delivered his grand vision in his speeches around the year 2000. The initiative did get included in the EU's texts, but it never received its own budget policy. It was launched by listing contents, a group of issues that would have been handled regardless, and because of that had seemed tacked on to the Northern Dimension. The target area was mostly Russia, and they did not appreciate being the target of the EU's operations without having any influence of their own.

In the first years of 2000, again on its own initiative, Finland started to correct the situation. Different partnerships were established as a core for the operation: an environmental partnership, a partnership on public health social well-being, a partnership on transport and logistics and a partnership on culture.

The environmental partnership took off. A financial system was established behind it, with high-level financial institutions like the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the World Bank and the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO). This was done through good will and by the innovators that worked on the project, such as Jaakko Henttonen, who was largely responsible for establishing the environmental partnership and has been part of the project in different positions for years. The goal was to achieve a structure that would allow the financing for big investments for solving environmental problems. In addition, the participants, like Russia, directed a great amount of their own financing to the work.

The environmental partnership became an undisputed success.<sup>4</sup> The other partnerships slowly started emerging as well, but a similar financial base as for the environmental partnership was never established behind them.

Finland raised its national profile during 2000–2002 by organising a series of special Northern Dimension forums that addressed several themes and gathered hundreds of participants and prestigious speakers, especially in the beginning. The leader of the forums was the Rector of the University of Lapland Esko Rieppula, on Prime Minister Lipponen's request. They began as high-profile events that composed ideas for actions and partnerships, but they wore off eventually.

The dynamics of the Northern Dimension started to disappear, and concrete actions were scarce, excluding the environmental partnership. The first programming period was ending in 2006 and Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs estimated that if there was a desire to continue the Northern Dimension, Russia would have to be better committed.

During Finland's Presidency of the European Union in autumn 2006 the structures were changed. The programming periods were abandoned, and we managed to turn the Northern Dimension into an equal partnership between the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland. It was a new start. Thematic partnerships had been successfully launched and everything looked good.

Ten years later almost nothing looked good anymore.

At the Aalto University, there is a Northern Dimension Institute, which coordinates research cooperation of the Northern Dimension with meagre financial support from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Professor Riitta Korhonen and Project Manager Piia Heliste remember all too well what happened, when the Institute moved from the Lappeenranta University of Technology to the Aalto University. Russia occupied Crimea, sanctions and counter-sanctions were issued and everything changed. All funding channels were jammed, when the financial institutions of the EU and the Nordic Investment Bank discontinued everything, in-

cluding the plans for new environmental cooperation projects and funding for Russia. Old projects could be continued, but new projects could not be started.

The officials are still holding meetings and Russia has clearly stated that it values the Northern Dimension. As a politically neutral forum, it has crucially served as a tool for discussions.

However, the visibility of the Northern Dimension has vanished with time. The Arctic has become a much more efficient lobbying word in both the EU and elsewhere, and the Arctic window for the Northern Dimension had closed off long ago. Additionally, the Northern Dimension has had one distinct problem from the start: it has presented itself as an initiative promoted by Finland, and it has not had enough visible advocates in other countries or the EU. It has been mentioned in certain connections out of sheer formality or officially, but otherwise has been relatively insignificant.

Transport and logistics are discussed often in the North, and the Northern Dimension includes a transport and logistics partnership. It could potentially have a rather large role, but only a small amount of funding can be channelled through it. The public health and social well-being partnership has numerous expert-level working groups and valuable work has especially been done towards improving Russia's HIV/AIDS situation. The cultural partnership has efficiently evaded all attention and after 2014 its projects have only been carried out in Finland and Latvia.

To raise the profile of the Northern Dimension and its partnerships, future forums have been organised, so that they could build concrete projects through them.

Twenty years after its birth, the Northern Dimension is still alive. Sanctions snuffed its most successful part, environment partnership. However, all the mechanisms that were created still exist and can be put into use and while the Finnish Arctic interest is on black carbon, those mechanisms are becoming key elements.

A mechanism was created for wastewater treatment projects in St. Petersburg, Kaliningrad and elsewhere. A group of international financial institutions were involved, and Russia paid most of the costs itself. The same could be possible with black carbon emissions.

North-West Russia has 1800 municipal district heating plants that release significant black carbon or soot, and emissions in the Arctic regions. Reducing these emissions would also improve the health of the locals, which is a Northern Dimension principle. Finland began recognising possible pilot projects and connections already in 2018.

At the Arctic Circle Assembly in Reykjavik in October 2018, Jaakko Henttonen presented some statistics: in the Murmansk region 97 per cent of heating is generated with coal or heavy fuel oil. In the Arkhangelsk region, half of the heating is generated with biomass.

This type of district heating plants can be very big sources of emissions in a certain area. They emit large amounts of black carbon that accelerates the melting of snow and ice and in part boosts global warming. For exactly these plants we could build similar refineries as in the Baltic Sea, just in a smaller package. The Northern Dimension mechanisms could get international funding through NEFCO and Russia would be the main financier.

Other significant sources of black carbon emissions are traffic, seafaring, forest fires and the flaring that happens with gas production. Northern Dimension does not offer tools for handling these, but a package could be built from different platforms or channels. For example, prohibiting the use of heavy fuel oil in Arctic Regions is part of the International Maritime Organisation's tasks. The World Bank on the other hand has an initiative to stop flaring on gas fields by 2030.

After the sanctions, the EU issued five principles for its Russia policy. Those include selective engagement and maintaining connections between citizens. The Northern Dimension fits these principles.

When Finland was the President of the EU in 2006, invigorating the Northern Dimension and renewing its structures was on top of the agenda. This will also be attempted on a smaller scale during the autumn of 2019 when Finland will be the President of the EU again. The focus, however, will be on increasing visibility rather than structuring the negotiations. Finland is planning a high-level meeting that would be built around the Northern Dimension and the Arctic.

## BARENTS WAS OVERRUN BY THE RISE OF THE ARCTIC

**BARENTS COOPERATION WAS NOT** Finland's initiative, but was born in Norway. In fact, the initiatives of Finland and Norway for the Arctic region were rivals in the beginning.

When the Barents Euro-Arctic Council was established in Kirkenes in 1993, the then Foreign Minister of Norway Thorvald Stoltenberg acted as host. In the years that followed, he had time to participate in many events as the founding father of the Barents cooperation. In the special issue of the University of the Arctic journal in 2016, he gave an interesting interview<sup>5</sup> discussing why Norway was not at all interested in the establishment of the Arctic Council. The country's attitude towards the Rovaniemi Process was rather reluctant at the time.

"My focus was on establishing the Barents cooperation, and I did not want the Arctic Council to come in its way", Stoltenberg said. According to him, in the early years the people working for Barents cooperation tried to push it in a wrong direction, it would have resembled the current Arctic Council and included geopolitics. This means that regional focus would have suffered.

In this light, a rather interesting detail is that at the first Meeting of Environment Ministers in Rovaniemi 1991, Norway was represented by Jens Stoltenberg, the son of Thorvald Stoltenberg, deputy Minister of the Environment at the time. Norway just decided a couple of days before the meeting that the actual Minister of the Environment would not go to Rovaniemi. Since then, Jens Stoltenberg has proceeded to become a long-standing Prime Minister of Norway as well as the Secretary General of NATO.

There was a time also in Finland, when the term Barents was used a lot more than the Arctic. In principle, it is possible to explain with one word why both the Barents cooperation and the Northern Dimension have become side notes in Finland, and the focus has shifted to the Arctic.

The word is Russia.

There was always considerable uncertainty about the direction Russia was headed towards. Not a single speculation however mentioned a future marked with sanctions, counter-sanctions and undertones of the Cold War.

Not one official cooperation pattern has been broken. Russia is included in all northern structures and seems to hold the Barents cooperation in high regard in many statements. However, Russia evolved in accordance with its own logic and priorities, and did not care about the expectations expressed on the western side of the border.

Part of the internal development in Russia has been to reduce the powers in regions and move decisions to Moscow. This has affected Russian Barents regions as well. The regional

cooperation has been restricted to official structures and its contacts to external companies and civil society have diminished.

The Finnish Barents Group that was established by major Finnish companies and was influential at the end of the 1990s was abolished in the beginning of the new century. There were no Barents projects to try to work on.

The 1990s arguments on the need for northern cooperation still circled around energy. There was talk of oil, but mostly of gas. Gas pipelines were drawn on maps of Murmansk from the Shtokman fields to the south. The pipeline was supposed to come ashore in the Kola Peninsula near the small coastal village of Teriberka, the location where the award-winning movie *Leviathan* by director Andrey Zvyagintsev was filmed.

It is these gas reserves of the Barents Region that the former Prime Minister Lipponen often referenced, when justifying the significance of the Northern Dimension to the EU.

These maps pertaining to the gas field and pipe planning could still be found on the webpages of Shtokman Development Companies, owned by Gazprom. In hindsight, they are the only concrete achievement of the Shtokman project. The production of shale gas revolutionised the global market, and the dying economic relations of Russia and the West drove away international investors. Two black swans landed on the waters of Shtokman at the same time – unexpected factors. The gas reserves still exist, but their utilisation in the near future is not realistic.

Russia's Arctic energy activity is focused on the Yamal Peninsula in western Siberia. Many projects have been built near the gas fields there, for instance, railways and the LNG terminal that is central to the northern sea route traffic. There have been some projects for the Finns as well, but they are far outside the Barents Region.

The jobs that the Finns were hoping for on the Shtokman gas field have sunk to the bottom of the ocean, where the gas is. And there both the gas and the investments are now frozen, waiting for decisions that were supposed to arrive during the following five years, but that are never going to be made.

Infrastructure is also being built in Russia, like we have seen on the Yamal peninsula, but the arrows being drawn on Arctic maps in Finland no longer point to Russia and vice versa as they did in the 1990s. They go past the northern boundary of Russia onto Asia. In addition, these arrows go around and past the cooperation in the Barents Region.

Cooperation in the Barents Region continues in itself. Things are happening, but cocooned inside frameworks.

A snapshot of Kirkenes from January 2018: The Barents cooperation had just celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. In the offices of the international Barents Secretariat on Friday, there was a handsome cake that was decorated with the flags of Finland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the Saami.

It was now Monday, and there were around thirty Barents Region actors and experts around the table at the workshop. They had one task: to discuss how to increase the visibility of the Barents cooperation. Barents cooperation ambassadors and officials from four different member states and the EU Commission were present.

The international Barents Secretariat celebrated its tenth anniversary at the same time. The Secretariat was established to coordinate the complex pattern that had emerged to implement the Barents cooperation. There are five people in the staff group photo. The national Barents Secretariat of Norway is located in the same building and it has twelve names on its roster. Their job is to coordinate the bilateral Barents cooperation between Norway and Russia.

The term Barents cooperation references both: international cooperation between many countries and regions and the bilateral projects between Norway and Russia. This does not make it easier to understand these structures.

In October 2017, there was a Meeting of Foreign Ministers in Arkhangelsk, where Sweden accepted leadership of the Euro-Arctic Council. Sweden had chosen 'promotion of visibility' as one of its main themes.

The region's Foreign Ministers were present at Arkhangelsk, because the member states still want to show their commitment to the Barents cooperation. The Regional Council's composition had gaps already.

On Finland's side, the original members of the Barents Regional Council, i.e. the provinces, and the positions of governor have been abolished completely. They have been replaced by counties. Northern Karelia was the last to be accepted as a full member. Thus, the territory of the Barents Regional Council covers most of Finland: Lapland, Northern Ostrobothnia (Oulu region), Kainuu and Northern Karelia.

The attention has not increased in the same way.

While the visibility of the Barents cooperation was being discussed in the Kirkenes conference room, the Arctic Frontiers conference was beginning in Tromsø, and around two thousand participants were expected. The Arctic has pull that the Barents does not.

Something had gone differently from what was envisioned in the beginning. Many could see after the first years that there was a great deal of conflict between the great expectations of the Barents Region and everyday reality.

The overwhelmingly visible Barents brand nowadays is the online newspaper Independent Barents Observer. Its two-person editorial staff in Kirkenes, a stone's throw away from the building of the Barents Secretariat, is located in an old brick-walled office building in two shabby rooms.

The Independent Barents Observer is no longer part of the official cooperation. In the beginning, it was a part of operations of Norway's National Barents Secretariat. In 2015, a conflict between the owners and workers escalated. The reporters – there were three at the time – wanted to work like independent news media. The owners wanted an information site that would not comment independently on anything, especially on matters that might upset someone. Someone in Russia had clearly gotten upset about the writings on the site. There was a big dispute and as a result, the journalists left and added the word 'independent' to Barents Observer. As independent news media, it has received international fame as a good news source on the most northern parts of Europe.

One of the newspaper's reporters is on Russia's countersanction list for Norway. He can no longer cross the border to Russia at the border crossing in Kirkenes, or anywhere else. The situation only became known to him when he was traveling to Russia as normal and was denied entry.

Officially, everything is well with the cooperation.

During 2017, the International Barents Secretariat requested and received interviews for their website from all four Foreign Ministers from the Barents Region. <sup>6</sup>

Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström praised how the cooperation has improved the chances for cross-border communications and human contact. Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov considered it one of the most exemplary forms of regional cooperation in the world and hoped that this will be replicated elsewhere. Norway's Foreign Minister Børge Brende said that the cooperation has opened up the region, strengthened its possibilities, improved the living conditions of the people and helped build a peaceful and dynamic area. Finland's Minister for Foreign Affairs Timo Soini highlighted sustainable development and achievements in several different fields.

All ministers answered very carefully and as expected. Nevertheless, they did answer and that is of significance in itself. The Foreign Ministers for the Nordic Countries and Russia

do not often write on the same forum. The previous instance was in 2016, when the Arctic Council turned twenty and the United States and Canada were participating as well.

The regional Barents identity has not taken flight despite the efforts. The operations have centred on the working groups that have been active in varying degrees. These officials have hardly been vocal on their matters.

In addition to the official actions, there has also been voluntary civic activity, for example the voluntary cooperation between reporters in the joint network of Barents Press International that has been ongoing since 1993. It has stayed alive through the years but has also had to face the changes taking place in the media worldwide.<sup>7</sup>

The contacts within the civil society are also influenced by the fact that a usable financial channel for small-scale projects does not exist. Norway has funds for a bilateral cooperation with Russia but Finland has abolished former neighbourhood policy. In Finland the regions do not have any earmarked Barents money available to them. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs has opened a joint financing mechanism for activity on the Baltic Sea, the Barents and the Arctic Regions, but the funding is only for issues in which one of the ministries is taking part.

Only a few agents can exploit the Interreg and Kolarctic projects and those have other challenges as well. The planning for the EU's external borders Kolarctic and Karelia CBC programmes for the period 2014–2020 started in 2013 and the final ratifications were received at the end of summer 2018. Only after that it was possible to grant funding – four years behind the original schedule. On the positive side, both the EU and Russia signed the papers.<sup>8</sup>

The Barents Region has been extended in Russia and in Finland so that it reaches from the Urals to Lofoten and from lake Saimaa to the Arctic Ocean. There are many working groups at the regional and national levels, some that work and some do not. Norway continues to be the only country that clearly directs funds to Barents activity, i.e., bilateral operations between Norway and Russia.

Kirkenes is one of the only places where anyone's identity could be defined by using the word Barents. Elsewhere there is talk about the same northern region with new names and with new thought patterns. The term Arctic Europe has appeared and it usually means the northern parts of Finland, Sweden and Norway. At this stage, Russia is omitted or left out of the analysis: it is not considered a part of Arctic Europe.

Despite all this, Barents cooperation is one of the only forums on the Arctic Region that genuinely includes the local regions. The Arctic cooperation circles have no room for regional operations. In the Barents Region the cross-border connections exist on a local level and the authorities know each other. Even though the actions might seem invisible to the citizens, the routine communications have value, especially at a time when creating connections across borders is more difficult.

In May 2018, the Regional Barents Council held a meeting in Rovaniemi and presented their hopes for a policy of visa-free travel for Barents citizens across the Barents Region. According to the proposal, this could be tried out during the Barents Games or the "Barents Davos" event that Russia proposed.<sup>9</sup>

The goal was big. For the residents of Russia and Norway's border regions visa-free travel has already been in effect for quite some time and Northern Norway has had a positive response to extending that area<sup>10</sup>. There has not been any similar conversation in Finland and talks of joint visa-free travel between Finland or the EU and Russia ended abruptly after the events in Crimea and Ukraine.

## AFTER FINLAND'S ARCTIC INITIATIVE

**FINLAND'S ARCTIC INITIATIVE** AT the end of the 1980s and the Rovaniemi Process have been brought up time and again during Finland's Arctic Chairmanship (2017–2019) term. There is good reason to remember them: the Rovaniemi Process created Arctic cooperation structures between the countries.

To understand Finland's long-term Arctic policy, it is appropriate to summarise what it meant for Finland during the initial years.

The Rovaniemi Process is a good example of a successfully executed Finnish foreign policy initiative that effortlessly crossed over the administrative borders of two ministries – the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and still young (at the time), Ministry of the Environment.

Finnish administrative culture consists of silos in the form of different ministries, and breaking these boundaries is not that easy. At the end of the 1980s, it helped that both ministries were under the fiefdom of the same party, the SDP, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs Kalevi Sorsa was a strong figure in the party at the time and got firmly behind the Arctic initiative with his prestige.

When evaluated thirty years later, Finland's initiative is related to a larger entity. The Cold War was ending and new openings became possible. There were several other incentives for the Arctic environmental initiative that just a seemingly spontaneous speech by Gorbachev in Murmansk in October 1987.

In spring 1987, the UN published a report by Gro Harlem Brundtland: *Our Common Future* and ever since the term sustainable development has become a concept that people want to connect with almost everything.

In 1975, a Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (led to the creation to the OSCE later), was held in Helsinki and it had a long-lasting effect on the Finnish perspective on international relations. The thought of Finland as a conference host and originator of international initiatives was welcomed, and the same is true today: discussion about an Arctic Summit has survived in Finland for years.

The end of the 1980s was a time when the establishment of International Arctic Science Committee, IASC, was taking root. American science circles had realised that the Antarctic had organised international science cooperation since the end of the 1950s, and the Northern polar region was lagging behind. When the initiative of the International Science Committee finally took off, all capitals of the Arctic countries had to respond to it. According to



the IASC history<sup>11</sup>, Gorbachev's Murmansk speech has definitely been influenced by the discussions and reports from the founding phase of IASC.

At the end of the 1980s, traveling to the Soviet Union and communications with them began to ease. In addition, alarming information started to emerge on the condition of the environment in the Kola Peninsula, especially on the forest destruction surrounding the industrial complexes. The very public problems discovered in the forests of Lapland were assumed to be the result of the Kola Peninsula pollution.

There was increasing momentum both in international relations and in the understanding of the environmental situation. All of this was in the background when Finland responded to Gorbachev's speech in Murmansk. The speech was also directed to the right audience. The long-standing Prime Minister and then Foreign Minister Kalevi Sorsa was also the vice-president of the Socialist International and Gorbachev mentioned him separately in his speech.

When Finland took the official step on Arctic environmental cooperation by sending letters to the seven other Arctic countries on January 12, 1989, these were signed by Kalevi Sorsa and the Environment Minister Kaj Bärlund. However, the implementation was delayed and Sorsa no longer had a visible role in the Rovaniemi Process. In addition, because of some internal shifts inside the SDP party, Sorsa became the Speaker of the Parliament at the end of January 1989, and that made sending the Arctic invitations one of his last acts as Foreign Minister.

The letters were preceded by careful testing and groundwork by Finnish diplomats during 1988. Finland hired an experienced diplomat, Esko Rajakoski, to lead the negotiations. He had been a central part of the OSCE meeting preparations in the 1970s and had substantial experience working on multilateral diplomacy.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the OSCE connection found its way to Finnish thinking about Arctic Cooperation as well.

The very first task was to find out if it was possible at all to go ahead with the Arctic Initiative. The responses varied. The notes of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in the archives of the Ministry of the Environment show that Norway, for example, was not at all interested and the United States was very careful.

The ongoing diplomatic operation was big by Finnish standards and it combined both traditional diplomacy and environmental analysis. Background information included all available facts on the condition of the Arctic environment. The need for an extensive Arctic conference had to be justified by scientific information and proven environmental challenges that would require cooperation from all Arctic countries to overcome. It was also essential to be able to identify issues on which more information was needed and to take stock of existing agreements and legal matters on the Arctic Region.

Based on the findings, the situation was interpreted so that an official initiative could be made. In its letter in January 1989, Finland proposed that an environmental protection conference between the eight Arctic Countries be held in Helsinki.

The arguments were centred on the threats to the Arctic environment and particularly transboundary pollution. The main issue of today, climate change, was not as visible at that time. In the letter Finland stated that the Arctic countries are responsible for coordinating environmental protection for the region.

There were a slew of matters to be discussed, starting with why to gather in the first place and then who should be sitting at the table. At that point, only the Arctic countries were participating. Representation for the indigenous peoples came later and was not part of Finland's original idea. Canada played an active role in that.

At the beginning, Finland thought that the official meetings would be in Helsinki. Very soon, the location was changed to Rovaniemi, for which Esko Rieppula, rector of the University of Lapland and Chairman of the City Council, was lobbying. According to the minutes of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, “in a small location, closer to nature than Helsinki, there is a focused atmosphere that can lead to results in a short amount of time.”

The first official preparatory meeting was held at the Rovaniemi City Hall in September 1989. The shared concern for the condition of the Arctic environment was acknowledged, and Finland strived to ensure there would be future meetings.

The meeting established two task forces to prepare for what would be discussed at the ministerial meeting. The first task force considered the state of the Arctic environment and the eventual steps to be taken. The other task force examined the international law in the Arctic Region and what would be the structure of the incipient cooperation.

Twelve issues were added to the agenda of the environmental task force: the marine environment, climate change and pollution, radioactivity, chemicals and oil, food chains, waste management, protecting the living resources, environmental economics, environmental health, noise pollution, population centres and indigenous peoples.

A joint understanding of what they wanted to do and how it could be done started to emerge. Graphs of themes and the countries responsible for those themes were drafted. At the same time, different countries had different aspirations and objectives that needed to be considered. Thus, the Rovaniemi Process was in full swing.

Additional preparatory meetings were required. Since it was an international process, the meetings could not be held only in Finland, and other countries had to commit as well. The key countries for this phase were Canada and Sweden. The official preparatory meetings were held in Yellowknife, Canada in March 1990 and in Kiruna, Sweden in January 1991.

In October 1990, Canada, Finland and Sweden issued a joint proposal on the future of the Arctic cooperation. The Arctic environmental meetings were to be held regularly from there on. Other countries and organisations could be asked to participate as observers and the indigenous peoples of the Arctic should be included in the process. The idea of an Arctic Council was also written down.

Ideas for the Arctic Council had already been proposed in Canada since 1987, and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney brought them up in his speech in Leningrad in November 1989. In January 1991, Canada sent an official letter to all Arctic countries, where it suggested the founding of an Arctic Council.

According to Canada, the Council could address the Arctic economy and culture as well as social and development issues. The more extensive Arctic initiative of Canada and the concise initiative of Finland now existed side by side. The background of Canada’s internal policy initiative was strongly tied to raising the status of the indigenous peoples. However, concrete discussions were only held on Finland’s suggestion.

Since the beginning of 1991, everything started to be ready for the first Meeting of the Environmental Ministers. Meanwhile, Finland held parliamentary elections, the government changed and the politicians who had worked on the initiative were no longer hosting the meeting. Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen and Environment Minister Sirpa Pietikäinen welcomed the Arctic guests in the Rovaniemi City Hall in the middle of June 1991.

The Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy was approved in Rovaniemi, and through it, many of the structures and operations that can still be seen in the work of the Arctic Coun-

cil. The ministers approved a political statement and agreed upon the contents of operations and timetables.

The pollution threatening the Arctic environment was at the centre of the protection strategy, especially oil, acidification, persistent organic pollutants, radioactivity, noise pollution and heavy metals. Scientific cooperation focussed on getting more information on the sources of pollution, its transmission and effects.

At the meeting, it was decided that four new working groups should be established to respond to the environmental threats: on Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME), the Emergency Prevention Preparedness Response (EPPR), and the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF). All of them continue their role as an important part of the Arctic Council.

Climate Change and ozone depletion were left out of the strategy, given that they were already addressed in other forums. Only the state representatives signed the strategy, but the role of the indigenous peoples was strongly recognised in the text. In addition to the Arctic countries, three organisations for indigenous peoples were also present in Rovaniemi – for the Inuit, the Saami and the indigenous peoples of northern Russia.

“The Arctic Meeting of Ministers in Rovaniemi was unanimous and successful,” said the evaluation of the Finnish delegation after the meeting. At the same time, it was important to remember that nothing in the strategy was legally binding and the meeting “could be considered a good start for international Arctic cooperation”<sup>13</sup>. Norway had promised funds for the AMAP Secretariat, otherwise no one committed to anything in particular.

The Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy AEPS continued, but disappeared from the spotlight. Finland no longer continued its Arctic initiative. In Norway, the focus was on the Barents cooperation, that started in 1993. Canada still maintained the idea of a more extensive Arctic Council.

The Arctic Council was established in Ottawa in September 1996. Finland participated in the negotiations that led to its birth with a rather standard investment, without its own special agenda.

Finland's next big initiative in the North was the Northern Dimension, depicted in more detail in the first part of the book. For its entire duration, the Northern Dimension has been on a different track to that of Finland's Arctic policy.

On the Arctic track, there are no considerable leaps in Finland's official policy at the end of the 1990s since the Arctic Council was established. However, certain people, activities and initiatives have been shaping and influencing the Arctic activities.

The first meeting between the Arctic parliamentarians was connected to the Nordic Council and it was held in the Icelandic parliament in Reykjavik in 1993. There it was decided that the cooperation would be continued. A standing committee was established, and because Iceland did not have the resources to maintain it, the General Secretary of the Finnish delegation to the Nordic Council Guy Lindström was asked to take the job. He worked in the International Department at the Finnish Parliament and acted as the Secretary General of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region for the fundamental first decade, when the cooperation of the Arctic parliaments developed and had an effect.

The parliamentary conference in Yellowknife was held in spring 1996, at a time when negotiations for the Arctic Council were in a difficult state. Lindström believes that the support from the parliamentary forum was pivotal for the continuation of the negotiations.

It was essential for Finland's role in the Arctic that the Finnish parliament was the hub of the cooperation between the Arctic parliaments for a long time, especially through the support of the Secretariat. On a political level, Canadian Clifford Lincoln took a visible role as the Chairman of the Standing Committee. Finnish parliamentarians did not receive an internationally high profile.

Of the Finnish parliamentarians of that time, Hannes Manninen, a member of the Centre Party from Tornio, played an active role in the country for promoting Finland's Arctic profile. However, he never took a more visible international role in these issues. Arctic publicity often requires the English language, just like many other arenas.

At the end of the 1990s, Lindström strived to promote the Trans-Atlantic Economic Society. The idea did not lead to desired results.

Lindström worked hard to create networks and to activate both major corporations and political channels in several countries. This may well have been the most significant Finnish Arctic initiative at the end of the 1990s, but because it never led to anything it was not commonly known.

He was lobbying for his idea in addition to his own work, and spoke to people at every turn. The interparliamentary work of the Nordic Council was complementary with the operations of the Arctic parliaments. Lindström had many Nordic contacts; especially the Icelandic ones were interested in his idea.

There were hardly any contacts with Russia, but many attempts at contact with North America, also with Washington in the US, but more in Canada. Lindström also often held conversations with the managers of major companies.

As a one-man operation, the matter did not progress very far. Lindström estimates now that the Arctic and its possibilities were not yet known at the time. Some sort of institutional support for the initiative would also have helped to promote the issue in practice.

Also required was a small secretariat, with a state or international organisation for organising round table meetings and networking events. There were no resources for one, however.

When it came to Russia the reality was not what Lindström and many others had assumed. The West believed that Russia wanted financial gain and hence economic cooperation with them, but Russia had its own agenda.

The idea for the Trans-Atlantic Society did not take flight. At that point, the Northern Dimension of the European Union was already strong and Lindström directed his contacts to the Business Council of the Northern Dimension. It still functions as part of the Northern Dimension operations, but these are completely different from what Lindström had in mind. It is mostly a Finnish-Russian network without a Trans-Atlantic connection.

When the idea for Trans-Atlantic Society was being launched, the Arctic Council was just finding its way and it would not have been a suitable cooperation partner. The Arctic Economic Council on the other hand came so late that its founding had no direct connection with the visions Lindström had at the end of the 1990s – even though the vision is the same, just on a pan Arctic scale.

In retrospect, Lindström highlights the importance of timing when making new pioneering initiatives: what seems self-evident to you, might not be for everyone. If the time is not right, matters will not advance.

A similar feeling was also experienced around 2015, when it had become clear that the initiative of an EU Arctic Information Centre that Finland had strongly promoted couldn't proceed further.

However, at the end of the 1990s, Finland also participated in an initiative that was a great success and left a permanent mark on the Arctic world. It was regarding an Arctic University and the University of the Arctic immediately got enough networks and institutions behind it.

The origins of the University of the Arctic have been described in their magazine *Shared Voices* in the 2017 issue.<sup>14, 15</sup> The idea was born in the beginning of 1997, within the Arctic Council Working Group (AMAP), and as it took flight on a broader scale, it was planted on the agendas and meeting tables of Senior Arctic Officials (SAO) at the end of the same year.

The Circumpolar Universities Association (CUA) had already been formed at the beginning of the 1990s. Esko Riepula, the Rector of the University of Lapland, had played an active role in its establishment. The CUA Secretariat was founded at the University of Lapland and its Secretary General became Outi Snellman, who then strongly participated in the establishment of the University of the Arctic and getting Ministers of Education from the Arctic countries behind the idea.

Snellman has acted as the Head of the UArctic International Secretariat in Rovaniemi since the beginning and together with Norwegian rector Lars Kullerud, has given a face to the networks of the University of the Arctic.

In making the cooperation a success, it was essential that the Finnish Ministry of Education and the University of Lapland committed to the funding of the Arctic University Secretariat at the University of Lapland. In addition to providing the location for the secretariat, Rovaniemi had in the beginning a central role in composing background reports and papers for the developing network. At the end, it was logical that the official establishment of the University of the Arctic took place in Rovaniemi during the Arctic Council meeting.

At this point, the University of the Arctic had received strong support from both the Arctic Council and the Arctic parliamentarians who held their meeting in Rovaniemi in August 2000. The founding of the University of the Arctic was scheduled to occur at the same time as the Senior Arctic Officials (SAO) meeting of the Arctic Council in June 2001. The tenth anniversary of the Rovaniemi Process was held also at the same days.

Finland then acted as the Chair of the Arctic Council for the first time and the timing could not have been better.

In 2018, the International Secretariat of the University of the Arctic still operates under the leadership of Outi Snellman at the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi, and Thematic Networks and a Research Liaison Office has been founded at the University of Oulu. The University of the Arctic in itself has expanded to a major international network that includes over 200 universities from both the Arctic Region and outside of it.

As a new form of action, the University of the Arctic has begun to organize big conferences, the second of which was held in Oulu and Helsinki in September 2018.

The University of the Arctic operations have significantly contributed to prioritising education as a thematic priority of the Finnish Arctic Council Chairmanship Programme in 2017–2019.

## THE FIRST ARCTIC CHAIRMANSHIP – TOWARDS A NEW AWAKENING

**AT THE END OF** the 1990s, Finland focused on the Northern Dimension, but was still involved in other projects. The Finnish Parliament ran the Secretariat for the Arctic Parliaments and the University of Lapland hosted the Secretariat for the University of the Arctic. They were not particularly visible for major audiences or even politicians, but had an important role in developing international Arctic cooperation. At the official level, the Foreign and Environmental Ministries were in charge of Arctic actions. Political involvement was less.

Finland was the first European country to have the Chairmanship role of the Arctic Council after Canada and the United States. Finland sent a minister to the Barrow Ministerial Meeting in 2000 for the Chairmanship transfer, and was the only country besides Iceland to do that. At the time, ministers did not fill Arctic Council meetings in their calendars.

In Barrow, on the Northern Coast of Alaska, the Arctic Council was still stuck in the time when it was more like a club for enthusiasts than an official international governing body. The meeting was held in a school gym and all the doors were open at all times. Only one member of the press was present: yours truly. The upcoming change in the current, very formal appearance of the Arctic Council was difficult, if not impossible to predict at the time.

However, matters were set in motion that sprouted seeds of change. If the Arctic Council could be compared to a start-up company, at that moment it made its investments wisely. The most important was the report on the effects of climate change on the Arctic Region: the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) that was made possible with the United States' initiative and funding. After some years, its results had a great influence on getting the world to notice what is going on in the Arctic Region.

We were on the edge of the world at the meeting. The biggest local event was that they had caught a whale (indigenous whaling is permitted) and its organs were now available. Their smell even attracted polar bears. Whale lard was cooked in the lodgings in school dormitories. However, the Arctic sea overlooking the town was full of slush, the scenery was grey, and signs of climate change were there. The importance of Arctic cooperation was increasing. During the Cold War, Barrow was one of the most important radar sites, but now people there were involved with completely different issues. No one thought about missiles flying over polar ice anymore.

Minister of Justice Johannes Koskinen represented Finland in Barrow. He was present because the long journey did not fit into the schedules of the Foreign or Environment ministers and Fin-

land had to have an attending minister to receive the Chairmanship. Also, in attendance was Peter Stenlund, who was subsequently ambassador to the Finnish Chairmanship. He has a background in domestic politics – before joining the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Stenlund was the Party Secretary for the Swedish People's Party – and Nordic cooperation. Later, he continued his career at the Embassy of Finland in Stockholm, as an ambassador in Norway and finally as the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, as the highest official in the ministry.

In the Finnish Chairmanship programme for the Arctic Council 2000–2002, there are elements that can be viewed as part of Finland's long-term Arctic policy. One of the key themes is to get a role for the European Union in Arctic cooperation.

According to the program: *“The European Commission would be a particularly valuable partner to the Arctic Council. According to the EU's Action Plan for the Northern Dimension, the Commission may create contacts with the Arctic Council in order to strengthen Arctic knowledge and co-operation. Also, Japan would be a good potential partner at the governmental level. As the Host Country of the Arctic Council, Finland will promote co-operation between the Council and the EU. The intention is to put this co-operation on a regular basis so that the Commission becomes a permanent Observer in the Council.”*<sup>16</sup>

The Northern Dimension was a natural and often introduced connection between the EU and the Arctic.

The first objective was increasing the international visibility of the Arctic Council. At the time, the Council operated without a permanent Secretariat – it was later established in Tromsø. The secretariat moved with the Chair and there was no institutionalised continuity. Finland had not yet pursued a permanent Secretariat, but better communications and a clearer role in relation to other regional cooperation bodies. The relationship between the Baltic Sea, Barents, Arctic Region, Northern Dimension and Nordic cooperation has been a long-running matter in Finland's north-related statements.

In addition, the program mentioned rationalising the Council's work and appraising the organisation. Even though the Arctic Council in itself was rather new, its most important structures stemmed from the Rovaniemi Process launched ten years earlier and old approaches were hard to change. A joint understanding of the changes among all countries is often not easy to achieve.

Part of Finland's first Chairmanship Program was related to the ongoing processes at the time, especially the ACIA report about the climate, but these issues were generally not Finland's responsibility.

With regard to sustainable development, the program admitted that it involved controversial discussions within the Arctic Council as different countries had different goals. For instance, especially the United States' policy differed from the others. An important policy priority during Finland's Chairmanship term was to organise an Arctic side event at the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. This was the first time Arctic issues were brought to global forums of the UN.

Especially during the term of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the UN tended to organise thematic summits all over the world. At Johannesburg the special theme was to continue the work of the famous Environment Meeting that had taken place in Rio a decade earlier. However, the interest had had time to fade.

The upcoming official founding of the University of the Arctic in Rovaniemi was prominently featured in the Chairmanship Program. It also mentioned another initiative that had strong connections with Finland: the Northern Research Forum (NRF).

The NRF is a forum that promotes Arctic research and discussion, and it is especially connected with Iceland. It also has a strong connection with Finland, because one of the individuals behind it, Lassi Heininen, has been a professor of Arctic Politics at the University of Lapland. He has been involved in Arctic matters since the beginning of the cooperation in the 1980s. The NRF continues its operations and has its Secretariat under the University of Akureyri. Perhaps the most visible form of operations for the NRF and the related Arctic University Thematic Network on Geopolitics and Security is the annual Arctic Yearbook publication, and Heininen has been its editor. He has also been among a number of other things organising the annual Calotte Academy that travels around the northern parts of Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia, and he has developed the model Arctic Council for students.

The situation of women, equality and youth cooperation were also themes for the first Arctic Chairmanship. In 2002, a conference on the situation of women in the Arctic was held in Saariselkä, Finland. These themes have not had much continuity in Finland's Arctic discussion and actions. The women of the Arctic were highlighted at the University of the Arctic Conference in September 2018 in Helsinki, thanks to the initiative of individual researchers, and the process continued at the Arctic Circle session in Reykjavik in October, when the possibility of an Arctic Women's Summit was discussed.

Instead, there has been continuity in the transport issues that Finland brought up in the program. Transport and logistics has become a permanent cornerstone of Finnish national Arctic policy, even though the Arctic Council does not discuss this except in the context of telecommunications and accessibility. In the Barents Region and the Northern Dimension they feature in a more concrete manner.

The program also included advancing information technology.

Other familiar themes from Finland's national discussion and later national Arctic strategies were also included, like tourism, forestry and reindeer husbandry. Part of the Arctic Chairmanship Program touched upon the contents of Barents cooperation and the boundaries of different forums were clearly not kept apart.

The role of the indigenous peoples was included, but in addition to that, regional cooperation and the interaction between the regions and the Council was introduced. As a way to achieve this, the program mentioned the Northern Forum, a forum created by the northern regions that has an observer role in the Arctic Council.

At the time, the Northern Forum was very active, and regions from North America, Nordic Countries and Russia were involved. Later its activities slowly decreased. The Finnish members, the Provinces of Lapland and Oulu, disappeared from the forum at the end of 2009 when the provinces were abolished. The counties that replaced them had a different role; they took over some international duties, like the membership of the Barents Regional Council and EU related regional development. Lapland has rejoined the Northern Forum as a Finnish member, but the only other Nordic member is Akureyri from Iceland and the focus for the remaining regions is on Siberia and Alaska. In the end, the Northern Forum did not get the extensive representative role it was supposed to have.

At the ministerial meeting that ended Finland's Chairmanship term in Saariselkä in October 2002, the floor was given to the Governor of Lapland, Hannele Pokka, who spoke for the regional voices in Arctic cooperation.

For its Chairmanship term, Finland had ordered a background analysis from a well-known researcher of Arctic cooperation, Oran Young, and the analysis was presented at the Meeting of Arctic Parliaments in Rovaniemi in August 2000.<sup>17</sup> In his text, Young extensively addresses



the existing structure of Arctic cooperation, its problems and solutions. Among other things, he warned that in the eyes of the inhabitants of the region, the Arctic Council might seem like a loop in a chain where the capitals control the Arctic regions.

This text was often referenced in the speeches during Finland's Chairmanship. It was mentioned by the Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja in the middle of the term<sup>18</sup> and Ambassador Peter Stenlund, at the Northern Forum meeting in Edmonton around the same time<sup>19</sup>.

According to Young, a closer relationship with the Northern Forum would remove several problems regarding the representation of regions. Stenlund noted in Edmonton that the structures of the Arctic Council do not have anything else to offer to the regions than an observer role for the Northern Forum.

Afterwards, when a large group of participants left the Northern Forum, the discussion on how the regions could participate in the Arctic cooperation has died out as well.

Both Tuomioja and Stenlund referenced the fact that Finland has regions, universities, cities and many other operators that have been committed through the unofficial contact group for Arctic affairs convened by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. This practice has later continued and extended to be an Arctic Advisory Board in the beginning of the 2010s after Finland's second Arctic awakening.

Majority of Tuomioja's mid-term review concerned globalisation, the guiding star of Finnish Foreign policy at the time and the favourite subject of both Tuomioja and President Tarja Halonen. Regarding the Arctic, Tuomioja's speech was more a description of ongoing developments than an attempt at seeking active initiatives of his own. This approach characterised Finland's Arctic policy for a long time.

In October 2002, at the end of its Chairmanship term, Finland organised the final ministerial meeting at the tourist resort of Saariselkä in the municipality of Inari in Lapland. One hotel was enough to accommodate all participants and no special security measures were needed. In addition to the meeting's host, Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja, ministers from Canada, Sweden and Iceland were in attendance and the media attention was mostly local. In total, there were 260 participants, 23 of which represented the media.

For comparison, the preparations for the 2019 Meeting of Ministers in Rovaniemi include reserving an entire ice hockey arena for the meeting, and at least 100 journalists are expected to attend.

At the ministerial meeting, Tuomioja's speech covered matters that were ongoing in the Arctic Council and Northern cooperation, especially from the viewpoints of sustainable development and climate change<sup>20</sup>.

The top priorities on the agenda for Saariselkä were the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) led and developed by the US and the proposed Arctic Human Development Report. Neither of those were supposed to be completed during Finland's term.

The declaration arising out of the meeting included issues that Finland obviously considered important: closer cooperation with the European Commission and shifting focus to the Northern Dimension, its new Action Programme and Arctic window. In addition, strengthening cooperation with the Nordic Council of Ministers, and Barents Euro-Arctic Council and Council of the Baltic Sea States were also included. Finland had consistently brought this up. Other issues important to Finland like the Northern Forum, University of the Arctic and Arctic parliaments were also mentioned.

Iceland took over the Chairmanship after Finland and this meant that Finland's political leaders could at least for the time being forget about the Arctic cooperation and focus on the

Northern Dimension. Finland's Arctic policy was moved to the sidelines for years after the first Arctic Council Chairmanship.

Political attention towards the Arctic had been somewhat missing for many years, all the way up to 2009, when Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb had a wake-up call at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Tromsø.

Not that they have not completed the necessary tasks. Apart from one meeting, Finland has attended every Arctic Council meeting on a ministerial level. In 2011, the government situation was so delicate that they could not send a minister to attend. The number of Finnish Arctic officials was kept to a minimum, but they have always participated in Arctic meetings and working groups. After Arctic Ambassador Stenlund led the Chairmanship, a new Arctic Ambassador was not appointed, and matters were handled at the level of lower officials. Finland no longer proposed any Arctic political initiatives.

At the same time, matters in the Arctic Council finally took off. It was primarily because of the ACIA report on Arctic climate that was completed and published during 2004.

The work had started with the initiative of the United States and it was included in the programme at the Ministerial Meeting in Barrow in October 2000. Researcher Robert Corell took the lead on the project. He had strong networks both among the Arctic climate researchers and within the inner circles of the Democratic party. At the time, the Vice President was Al Gore, who had made inflammatory statements on climate change – although he focused on them only after he had lost the presidential election to George W. Bush in March 2000.

President George W. Bush came to power after Bill Clinton and his climate policies were very different from those of his predecessors. Nevertheless, the United States continued to fund the ACIA project and the report was published in autumn 2004, first at the Meeting of Arctic Parliaments in Greenland and then at the Arctic Council Meeting in Reykjavik.

Formatting the policy recommendations met with some politics, but the results of a thousand-page report were enough to raise attention on their own. An understanding had started to spread throughout the world that Arctic climate change is not just fast, but also serious and it has global consequences, such as increased melting of the Greenland ice sheet and the resulting sea level rise.

Spreading the knowledge of Arctic climate change also brought about an Arctic paradox that we are now very familiar with: when the Arctic sea ice melts, the resources in the area are easier to exploit and the new sea routes through the North become more realistic. At the same time, the question of who owns the Arctic maritime regions and who can exploit them started to be more than just an academic debate. That started talks on the expansion of the continental shelf, which would matter when the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) starts sorting out the rights of Arctic maritime powers. All Arctic countries, apart from the United States, are part of the convention.

In the situation, Russia started to examine the extensions of their continental shelf as well and in its opinion, one of its boundaries reaches the North Pole.

In 2007, a national hero and a good friend to the Kremlin, Artur Chilingarov, began his polar expedition. He commanded a Mir submersible, a pressurised orb that can make exceptionally challenging deep dives and Russia is the only country to own one. Two of these vessels exist and both were built in Finland. The former Rauma-Repola company developed a groundbreaking technology already in the 1980s that was envisioned to become a huge business. Two deep-sea submersibles were delivered to the Soviet Union in 1987.

They were so great, actually, that they were the last ones to be made. It was the time of the Cold War and the United States had prohibition domestically and for its allies on the export of advanced technology to the Soviet Union. These diving orbs were exactly that kind of advanced technology.

The submersible and the trade fired the CIA's imagination about what the Soviet Union could do to the submarine communication cables at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. A strong diplomatic and commercial pressure begun, which led to the discontinuation of the submersibles and the orbs, and these were no longer exported anywhere. At the time, all this happened behind the scenes but later the events have become public in Finland.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, two vehicles were already in the Soviet Union and they scoured the trenches in both the Lake Baikal and in the oceans. They also visited the wreckage of RMS Titanic, and in the summer of 2007, Chilingarov dived to the bottom of the sea under the North Pole with one of the submersibles. He brought a titanium flag of Russia with him that was mounted to the bottom and photographed. Russia sent good footage of the event for international distribution.

The international media used the material freely and a 13-year-old boy from Kemi, Waltteri Seretin, saw the footage as well. He thought there was something familiar about it: it was the same footage as was shown at the beginning of James Cameron's famous movie *Titanic*. The Russian media had cut corners to make up for the fact that there was not enough authentic footage from below the surface. It was a big scandal. Waltteri Seretin, who contacted the Finnish tabloid *Ilta-Sanomat* got a Bonnier journalism award in 2007 for his discovery together with the team at *Ilta-Sanomat*.

Planting the Russian flag at the bottom of the sea under the North Pole was a symbolic, easy-to-understand gesture that caused huge international waves. Even now, internet search engines find a great number of media hits on the subject. The governments took notice as well. All capitals understand very well what flags mean in places where they have not been before. The international media started to talk about a race to the Arctic and the possibility of military conflicts – issues that the Arctic actors had not foreseen, but which were now turning into headlines. All eyes turned north, and that is where they have stayed ever since.

In May 2008, the ministers and representatives of the five Arctic coastal states – the United States, Canada, Norway, Denmark and Russia – met in Ilulissat, Greenland, to discuss Arctic matters without the Arctic Council structures<sup>22</sup>. For Finland this meant development that went against the country's objectives and this also partly woke the country up after a long pause.

During 2008, the European Union began to prepare for the first Arctic communication, which was then published in November.<sup>23</sup> This meant that the EU was now for the first time seriously considering its own Arctic policy, and this was also noticed in Finland.

This was the situation when Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Stubb left for Tromsø in May 2009 to participate in an Arctic Council Meeting of Ministers. Finland's new Arctic awakening took place there and the person who awoke was Foreign Minister Stubb himself.

I was also present as a reporter in Tromsø and summed up the starting points of the meeting for Finland in an editorial article in newspaper *Kaleva* as follows<sup>24</sup>:

***“The climate issue clearly increases the value of the Arctic Council. It is high time for Finland to strengthen its own foreign policy in the North.*”**

*Bubbling in the middle of an open sea. Inflammable gas from a hole in the snow. These images depicting global warming and the release of the greenhouse gas methane were presented by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Al Gore to the Foreign Ministers of the Arctic Region in*

*Tromsø, and it seems like they got the message. The meeting of the Arctic Council was now more politically valuable than ever.*

*The reason for that is in both climate change itself and Norway's Minister of Foreign Affairs Jonas Gahr Støre's sense of expediency. He had persuaded Gore to come to Tromsø and made the routine meeting of the Council a process that could truly affect the climate negotiations of the UN.*

*Alarmingly, the ongoing change has been faster than what the models from a few years ago predicted even in the worst-case scenarios. Arctic sea ice was expected to completely disappear during the summer by the middle of the century. Now the time frame has shortened to five years. These are the changes that Gore says, are a threat to civilisation.*

*The Arctic meeting held in Tromsø received brand new research results on the considerable effects that microparticles, soot and methane have on the climate. If it is possible to get these issues to the agenda of the December meeting in Copenhagen, which is very possible, Arctic cooperation will already have global significance.*

*The value of the Arctic Council is clearly on the rise, but the Council itself is structurally weak. Just before the meeting in Tromsø, University of Lapland professor Timo Koivurova published a book that criticises the fragmentation of governance in the Arctic Region and the resulting difficulties in facing challenges. There are no fast solutions in sight for this. More likely, there is a danger that the coastal states on the region take action that excludes the other states like Finland from the matters.*

*The cooperation's difficulties are apparent in the fact that the Council could not accept new observers, like the EU Commission – which is already in the Barents Council – and China. Canada's objection can be explained by the anger of the indigenous peoples towards the EU's seal policy. Russia was probably more worried about the role of China than the EU. Nevertheless, these memberships are still being decided, but this would have been the time for decisions.*

*Støre became one of the most internationally known Nordic politicians through his strong northern policies. His way of operating shows that the weaknesses in the structures of Arctic cooperation can be bypassed with skilled action.*

*For a long time in Finnish politics, a focus on the north from the Baltic Sea upwards has been next to invisible, excluding the trade policies that have shown signs of life.*

*The recent Foreign Ministers Erkki Tuomioja, Ilkka Kanerva and Alexander Stubb have mainly dealt with necessary routines and kept the Northern Dimension alive. A possible desire for more has not been evident in practice. Finland's last initiative or activity, like the Arctic environmental protection cooperation or conceiving the Northern Dimension, was years ago.*

*Moreover, Finnish politicians have not played a part in the EU's recent activities on Arctic matters either. Because of Finland's invisibility, others have handled the issues over Finland's head."*

During that time, Stubb was the prodigy of Finnish politics, after a year of being the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Before that, he was a very popular Member of the European Parliament, whom the Coalition Party Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen surprisingly appointed Foreign Minister, when Stubb's predecessor Ilkka Kanerva had to resign due to scandals regarding his personal life.

In Tromsø, Stubb sat his eyes glued to the wide screen, when the new Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Al Gore showed pictures and charts on climate change developments. The attendees in the meeting could actually see how Stubb had a sudden awakening on the Arctic, which has been one of the cornerstones of Finnish Foreign Policy ever since. In Stubb's words, it was the "A8+ Group", which meant the eight Arctic countries and the indigenous peoples.

## FULL SPEED AHEAD TO A NEW BEGINNING

**ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2009**, Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb arrived in Rovaniemi to the twentieth anniversary of the Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland. There was a celebratory mood at the end of the glass tube in Arktikum's Polarium auditorium. This is the same architecturally impressive building where Paavo Lipponen had launched his idea of a Northern Dimension of the European Union twelve years earlier.

After a long silence, it was time for new initiatives and this time they would focus on Rovaniemi as much as Finland, and also the European Union. It was not a coincidence that these would be presented now.

The origins of the Arctic Centre and the Arktikum building are a fascinating story about Finland's Arctic attitude long before the Rovaniemi Process was even an idea. At the time, the Arctic was mostly present in the thoughts of the cultural crowd, ethnologists and natural scientists. It was a vision that was well ahead of its time and that somehow became reality.

Already in the beginning of the 1970s, a discussion had started in the academic circles in Finland about establishing a special Arctic Institute. At the beginning, talks circled around Oulu and the University of Oulu, but they did not result in anything. At the end of the 1970s the discussions became more tangible. The idea back then was about an Arctic institute on the lines of the Arctic Research Centre established by anthropologist Jean Malaurie in France in 1958.

In the cultural circles of the capital, the European Cultural Foundation Finland was the leading spirit of the initiative. Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education Jaakko Numminen was also well versed with the project. In 1979, the University of Lapland had been established in Rovaniemi.

The idea of an Arctic Institute made headway later. The European Cultural Foundation Finland started to promote the Finnish idea of an Arctic museum in honour of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Cultural Foundation. The museum would also be the Centre of Arctic research and information. Thus launched an ambitious national project on Northern culture, history and identity, long before a political Arctic awakening. The city of Rovaniemi got on-board, because the Regional Museum of Lapland needed a new venue.

The original starting point for the European Cultural Foundation Finland was an independent international institute. After several new developments, the idea took off, but under

the Ministry of Education and as a part of the University of Lapland. In addition, the city of Rovaniemi and the Regional Museum of Lapland joined the planning as well and some local politicians with their own agendas entered the discussion. Not everyone in Rovaniemi appreciated the idea of a glass tube being built on the flooding shore of Ounasjoki River. The now iconic landmark represents modern Nordic design.

In the beginning of the 1980s, to select architects who would build the museum, an international architecture competition was organised for participants from the Northern countries. The design of a group led by Danish Claus Bonderup won the competition and the design is now known as the Arktikum building.<sup>25</sup> Lennart Meri, who would later become the President of Estonia, participated in the competition as a member of an Estonian working group with their castle-like proposal.

In 1987, a decision was made to make the planned building Finland's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary project. This made it possible for the project to continue, and the exhibition part of the building was completed in 1992, the year of the anniversary. In the first stage, the Arktikum building received an Arctic Centre exhibition and the Regional Museum of Lapland. The office building with its working spaces was finished a couple of years later.

The Arctic Centre that is located in the Arktikum was established in 1989, under the administration of the University of Lapland. Its mission according to the act was to *“provide information services or research on the nature, culture, economy and technology relating to the Arctic and Northern regions and organise exhibitions relating to these fields and practise and promote research, education and international cooperation in these fields.”*<sup>26</sup>

At the time of its establishment at the end of the 1980s, major international and national tasks were planned for the Arctic Centre. In 1989, several newspaper comments noted disgreeably the plan to build a hotel for 200 hundred people on the same property: it would take up space from the future development and cultural and scientific activities of the Arctic Centre.

In hindsight, a conference hotel would probably have been a great help to the Arctic Centre, because it could have diversified the Centre's functions considerably. However, the plans never amounted to anything. Much later, the big Metsähallitus (the Finnish Forest Administration) building Pilke was built on the same plot.

Nevertheless, the framework was in excellent condition and the Arktikum immediately became a significant attraction and meeting place. The first years of the activities of the Arctic Centre were however marked with the fast changing of directors and the instability that brought. This was because of many different reasons, like resource issues and the conflicting expectations of different actors.

The situation stabilised, when the former Arctic official of the Finnish Ministry of Environment Paula Kankaanpää, who also participated in the latter part of the Rovaniemi Process, joined as the director of the Arctic Centre in 2000. She was the longest running director of the Centre (until 2015). In 2008, she read what had been written in the new Arctic communication of the EU: *“Explore – together with the Nordic countries – possibilities for creating a European Arctic Information Centre.”*<sup>27</sup>

Why could the Arctic Centre in Rovaniemi not be a centre like this? There was a lot of Arctic research happening, an Arctic Science Centre, library and information services. A similar centre could not be found anywhere else.

The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Arctic Centre was approaching. Finland's new University Act caused confusion on the role and funding of the Arctic Centre thereon. The European Union

did not have any other research institutes on the Arctic Region and the University of Lapland was and still is the northernmost university in the European Union.

It was a good time to take initiative. The anniversary of the Arctic Centre became the perfect occasion for the launch of a new initiative. Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb delivered a policy speech<sup>28</sup>, which signalled a beginning for Finland's new Arctic activity and announced that Finland would start devising its first Arctic Strategy. Professor Paula Kankaanpää on the other hand announced that the Arctic Centre strives to be the Arctic information centre of the EU.

These two initiatives had an obvious converging point. Throughout the years, Finland's Arctic policy had a clear course: strengthening the Arctic Council and the role of the European Union. The idea of EU's Arctic Information Centre in Rovaniemi alligned perfectly with Finland's goals.

This was the time when the building blocks of Finland's Arctic policy began to turn. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs raised the status of the Arctic by appointing an Arctic Ambassador for Finland. The position was given to Hannu Halinen, a veteran diplomat who had just returned from Cairo and had experience, for example, from Baltic Sea cooperation.

One of the first issues to be resolved was devising Finland's official Arctic Strategy. Finland mobilised a little late, because six of the eight Arctic countries had devised their own Arctic strategies. There was no time to waste. The government organised a task force consisting of different ministries to prepare the strategy in February 2010 and it was supposed to be ready in June the same year. Soon after, they also appointed an Arctic Advisory Board to Finland, which represented several different actors.

The definition for the mandate was clear: Finland's strategy would focus on foreign relations. The resulting Arctic Strategy gives a sense of Finland's expectations and views.<sup>29</sup>

The text assigns a lot of value to the economic expectations of the Barents Region and especially Northwest Russia. It also suggests that the Murmansk branch office of the Finnish consulate general in St. Petersburg would be turned into a full-fledged consulate general – an idea that was quietly abandoned.

A majority of the strategy text described the environmental and economic framework and tools of Arctic policy. The Barents cooperation and Northern Dimension were strongly featured. For example, there were great expectations from the new Northern Dimension Business Council as a promoter of major transport infrastructure projects. Altogether, a great deal of attention was paid to different kinds of economic opportunities and the evaluation of the pressures on the environment. This duality has constantly characterised the Arctic discussion in Finland. A primary reason for this is that the different ministries get their own views through in these documents rather directly. This translates to one part of the text appraising economic opportunities and the other focussing on environmental protection issues. A synthesis is achieved by balancing the prospects of a developing economy with the preconditions of the environment.

At the time, all actions relating to the North were managed through the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Soon the matters were divided so that Arctic cooperation was given to the Department for Europe and Barents and the Northern Dimension were left with the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Inside the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, this was proof of change in thinking about the Arctic.

In the strategy, the emphasis on the EU was strong and the promotion of the Arctic information centre in Rovaniemi made into it.

Finland wanted to develop the Arctic Council as a forum also for strategic Arctic discussion. They had two proposals for this: regular deputy ministerial level meetings and a special Arctic Summit. Neither of these came true, but the President has later returned to the subject of the Summit.

In 2010, the term of President Tarja Halonen was ending and she apparently never mentioned the Arctic Summit. The Chairmanship for the Arctic Council was also not with Finland, so Finland could not easily have organised any such meetings.

It was mostly Foreign Minister Stubb's own idea that he started optimistically bringing forth. In June 2010, he proposed an Arctic Summit when talking at a NATO seminar held in Finland's parliament<sup>30</sup>. Stubb's idea was that the Arctic Summit be held specifically in Rovaniemi.

Arctic Ambassador Hannu Halinen said in November 2010 in an YLE interview that he believes the Summit would be held in Rovaniemi during Sweden's Chairmanship term and that the member countries of the Arctic Council agree on the need for a meeting. Halinen did not specify why the Summit would be held in Finland during Sweden's term<sup>31</sup>.

In January 2011, Stubb admitted in an interview for YLE that the true spirit for an Arctic Summit is fading: "It is possible that if the Summit is organised, there will be jealousy between the countries on where it should be held. The idea was ours, however, so let's see where it goes during the next few months or the next year or two"<sup>32</sup>.

The Arctic Council ministerial meeting in Nuuk in May 2011 would have offered a good opportunity for lobbying in the halls, because for the first time, the United States Foreign Minister Hillary Clinton was also present. However, Finland had to be in an Arctic Council meeting without a minister for the first time. The government negotiations after the elections that spring were long and arduous, and the country did not have a politically functioning government. Stubb continued in the new government as well, but was no longer a foreign minister, and the Arctic Summit seemed to be forgotten.

The government programme of Jyrki Katainen released after the government negotiations in spring 2011 was exceptionally long and detailed. A concrete objective listed was getting an "Arctic centre of the EU" to Rovaniemi. This meant an EU Arctic information centre, and reaching for it had fast become the Finnish Arctic agenda. And there it stayed until 2014, when the decision was transferred to the EU, and they never returned to it.

The idea of an EU Arctic information centre that was raised in the Commission's Communication in 2008 had not been lobbied by Finland, but most likely came from Norway. The Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland was the first to make a practical initiative, however, and it had a clear advantage on its side: Finland, unlike Norway, was a member of the EU. It was a concrete matter that could easily get the support of the Finnish government – as long as there was no talk of financial commitments.

The proposal had to be put in practice as well. There was a need to define what the EU Arctic Information Centre would be and what it would do. Paula Kankaanpää had the instinct that a new individual operation in Rovaniemi would not get through in Brussels. An international network might have a shot however and its headquarters and coordination point could be in Rovaniemi.

The Arctic Centre began to contact European Arctic research centres and institutes working on Arctic information. The idea was picked up at several places and in the end, they had a network of almost 20 institutions all over Europe. In the planning meetings, the participants had varying expectations, but they converged on a joint starting point: answering to the Eu-



ropean Union's Arctic information needs. Parliamentarian Hannes Manninen managed to organise funding for the preparations of the project in the Finnish parliament and in the European Parliament the Finnish MEP's in particular were very active. Others warmed up for the project as well, like Diana Wallis, a British representative of the liberal democratic group of the EU Parliament and a vice president of the Parliament, who even visited Rovaniemi.

Finally, a high-level representative of the EU's Foreign Policy Catherine Ashton also arrived in Rovaniemi together with Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja in spring 2012. She spoke positively about the project in Arktikum, but was careful not to promise anything. The same was repeated in all the Arctic documents that the EU institutions started producing. The idea of an information centre was mentioned, but no one was responsible for it.

While waiting for the Commission to decide, Finland got time to emphasize the idea of EU's Arctic Information Centre also in the new Arctic Strategy that was drafted just a couple of years after the first one, and approved by the Finnish parliament in summer 2013.

A MEP from the Finnish Centre Party Anneli Jäätteenmäki managed to push through a Commission funded preparatory initiative, which would, through the "Strategic environmental impact assessment of the development of the Arctic", test the kind of information the international network behind the Arctic information centre could produce. Funding for a million euros kick-started an extensive project at the beginning of 2013. Hearings were held, data was compiled and produced, reports were prepared and the functionality of the network model was evaluated.

The final seminar of this project was held on 21 September 2014 in Brussels, where the Commission also received an extensive assessment report on the Arctic from the viewpoint of the EU's functions<sup>33</sup>. In a short period, the project had managed to produce a large number of Arctic analyses for the EU and there was comprehensive international representation at the final seminar. The Commission promised to return to the matter within six months.

However, nothing concrete was heard from the Commission and eventually it was discovered that the Commission did not want to pursue the matter. There was support from the European Parliament, but no pressure from the governments. The Commission feared both permanent expenditure and a precedent that would create pressure for establishing other geographical or thematic information centres. In addition, the Arctic issues were divided in the Commission's directorate generals and clear responsibilities did not exist. In the end, the matter might have looked too focused on Finland, and the concept of a possible information centre was not clear for everyone. Additionally, the proposed network-like operating model had been constructed in a way that had no precedent in Brussels.

The Arctic information centre had the same fate as the Arctic economic forum proposed by Guy Lindström ten years earlier: the time was not right, and when it eventually was, the original initiative was gone and matters started progressing through different means.

From Rovaniemi perspective, an EU Arctic information centre would serve an obvious and apparent need, but the Commission had a hard time connecting it with its own thought patterns and operating models. Gradually, the network behind the information centre disbanded. Many ideas and operations that came up during the process have been later realised through separate projects and actors.

The Arctic Centre has continued its work as an international institute with 60–70 employees, focusing on Arctic research and Arctic science communications. Practically, it functions as Finland's Arctic Information Centre. Over a hundred thousand people visit the Arktikum exhibitions every year and the Centre organizes biannual Rovaniemi Arctic Spirit conferences.

## “THE LEADING ARCTIC ACTOR”

**THE GOVERNMENT OF JYRKI** Katainen that started working in 2011 was the first to consistently consider the Arctic role of Finland in relation to both domestic operations and the international environment. In October 2012 the government outlined Arctic policy visions, which formed the basis for the creation of a new Arctic Strategy for the country only two years after the first one<sup>34</sup>. The lead role was given to Arctic Ambassador Hannu Halinen.

The core idea behind the push then and what has come to define Finnish Arctic operations ever since is this – the whole of Finland is an Arctic country. It brought along a slew of new issues. The definition includes business, expertise, international cooperation, the northernmost parts of Finland as well as a general strengthening of the country’s Arctic status and working for sustainable development in the Arctic.

There are several international definitions for the Arctic Region depending on the intended use. By any international or scientific definition the whole of Finland is not Arctic. The Arctic border is on the polar circle or the southern border of the region of Lapland and in natural sciences it is all the way up to the northernmost part of Lapland or even completely beyond Finland.

However, we cannot place a sign anywhere that says: You are now arriving in the Arctic Region. The Arctic has also come to be seen as a state of mind.

When talking about the whole of Finland as an Arctic country, Finland is not coming up with new international definitions for the Arctic Region. Nevertheless, Finland has often reminded that over a third of the people living above the 60<sup>th</sup> parallel north – which goes through the southern coast of Finland – are Finnish.

What it essentially means is that the whole of Finland has its own Arctic interests. It becomes apparent especially in defining its economic interests and “expertise”, research and development investments.

A good example is that the head office of the Finnish icebreaking company Arctia, and the home port for the icebreakers is located in the heart of Helsinki, next to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Helsinki also has a dock that manufactures Arctic vessels, and other significant Arctic maritime technology companies and Arctic research units.

The policies of Katainen’s government emphasised the Arctic role of Finland generally. Activities other than at a general level were left to actual strategy work. A working group consisting of representatives from all ministries was added to the work led by the Foreign Ministry, and these different ministries started making policies and listing their own Arctic goals.

The result was a huge pile of varying goals. Depending on the ministry branch, the outline was either to promote the economic interests or sustainable development and environmental issues. The strengthening of the Arctic role of the EU, a core objective for Finland, was also included. Until now, Arctic matters had been systematically considered only in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment, but now all ministries were included and all had some activity relating to the North or the Arctic. In addition, the process awakened different ministries to evaluate their activities in this regard.

In strategy work and in the editing process, this collection of interests was shaped to be a uniform entity but the work itself and objectives were not viewed in relation to each other. Additionally, the government did not commit to any new resources and everything was to be implemented within existing appropriation.

The new Arctic Strategy included dozens of goals and tasks from different administrative sectors, and practically everything that Finland as an Arctic country does or strives to do was listed in it. In this composition, the text received a descriptive rather than a guiding role.

Devising the strategy was undertaken in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, but the Prime Minister’s Office also heavily participated and their role was new compared to Finland’s previous Arctic operations. The Arctic Advisory Board that was established along with the first Arctic strategy gathered all kinds of Arctic actors together also from industry, regions and universities, and that work was led by the State Secretary to the Prime Minister. The purpose of establishing this mode of operation was to offer a discussion and information sharing forum as well as raise the profile of the Arctic to a comprehensive national issue, when previously it was mainly the Foreign Ministry’s problem.

The strategy was handed to the parliament on 2nd October 2013 as the announcement of Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen <sup>35</sup>, his speech sums up the dilemma with the environment and economy again.

First, Katainen addressed Arctic climate change, its effects and how important it is to address it. After that he continued: “The otherwise unfortunate melting of the ice sheets opens opportunities for Finland. (...) The Arctic Region attracts a considerable amount of investments from all around the world, which provides a strong demand for the Finnish expertise in Arctic conditions. The joint volume of projects planned for the Arctic regions of Finland, Sweden and Norway as well as the Kola Peninsula is estimated to reach 100 billion euros in the upcoming decades. This creates significant opportunities for new Finnish jobs.”

He also summarised Finland’s objective in a way that makes the emphasis very clear: “Finland’s goal is to increase growth and competitiveness while respecting the environment.”

Pursuing growth was now clearly stated as a priority in Finland’s national Arctic policy. It is mentioned in two reports published in 2015: the joint report by the governments of Finland, Sweden and Norway: *Growth from the North* and the overview by Paavo Lipponen for the Confederation of Finnish Industries: (EK) *A Strategic Vision for the North – Finland’s prospects for economic growth in the Arctic region.* <sup>36, 37</sup>

The *Growth from the North* report was a rare example of Nordic cross-border thinking. The Prime Ministers of Norway, Sweden and Finland gave an investigative mission to the rector of the University of Tromsø Anne Husebekk, the governor of Västerbotten County Magdalena Andersson and the CEO of Finland Chamber of Commerce Risto E. J. Penttilä in April 2014.

The group found four Nordic drivers for the sustainable growth of the Arctic: liquefied natural gas, green mining operations, tourism development and the expertise on ice conditions

and cold climate. To promote these they found four tools: easing the regulations of cross-border cooperation, joint policies on education, joint advancements in infrastructure and common policy objectives in some Arctic issues.

The report was published in the Arctic Frontiers conference in August 2015 in Tromsø, but it did not create any further joint actions. However, it mentioned cooperation to get the northern routes included in the important TEN-T transport network of the EU and that has been topical later as well, especially between Finland and Sweden.

The CEO of the Finland Chamber of Commerce was devising the *Growth from the North* report. The Confederation of Finnish Industries published another report a little later. Thus, the biggest advocacy groups of the Finnish industry and economy had their eyes on the Arctic.

The EK had cultivated the former Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen for the task. He was remembered for his Northern Dimension initiative and still had an exceptional amount of authority and contacts. Lipponen already had a lot on his plate at the time; he was also devising a memo for the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker that was published in September 2015, and the subject was an ambitious Arctic and northern policy for the EU<sup>38</sup>.

In the EK report, Lipponen did not even try to hide the matter under environmental issues: “The Arctic region can develop into Europe’s largest area of investment. It is estimated that investments worth about EUR 140 billion are planned in the Barents region alone. Finland now has a window of opportunity to ensure that we will get our share of northern economic growth”.

These billion-euro estimates repeated in different reports are usually from the yearbook published alongside the Arctic Business Forum organised by the Lapland Chamber of Commerce. The yearbook lists the planned investments in Finland, Sweden, the northern parts of Norway and the Murmansk and Arkhangelsk regions. The numbers are exceptionally huge. Some of the plans have become realised or are being realised, the fate of others is still open, and some have been left on paper.

The discussion on major investments into the future of the North is familiar in Finland from the early years of the Barents cooperation.

The central argument for Lipponen’s EK report was that the government and industry together should better define the central goals of the northern policy. He also set an objective for Finland to achieve a leading role in the EU’ policy on the Arctic and northern regions.

Altogether, Lipponen listed a vast number of concrete proposals. Already at this stage, the Arctic railway was recurrently mentioned in Finland’s Arctic documents, but only as a possibility. Lipponen considered the communications cable between Europe and Asia through the North particularly important.

Similar themes were present in the memo that Lipponen drafted for Juncker. Its key message was to strengthen the EU’s Arctic role in all fronts, including the Barents Region and the Northern Dimension. Two individual points in the memo received extra attention: the railway from Finland to the Arctic Ocean (from Rovaniemi to Kirkenes) should be made an EU-level matter and that in the work against climate change in the Arctic Region, the focus should be primarily on black carbon and reducing its emissions.

These two themes that Lipponen brought up so strongly have later surfaced again, not so much at the EU-level where the memo was directed, but in Finland.

The new government’s Minister for Transport and Communications, Anne Berner launched the first concrete investigations on the Arctic railway project and began to lobby hard in both Sweden and the EU to get Northern European transport initiatives to be a part of the European TEN-T networks.

Black carbon, or soot, on the other hand became a theme that President Sauli Niinistö picked up and has leaned on to start lobbying his idea of an Arctic Summit before the end of Finland’s Chairmanship term.

The Finnish government changed after the parliamentary elections in 2015, and the new three-party right-wing government of Juha Sipilä started in the beginning of May.

Updating the Arctic Strategy in the new government term was ahead and official preparations had already been made at the end of the previous term. At the end of 2015, the government commissioned report *Growth from the North* and the *A Strategic Vision for the North* report by Lipponen were at hand. The contents of both these reports were considered when the strategy update started. The Prime Minister’s Office coordinated the work and the civil servants responsible for Arctic affairs from different ministries participated as well.

Nothing explicit about the Arctic was written in the government programme, but in the updated strategy the objective was to summarise the Arctic policy during the government term. This was achieved by leaving the 2013 strategy in effect, but putting more focus on few individual issues. Business-orientation was central in the work, as it was emphasised in both 2015 reports. In addition, the content creators reviewed the EU’s Arctic Communication from April 2016 closely.

The issue was discussed at the beginning of 2016 among civil servants responsible for Arctic affairs and it even crossed the government’s desk until it was brought to the government’s strategy session at the end of September. Instead of the previous dozens of pages long strategy, what came out was a concise three-page document that strives to increase Finland’s growth and competitiveness while respecting the Arctic environment <sup>39</sup>.

International cooperation is strongly emphasised in the document and the goal is big: “The Government’s objective is to ensure that Finland is a leading actor in international Arctic policy, both in the EU and globally.” In addition, Finland is featured as a key producer of Arctic solutions.

However, global Arctic leadership is not explained further. The matters of particular attention are Arctic expertise, sustainable tourism and infrastructure solutions. The infrastructure solutions reference the current reports and individual projects are not commented upon.

A concrete action plan was promised as a result of the updated strategy and it was published in March 2017 <sup>40</sup>. It included a significantly smaller number of individual matters than the 2013 strategy and the measures were divided into four groups: Arctic foreign and EU policy, commercialisation of Arctic expertise, sustainable tourism and infrastructure.

In foreign policy, the idea was to use Finland’s upcoming Chairmanship of the Arctic Council to build our country image and making our Arctic expertise known. The EU should also pay more attention to the Arctic Region. For Finland, it was also a question of full exploitation of EU funding possibilities important to regional development policy.

In addition, the text mentions bilateral Arctic partnerships between Finland and Norway and Finland and Russia that were built both ways and with high hopes some years earlier. In practice, they are left without any substantial implications. The action plan feebly states that we are “looking for ways” to make the partnerships concrete.

The infrastructure section included many internal Finnish matters, but it also establishes a goal to start building the telecommunications cable that connects Europe and Asia by early 2019. The cable along the Northeast Passage has gotten little international attention, but out of Finland’s projects, it is one of the most concrete.

The Arctic railway is only mentioned in passing, saying it is kept alive in bilateral discussions. However, it has become the symbol of concrete Arctic actions during Sipilä’s government.

Foreign Minister Timo Soini leads the Arctic Council and has kept up the Chairmanship, however without any initiatives of his own. Prime Minister Juha Sipilä's Arctic statements have also been mainly routine and without any new openings. Transport Minister Anne Berner (Centre party) on the other hand took the Arctic transport aspect quite seriously, primarily the Arctic railway.

The idea of a railway through Finland to the Arctic Ocean is not a novel one. It has been part of discussions for about a hundred years.<sup>41</sup> The railway was built up to Rovaniemi in 1909. In the Peace treaty of Tartu in 1920, Finland received the area of Petschenga (Petsamo) with access to the Arctic Ocean and planning for a railway from Rovaniemi to the north soon followed. Nothing concrete could be achieved before the Second World War, which resulted in Finland losing Petsamo and access to the Arctic Ocean. Appropriations for the plan had been made just before the Winter War, and in peacetime, the work could have proceeded fast.

After the wars, actual discussions on the matter were not held until the Arctic regions and Arctic waters started opening and major new projects and new global sea routes started appearing in the horizon. In Lapland, certain regional actors started writing brochures and making videos about the Rovaniemi-Kirkenes railway and engaging with Asian investors already in the 2010s. This was not part of national activity and the state did not take any measures before Berner. As a mention, the Arctic railway began appearing in various Arctic texts and discussion started in Lapland on what would be the best route for the railway: western route through Kilpisjärvi towards Tromsø, northern route through Sodankylä and Ivalo to Kirkenes or the eastern route from Salla to the east and connected with the Murmansk railway in Russia.

While Finnish discussion on the railway was on the rise, it also started appearing in new international maps depicting global routes. A discussion started in Finland on a possible Helsinki–Tallinn railway tunnel that would open the connection from Central Europe to the Arctic Ocean, if everything goes according to plan.

The Arctic railway was also brought up in discussions with Asian countries, especially China's interest in the Arctic. It was often visible in maps and presentations that discussed China's Belt and Road initiative. From Finland's point of view, these two matters have a clear distinction: the Arctic railway does not connect with China's global endeavours, but is an initiative about Finland's own global position. Finland joining the new Silk Road initiative of China has not been brought up in Finnish forums.

The Minister of Transport and Communications Anne Berner issued an information request in July 2017 on the execution of the possible Arctic railway project and policies for it. The report was made in collaboration with Norway and completed in March 2018. It ended up abandoning all other alternatives except the Rovaniemi–Kirkenes route. A new task force was established for the practical implementation.

At the time of writing this book, the government has made no concrete decisions on the Arctic railway and its construction. The first report ended on the note that immediate economic profit for the railway does not exist. Saami organisations are strictly against it. Nevertheless, constructing the Arctic railway could still be possible, and in an interview for the online ArcticFinland site in August 2018, Berner shared her own thoughts<sup>42</sup>.

According to Berner, Arctic connections are a part of a greater whole that defines Finland's position globally. It is about Finland's logistical position and accessibility as well as an alternative transport route for Finland's import and export.

All of Finland’s harbours are on the Baltic Sea. Even though Berner does not use the term security of supply, when speaking of alternative routes, this is what is meant.

Primarily, the idea is that Finland would be the hub between Europe and Asia – an idea that has been behind Finnair’s successful business model and that is also connected to the telecommunications cable between Europe and Asia. According to Berner, the cable could become a reality in commercial terms during 2019–2022.

Regarding the funding of the Arctic railway and Tallinn tunnel, Berner referenced the TEN-T transport network of the European Union, under which projects could be launched after 2023.

When speaking of the Northeast Passage telecommunications cable and the Arctic railway, Berner often alludes to the global connections that Finland would be promoting through them. This can also be seen as a link to the government programme that makes Finland the leading global actor on the Arctic Region. However, similar to President Niinistö, Berner’s initiative is also strongly connected to what she herself has wanted to achieve as a politician. In practically all the significant Arctic initiatives in Finland all these years, the theme has been a matter of individual politicians deciding to promote a certain issue.

## FINLAND LEADS THE ARCTIC COUNCIL: HOPES FOR A SUMMIT

**THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE** Finnish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council started in autumn 2014, when Aleksii Härkönen replaced Hannu Halinen as the Ambassador of Arctic Affairs. Härkönen has been Finland's Ambassador to Estonia, Special Adviser to President Tarja Halonen in Foreign Policy matters and has extensive experience in multilateral diplomacy including working with the OSCE.

His Arctic partner was at that point leading expert René Söderman. During the chairmanship period this group has expanded to include about ten people, but when the policies were made for the term, only Härkönen and Söderman were present.

The government and also the Minister for Foreign Affairs changed in spring 2015. Erkki Tuomioja, Foreign Minister and veteran politician from the Social Democratic Party's left was replaced by Timo Soini, chairman of the populist Finns Party that won the elections. Tuomioja and Soini are very different both as individuals and politicians, but in relation to their Arctic policy, the differences are hard to find. Soini quickly realised what kind of profiling opportunity the Arctic could be for Finland: it provides a connection to both the East and West and the upcoming government term did not have a more significant international role for Finland than the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council. Soini's first trip to the United States as the Foreign Minister was related to the Arctic, as he attended the Glacier conference in Alaska, led by President Barack Obama, in August 2015.

A document like the Arctic Chairmanship Program is approved at the governmental level in Finland, but it is prepared by non-political officials who are not affected by the changing of governments. The starting point for the preparations was to identify a few priorities that would then lead to the contents.

The legacy of the United States' chairmanship was connectivity, and it fit perfectly into Finland's profile.

The second priority, meteorological cooperation, was chosen because the Finnish Meteorological Institute is an active agent in Finland's Arctic research. The matter was further confirmed by the fact that the Director General of the Finnish Meteorological Institute Petteri Taalas was chosen as the Secretary General of the United Nations World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 2015.



Education, on the other hand, seemed like a tool that would bring in both sustainable development and local people, and is also related to equality. Additionally, Finland has always had a strong role in the University of the Arctic, and through this theme, the connection between the UArctic and the Arctic Council would be strengthened.

Environment protection is one of the main missions of the Arctic Council regardless, but upgrading it to one of the main priorities was done to prevent it from being left to the background.

Big, separate events on these themes have been organized during Finland's chairmanship term, like the Arctic Meteorology Summit in Levi, the UArctic conferences in Oulu and Helsinki and the Biodiversity Conference and the Meeting of Arctic Countries' Environmental Ministers in Rovaniemi.

The chosen themes have also been considered in the programme of the Arctic Economic Council while Finland its Chair. The rationale was to make both programmes complementary.

In addition to the four priorities, the programme included two comprehensive frameworks that were related to current and important international policies: Agenda 2030, or the sustainable development goals agreed upon in the UN, and the Paris Agreement. These were supposed to be a jointly accepted framework that no one could dispute. Sustainable development goals were the main theme of the Rovaniemi Arctic Spirit conference in November 2017.

The changing of the United States president and government caused a complete reversal in climate policy. Accepting common positions was harder than ever at the Meeting of Foreign Ministers in Fairbanks in May 2017 that ended the United States' Arctic Council Chairmanship. Nevertheless, consensus was reached in all text formats that were central to the operations of the Arctic Council and the Finnish Chairmanship.

In Finland, there was pressure from inside the government to raise economic issues in the text, but those were brought up more generally in the programme and not as concrete proposals. In addition, the Chairmanship Program already included elements like communications that are important to the economy.

At the beginning of the Chairmanship, Finland was also experiencing an economic expansion that was felt especially in Northern Finland and that drastically changed the unemployment situation. As such, it has reduced the pressure to include economic growth in the work of the Arctic Council. Matters relating to domestic policy and the Arctic Council are often hard to distinguish from one another in Finland's internal debate, because on one hand the Arctic is discussed in reference to Arctic Council meetings and on the other hand in regard to issues such as the possible construction of the Arctic railway and Finland's own strategic goals.

The workings inside the Finnish government sometimes tend to feel separate. The Chairmanship of the Arctic Council is restricted to issues that are on the Arctic Council agenda. The Chairmanship Program includes a list of work areas of the Council from the perspective of Finland's goals: environment and climate, oceans, people and strengthening of the Arctic Council.

However, the abbreviation EU is not found anywhere in the chairmanship program, even though Finland has officially held it in the spotlight throughout the years and its long-term objective includes strengthening the EU's Arctic policy and the European Commission's observer status in the Arctic Council. Additionally, Finland has set itself up as the EU's leading Arctic actor in its Arctic Strategy update.

Even though at this level national goals are not and cannot be included, the Chairmanship Program does not contradict the Finnish Arctic Strategy at any point. During the preparation of the programme different ministries and administrative officials commented on issues that affected the respective ministries. It is after this stage that the Foreign Ministry's Arctic team

retired to harmonise the texts and the drafts were sent to the Ministerial Committee on Foreign and Security Policy, i.e., the President and the government, twice.

Finland's chairmanship in the Arctic Council ends in May 2019, little over a month after the parliamentary elections. Hosting the Arctic Council Meeting of Foreign Ministers will be either one of the last assignments of the incumbent Foreign Minister, or less likely the first assignment of the new Foreign Minister. Whichever it may be, Finland's governmental policy is going to be at a turning point.

This will not affect the Arctic Council meeting. Officials have done the preparations, and that is how things will proceed. Finland's Chairmanship team will withdraw when the assignment ends and there will be fewer people, but the continuity of politics remains. In summer 2019 begins Finland's EU Presidency and this brings up the question of the European Union's Arctic policy. Related to this, Finland will search for fresh visibility for the Northern Dimension.

Finland's Chairmanship term will probably be most remembered for one thing: its attempts to invite an Arctic Summit.

Finland has had an interest in summits for a long time, since the "Spirit of Helsinki". The European Security and Co-operation Conference was held in 1975 and its success got deeply etched into the Finnish political mindset. Finland's Arctic initiative or the Rovaniemi Process had spiritual roots with the times and ways of the OSCE.

However, the Rovaniemi Process did not plan any summits, and finding exact origins of the discussion on the summit is somehow difficult. Talks to that direction can be found all the way from the 1990s, in connection to the Northern Dimension or something else.

Concretely the idea was brought up for the first time in 2010 as an initiative of Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb, when Finland's first Arctic Strategy was being devised. That initiative disappeared from public view after the term of Foreign Minister Stubb, but the idea remained. For example, in 2013 Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen told to the online newspaper Barents Observer that Finland is considering a summit during its upcoming Arctic Chairmanship from 2017–2019<sup>43</sup>.

Even though the issue was not brought up publicly, the possibility of an Arctic Summit has arisen in different discussions, for instance when President Niinistö met Arctic actors from Rovaniemi at the end of 2014. In a country the size of Finland, these issues are never too far. Mikko Hautala, who worked as an adviser to Foreign Minister Stubb during the time of the first summit initiative later worked as a Special Adviser to President Niinistö until he moved to be an ambassador in Moscow in 2016.

As the Chairmanship term of Finland drew closer, the time for it was ripe: now or never. However, because the Summit would not fall under the regular operations of the Arctic Council, the initiative had to somehow come from somewhere near the Council, but outside of it, and the presenter of the initiative had to have a sufficient mandate for it. In practice, in the Finnish political system this meant the President, who has powers in foreign policy but not in domestic policy.

Niinistö's presidential term began in 2012 and right in the beginning he brought up his own interest towards Arctic issues in many of his speeches. During 2016, Niinistö started to publicly discuss and declare that he has been bringing up the Arctic Summit when meeting leaders from other Arctic countries.

The Summit was featured when Niinistö met the President of the United States Barack Obama in Washington DC in May 2016. Then the press release from the Finnish presidential office stated that the Summit would require the world situation to calm down<sup>44</sup>.

In addition to Niinistö, former Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen has brought up the idea of an Arctic Summit in Finland. In 2016, Lipponen received a High North Hero Award in Bodø, Norway, and a year later in spring 2017, he gave an interview to the online newspaper High North News<sup>45</sup>.

At the time, Finland was preparing for its Chairmanship term of the Arctic Council, and in the role as a former Prime Minister, Lipponen stated in that interview that Finland is preparing for an Arctic Summit that would emphasize the Arctic region as a low-tension area. He also raised the need for developing a programme to check the emissions of black carbon.

When the Arctic Council Chairmanship Program was being prepared, it mentioned the hosting of the Arctic Summit “in favorable international conditions”, thanks to President Niinistö’s initiative. In the program, the idea of an Arctic Summit is tied to the long-term goals of the Arctic Council that could be reinforced on a higher level.

In spring 2017, Niinistö launched his own climate change slogan: “If we lose the Arctic, we lose the whole world.” This happened in the Russian Arctic forum in Arkhangelsk where he also met his counterpart Vladimir Putin. In Arkhangelsk, Niinistö separately brought up black carbon and one of its sources: according to him, flaring causes a fourth of the Arctic Region’s warming<sup>46</sup>. The message was especially directed at Russia, where flaring during gas production is common. In the Arkhangelsk meeting, Niinistö had an opportunity to test the waters on what the leaders of Russia thought of climate change and also their views on a possible Summit.

At this point, Donald Trump had been elected President in the United States and there was not much left of Niinistö’s discussions with Obama’s government. Trump began to make U-turns in practically every field, including climate policy. Following his election speeches, he decided to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

In the President’s blogpost from May 2017, it was time for a progress report and conclusions. Niinistö brought up the “great dilemma facing humanity”: whether the Arctic Region should put the environment or the economy first<sup>47</sup>. After this, he listed his objectives and recommendations and how climate change should be addressed in the international context:

*“I would recommend approaching this issue from the perspective of black carbon, an accelerator of glacier melting. Old energy plants in the neighbourhood of the Arctic are causing heavy damage. This is due to incomplete combustion and flaring, a process almost impossible for a lay man to understand, of burning off excess gas. Around the world, flaring wastes forty times more gas than Finland consumes in a year.*

*A ‘neutral zone’ can be found in combating these two sources of emissions. Doing so would not interfere with interests bent on economic exploitation. On the contrary, refitting plants would create business activity. Plans have apparently been drawn up, only the funding is lacking. Common sense can see that gas flaring means only a loss for both business and the environment.*

*Let me return to the two large member states. Russia can hardly have anything against engaging in cooperation to improve the condition and energy efficiency of its plants; this would mean economic gains in the longer term. Russia would also spur international cooperation, something which it would value during the current sanctions even if they were not lifted.*

*President Trump has repeatedly demonstrated his readiness to adjust his uncompromising views if he sees movement in the direction he prefers. Climate protection is now becoming his Achilles heel. By entering this neutral zone, he could at least do something to answer domestic criticism without having to give up his main message. The aim would be to have*

*President Trump at least go some way to acknowledging the unavoidable nature of climate protection – albeit through energy efficiency.”*

In practice, Niinistö has adapted his actions to the realities of world politics to achieve the Arctic Summit. Discussing the climate would not lead in any direction, but if we discuss black carbon, we discuss preventing contamination and we discuss clean air and not global warming. Black carbon would be an issue to find agreement upon, and that could lead to concrete actions to slow down the changes in the Arctic climate. In addition, Arctic seafaring issues where the countries have common interests, could be added to the Agenda.

Whether the Summit becomes a reality or not depends whether or not there are preconditions for the meeting of the great powers in the first place. Fluctuations in international politics have been swift.

Black carbon did not become an Arctic talking point by coincidence. It was prominently featured in the Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council in Tromsø in 2009, which focused on climate change in the Arctic Region and where Al Gore gave a powerful speech on climate change. The meeting noted that interfering with black carbon and other short-lived climate pollutants could be an effective means to fight global warming<sup>48</sup>.

The Working Group established in Tromsø gave its recommendation to the ministers in 2011<sup>49</sup>. Among other things, the recommendations state that intervening with black carbon emissions would offer the Arctic Council a significant opportunity to take on a leading role in short-term climate protection.

In the same year, the Working Group of the Arctic Council AMAP issued a scientific report on black carbon's effects on the climate. The group listed sources of black carbon in the Arctic Region, like district heating, burning gas, different forms of transportation and burning biomass.<sup>50</sup>

In the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Iqaluit that ended Canada's term as Chairman in 2015, a SAO (Senior Arctic Officials) report on the actions against black carbon and methane emissions was introduced. Among the proposals in the report was that the next Chair of the Arctic Council could consider convening a high-level conference of policy makers to reduce emissions.<sup>51</sup>

Thanks to all this and more, black carbon has regularly been addressed in Arctic discussions and a lot of information has been made available. Thanks to Niinistö's initiative, Finland also got a new chance to bring up the Northern Dimension mechanisms after a long period of inaction. Actions against black carbon emissions, for example in Russia's north-west district heating plants would fit well into the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership.

Finland celebrated its hundredth independence anniversary in 2017, which meant more state level meetings than usual. These events were an ideal occasion to put forth the idea of a Summit, as when connected to the Finnish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Arctic was a natural topic of discussion in almost every meeting of this level. Significantly, the President of China Xi Jinping chose Helsinki as a travel destination. China would not take part in meetings of the member countries of the Arctic Council, but China has been very active in the Arctic Regions.

In August 2017, Niinistö met Donald Trump in Washington DC and brought up black carbon during the press conference<sup>52</sup>.

The Summit became the national policy priority of Finland latest in June 2018, when the Ministerial Committee on Foreign and Security Policy of the Government announced that Finland will continue to promote the convening of an Arctic Summit and the aim is to

strengthen the Arctic States' endeavours to secure peace, stability and constructive cooperation in the region<sup>53</sup>. By this stage, Finnish Foreign policy was completely well utilized in pushing for the Arctic Summit.

When the Russian President Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump held their own summit on short notice in Helsinki in July 2018, the Arctic was not publicly mentioned. In the meeting of Niinistö and Putin in Sochi in August 2018, it was one of the primary topics of discussion and Putin announced in front of cameras that he was willing to come to the Arctic Summit. Putin and Niinistö held a very environment-centred press conference together in Sochi.

While this text is being written, the final fate of the spring 2019 Summit is not yet known but the developments in international politics have not been promising. However, taking an internationally significant meeting even this far has given the Finnish President a central role in the Arctic – a role that he would not have had to take. The standard operations of the Arctic Council have nothing to do with the President's domain.

On the same note, Iceland's former president Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson has acted as a kind of Arctic conscience of the world for many years. He is the leading spirit of the now very extensive Arctic Circle Assembly series. Both the presidents' visible Arctic profile is in no way directly related to their positions.

In a way, the Finnish President is literally handling an issue that is defined as the work of the government in the Finnish Arctic Strategy update: no more or less than global Arctic leadership.

At the big Arctic Biodiversity Congress hosted by the Arctic Council Working Group CAFF in Rovaniemi in October 2018, Niinistö was able to justify his point of view directly to the international Arctic audience. The conference took place at the same time as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) strongly appeals to everyone that we should try to stop global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Niinistö's speech made a strong case for keeping climate change on the top of the agenda in the near future. However, he once again pointed out that it is a result of more than just carbon dioxide emissions.<sup>54</sup>

"Black carbon is particularly relevant for the fate of the Arctic sea ice. When black carbon falls on white ice, it immediately accelerates the melting. But its absence will have an equally immediate impact to the contrary. Cutting down black carbon emissions is the quickest way to slow down the rapid changes now occurring in the Arctic", he stated.

In Rovaniemi he also clearly highlighted Finland's willingness to host the very first Arctic Summit: "I believe that environmental issues should be front and centre at such a summit. And that environmental issues deserve a summit."

As a concrete proposal Niinistö suggested that all Arctic countries at the highest political level would commit to reducing their black carbon emissions and the list of actions is ready: "Reducing flaring in oil and gas production, switching from heavy fuels to LNG in ship engines, upgrading old-fashioned power plants, and preventing wildfires."

According to him, feedback on the concrete proposals from the Arctic countries has been very positive, even in places where the Paris Agreement has aroused suspicion. "Climate change may not be the best conversation starter in every capital these days, but you can still find constructive ways to address the concrete issues behind it", he said.

"There is hope. We still have a chance to save the Arctic, and to save the globe. But there is no time to waste," the President pleaded.

## AROUND THE SAME TABLE, ALMOST

**IN THE MIDDLE OF** May in 2018, a group of invitees gathered for a breakfast meeting at Eteläranta 10, Helsinki. Those are the headquarters of the Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK) and the address has become a symbol for Finnish industry. Some of the matters discussed in these headquarters immediately become public knowledge, but there is also much power-brokering taking place.

Now the topic of discussion was how to make Finland “the leading actor of Arctic industry and policy”. Present were about forty men and five women, mostly from business organisations, companies and the civil service. The man of the hour was a well-known figure, also known from the pages of this book. But before former Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen, Transport Minister Anne Berner had the floor and she presented her vision of Finland as an international transportation hub. The Northern Dimension and Arctic way of thinking must be linked with the European way of thinking, she said, and Europe has to have more self-sufficiency with regard to resources and minerals. Arctic Europe is part of Europe and it requires actions in logistics and infrastructure.

The Arctic railway, Baltic Corridor, global interests in transportation and logistics. Berner painted a big picture, said what she came to say and left with the public’s praise. After that, the floor was given to Paavo Lipponen, who began to describe the actual matter at hand: the idea of an Arctic Office that would be established to promote Arctic matters of the industry and of Finland, and to bring continuity after the Arctic Council Chairmanship.

The idea itself dated from a couple of years ago. It had originated with the heavy-duty influencers in the Finnish industry – it would not be discussed in the high-level EK meetings otherwise. Paavo Lipponen did not disappoint. He encouraged Finland to shed the excess modesty, raise its profile and take a leading role in the Arctic policy in Europe: the leader’s position was available and attainable. Finland could become the global operations centre of the North, with a core in logistics.

For this, we need tools, and one of them would be the Arctic Office: a kind of Arctic point of contact for Finland.

After Lipponen, the CEO of Arctia icebreaker company and the Chair of Arctic Economic Council Tero Vauraste presented the idea in practice: structure, number of employees, budget, and operating model. The only thing missing from his presentation was funding.

No one committed to anything in the discussions.

Explorations have continued. When this book goes to the press, the establishment of the Arctic Office is still uncertain.

One of the morals of the story is that Finland does not have separate Arctic funding. Even though there are some strong background influencers, public or private funds to back the initiatives or ideas seem to be hard to find, and many operations are tied to existing projects.

It is also an example of how the industry wants to be a part of Finland's Arctic operations. So do the environmental organisations, and both know the right channels and how to use them. Finland does not have any significant actors who do not agree on the principles of sustainable development. Only the solutions differ.

During Finland's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, it is notable that everyone seems to be on the same page. If conflicts arise, they are related to something other than the policies of the Arctic Council. The proposal of the Arctic Railway creates heated discussion in the Saami regions, but the railway is not part of the Arctic Council agenda.

If the railway project proceeds to practical suggestions, big headlines are guaranteed. It would not be the first time there will be heated conversations on domestic Arctic issues. Sometimes these can go far. Some years ago, there was a phase when a complicated string of events relating to Arctic operations led to the resignation of a minister.

Finland is the only country with all its ports possibly frozen up in the winter, and an icebreaker fleet had to be developed as a lifeline for its exports. Its docks have a century of experience building these and the salesmen have a perfect sales pitch: sixty per cent of the world's icebreakers are built in Finland. Icebreakers are a symbol of Finnish Arctic expertise.

Of the eight icebreakers of Finland, some are built to work only on the Baltic Sea and some thrive elsewhere as well.

In 2011, Arctia made a deal on the use of multipurpose icebreakers Nordica and Fennica to assist the oil-searching operations of Shell in the waters of Alaska. In spring 2012, Greenpeace organised a series of protests against it and a group of Greenpeace activists boarded the ships in Helsinki. The leaders of Arctia wanted to report the incident, but it is a state owned company and the minister responsible for steering ownership, the Greens party minister Heidi Hautala, insisted they give it up. This was done out of the public eye.

When the matter surfaced in 2013, subsequent public pressure forced Hautala to resign from her seat. There was complicated discussion about the minister's actions in relation to the criminal report, and the timing and how the matter was published and what was told and when. The discussion did not have so much to do with the original reason for the Greenpeace protest, which was the assistance in Shell's oil drilling in the Arctic.

In 2012, the matter of an order for a new icebreaker featured. Under the leadership of Transport Minister Merja Kyllönen (Left Alliance) the resolution was that the icebreaker would be designed to work in the Baltic Sea conditions, but not on other Arctic waters like the multipurpose breakers. Eventually, the LNG operated Polaris icebreaker was introduced in January 2016. In connection with this icebreaker's order, there was a lot of discussion on the purpose for which Finnish icebreakers should be used: do they stay in the Baltic or can they operate for commercial tasks in the entire Arctic Region.

In 2013, there was another Arctic media storm in addition to the Hautala case, with which Greenpeace was directly involved. Russia arrested a group of Greenpeace activists on the Petshora Sea; they were there to protest against Russia's oil drilling in the Arctic. Amongst the arrested activists was Finnish Sini Saarela. The Greenpeace vessel was confiscated at the

port of Murmansk and Saarela ended up in a Murmansk prison alongside the other activists. A good four months later, she finally got back to Finland from St. Petersburg.

Minister Hautala resigned from her position in October 2013, when Saarela was in pre-trial detention in Russia. These matters did not directly relate to each other, but they had common denominators: the Arctic, Greenpeace and oil drilling.

Finland's new Arctic Strategy had just been approved in the parliament. As a result of all this, there was suddenly a big discussion in Finland on what it is that Finland is trying to achieve in the Arctic regions and what is the relationship between environmental protection and economic exploitation. However, the discussion was quickly subdued after Hautala resigned and Saarela returned home. Nevertheless, oil drilling in the Arctic has not been promoted in the last few years, partly because of environmental reasons and partly because the price of oil has gone down and operations in the Arctic regions have always been expensive. There no longer are ingredients for a situation like in 2013.

The Arctic multipurpose icebreakers have traversed both the Northeast and Northwest Passages and handled different tasks in the Arctic waters, and there has been no fuss over their role. Instead, discussion has shifted to evaluating how there are not enough operations beyond the Baltic Sea anymore. In November 2018, the company announced that the market is poor and the demand for icebreaker services has declined around the world because of protectionist actions.<sup>55</sup> In December, Arctia reported that a new acting CEO was appointed to the company. According to news reports, the key reason for the change were problems in the offshore business.

There are a number of companies in Finland that conduct business on the Arctic Region, especially in the maritime industry and on marine technology. Of these, the icebreaker company Arctia has had the most public profile, mostly because the company's former CEO Tero Vauraste has also been the Chair of the Arctic Economic Council during Finland's term and was already involved in the preparations for the Economic Council.

Vauraste joined Arctia in 2009 after having been in charge of several logistical tasks elsewhere. He was tasked to devise an Arctic business strategy for the icebreaker company, and concluded that there was a new level of international business opportunities. This led to the first agreements in 2011 and the operations with Shell in the Arctic Region.

During those years, a connection between the Arctic Ambassador Hannu Halinen and Vauraste was established. The Arctic Council task forces that prepared the Search and Rescue Agreement and the Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness Agreement visited Arctia. The operating models that followed Finland's new Arctic awakening were being defined and a working group of industry representatives was established. The group had discussions about Arctic economy issues with the Foreign Ministry.

The discussion on the establishment of the Arctic Economic Council took place during those years (2014–2015) when the strongly economy-based *A Strategic Vision for the North and Growth from the North* reports were published in Finland.

The Finnish economy background group discussions expanded to include an international dimension, and Finland led these discussions with Iceland, Canada and Russia. The operations were focused specifically on business and in Finland this led to the Arctic Economic Council background group. In the end, the Finnish and more broadly, Nordic view had a big influence on what became of the Economic Council's tasks and structure.

The idea of an Arctic Economic Council had developed during Canada's Chairmanship term and the planned structure for it was based on the Arctic Council structure. The Economic Council was born in 2014 as an independent body and it has not even applied to be



an observer in the Arctic Council. During its term, the United States made clear from the beginning that the Economic Council would not formally be connected to the Arctic Council on any level. And that is exactly what happened.

The Economic Council secretariat, led by Finnish Anu Fredrikson, was located in Tromsø, where the Arctic Council secretariat resides. The Arctic Economic Council chairmanship follows the Arctic Council chairmanship. In the beginning the structures were also designed to match the Arctic Council. Later on, the focus on business has entered the picture more and more. Eventually, the Economic Council became an independent body that operates outside Arctic Council structures.

In the Chairmanship Program of Finland in 2017–2019, there are several references to the Arctic Economic Council, however, and synergy is sought through the simultaneous chairmanships of the Arctic Council and Arctic Economic Council. In a small country, territorial borders are also small.

The work of the Economic Council is to promote the contacts of Arctic industry and clearly has elements suggested by Guy Lindström at the end of the 1990s in his previously mentioned initiative on the Trans-Atlantic Arctic Society. However, there is no direct link between them and previous initiatives were apparently unknown when the Arctic Economic Council was being established. Once again, the key factor is that certain ideas are able to proceed when the time is right.

The Arctic Economic Council took off around the same time as the sanctions and counter-sanctions between Russia and the West. They are also being felt in the Arctic economy, where a number of plans have not been realised. Trade barriers and protectionism are on the rise in the world as it is. In the Economic Council the Arctic business parties are connected through discourse and networks but they have to no ability to influence matters past government-level decisions.

During Finland's new Arctic awakening in 2012, the Arctic Society of Finland was also established to promote the Arctic discussion in Finland. It quickly pooled members from known Arctic persons and several public national actors. The delegation's chairmanship was given to former Prime Minister Esko Aho, also the chairman of the East Office of Finnish Industries, which promotes the industry relationships to the East.

In practice, the operations of the Society have remained at the discussion level. It does not have notable funds for actions and the Society during its first years has not profiled itself as an initiator of discussions or public initiatives.

The former prime ministers, Lipponen and Aho, both have worked in economic relations with Russia – Lipponen has been the adviser for the Nord Stream gas company, which is building the Baltic Sea gas pipe – but they also share common ideas on the Arctic front. In February 2018, just before the first Arctic railway report was published, they wrote an article in the *Helsingin Sanomat* newspaper together, encouraging Finland to take advantage of the Arctic Council Chairmanship and the following Presidency of the European Union at the end of 2019. The former prime ministers felt that this was mainly an issue of infrastructure, railway projects, telecommunications cables and logistics: “Finland's position as a global northern hub would have great strategic value to the whole of Europe.”<sup>56</sup>

Even though there are differences of opinion and emphases, the different parties often have a very similar view on the Arctic Region and Finland's position in it, and the threshold for conversation is low. This is especially true of the Arctic actors that are a part of the core of Arctic discussion in the country.

From environmental organisations, particularly the WWF, which has good resources and an influencing capacity, is participating. WWF International is the only environmental organisation that operates in the entire circumpolar region, and is hence an observer in the Arctic Council. The application of Greenpeace, for example, has not received unanimous acceptance.

The Arctic programme of WWF has raised its credibility by being involved since the beginning of Arctic cooperation. The headquarters for the Arctic program is in Canada, but the program's chairman during Finland's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council has been the Secretary General of Finnish WWF, Liisa Rohweder.

Rohweder wrote her dissertation on a theme related to sustainable development and there are not many Arctic sustainable development panels in Finland in which she is not in attendance.

As the only environmental organisation, WWF also participates in the government appointed Finnish Arctic Advisory Board that consists of ministries, northern Finnish regions, cities and universities, industry organisations and Saami representatives. WWF does not much organise headline events, but it has managed to get a straight flush, which is a seat at the table where Arctic policies are made.

The organisation's experience on Arctic influence in Finland is that their voice is well heard and their expertise appreciated. Thus, the organisation can easily say they are on the same page, for example with the Chairmanship Program.

In addition, disagreement on one subject does not prevent cooperation with the same actors on a different subject. In the ban on the use of heavy fuel oil and in matters of black carbon, Finland's policy gets a lot of praise from the WWF. The domestic policy issue of the Arctic Railway is a different matter.

In Arctic cooperation, WWF's experience has been that even governments in certain situations hope for a straight talk: an organisation independent from the government can bring up issues on the table that government representatives might not be able to.

For example, at the Meeting of Environment Ministers in Rovaniemi in October 2018, Rohweder presented in three slides how the Arctic Council should be renewed to be able to function more efficiently. That was something that no official government representative or member from inside the Council structure could have presented.

The WWF has driven Finnish ambition, courage and risk-taking in their Arctic environmental goals and the organisation requires some measurability: it is important to see how things are and how they are progressing. The global Arctic leadership that Finland is striving for could be environmental leadership, a forerunner role in controlling climate change.

Where WWF spoke inside the meeting halls of the Environment Ministers in Rovaniemi, Greenpeace climbed on the roof of the Lappia Hall to hang up a banner on marine projection for the participants of the Biodiversity conference. At the door, the members of the organisation handed out leaflets to speak against the Arctic Railway. The work of Greenpeace is mostly done through publicity and public events.

Actors like Arctia and the WWF in Finland have networked themselves everywhere and have made themselves heard. It is largely through contacts with parties like these that the ideas of connecting economic interests, sustainable development and environmental protection, constantly seen in Finnish Arctic policy, are born. The Arctic actors often praise the fact that discussion works so well between the different parties. However, lately there has been little praise from the Saami people, due to the Arctic Railway.

In April 2018, an Arctic workshop was held in the House of the Estates in Helsinki that filled every seat below the building's heavy crystal chandeliers. The Arctic Society, Paasikivi Society and the UKK Society (named after former Finnish presidents) had joined forces and gathered – mostly with the strength of a rather elderly audience – to discuss the future of the Arctic Region. There were some heavyweight members of government, Foreign Ministry and parliament present.

State Secretary Paula Lehtomäki said that Finland is a leading Arctic actor both internationally and in the EU. Former Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen spoke of economic interests and their connection to security policies. The state secretary for the Foreign Ministry Matti Anttonen spoke of climate change, resource exploitation and the massive change happening in the Arctic Region. Transport Minister Anne Berner described an ambitious vision of Finland as a hub for goods, people and data, and Arctic regions as Europe's core. Former Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen wanted the Summit between Europe, Russia and Asia in Finland during Finland's EU Presidency in 2019. Tero Vauraste from Arctia spoke of the need for a single window principle in Arctic operations and the display of Finnish Arctic expertise.

Then the floor was given to the President of the Saami Parliament of Finland, Tiina Sanila-Aikio. She explained what it is like to live as a member of indigenous peoples in a society that “wants to harness our homes, our Arctic region for their own economic interests by changing, destroying, eradicating the preconditions of our lives, preventing us from practising our culture.” For her, the Arctic was a motivator for the masses that entitles them to scope the Arctic Region and colonise the very last corners of it.

“The Arctic is represented as a semi artificial and a completely reversed identity than the one the indigenous peoples of the Arctic have,” Sanila-Aikio said.

She spoke about the press conference on the Arctic Railway held by Transport Minister Anne Berner, after which children at reindeer round-ups heard their parents joke about how they do not have to get rope from the garage anymore, they can just jump under the train.

“The next day I hear how our children have started to cry without knowing or understanding why they are crying, but just reacting to their parents. In the next few weeks, I heard how the parents cannot sleep because of anxiety or how they have manifested stomach issues, for example. I want to emphasise the responsibility and how these things are communicated that steal the future from an entire people,” said Sanila-Aikio.

“I have promised my husband and I also promise to Minister Berner today that I will do whatever I can so that the Arctic Railway will not become reality. But if it comes, my family's world will crumble, in addition to that of many other Saami families. Who is going to fix these worlds? I hope you decision-makers understand the kind of decisions you are making today.”

Transport Minister was no longer in the room.

The Arctic Railway is not a part of Finland's program in the Arctic Council. It is part of Finland's internal decision-making, and when this book is being written, there were no concrete decisions made about it. The possibility of the Railway is being investigated in a working group in which the Saami Parliament of Finland is also participating.

However, from a Saami point of view the discussion on the railway has marked the Finnish Arctic chairmanship, because it has been represented as the biggest individual matter of this time. This has also created a slew of demonstrations against the railway that Greenpeace also attended.

The Saami People and the indigenous peoples are mentioned essentially in every Arctic text that Finland has produced. Mainly the place of mentions is where they are in this book as well: at the end of the text as an issue that cannot be ignored but which has not been involved in the preparation of the actual contents.

The Saami Council represents the Saami people in the Arctic Council, which is a joint body for all Saami people. On the other hand, Finland, Sweden and Norway have their own Saami parliaments that represent matters domestically. Finland has continuously invited the President of the Saami Parliament to join the most important Arctic meeting delegations, however, often without giving the President the floor. In the opening ceremonies of bigger Arctic events, the turn of the Saami representative is almost always in the program, for example at the Biodiversity Congress in Rovaniemi right after the President of the Republic.

The feeling of being a “token Saami” is nevertheless strong with the Saami people and in important conversations, Saami people have felt they are only participating properly in environmental matters. Capacity is often a problem as well: there are several forums and meetings and issues to be discussed all the way to the level of the United Nations, and a limited number of internationally prepared Saami actors. Often the same people follow and take part also in everything that happens in the domestic Saami politics, which has plenty of matters and several twists and turns.

All this takes up a lot of the actors’ time, which is why for example the Rising Sun project that aims to prevent suicides among indigenous peoples has been left behind during Finland’s Chairmanship term.

The Saami Parliament has a new, modern building in Inari and close to it, the Saami museum Siida has plans to be renovated substantially. In matters relating to language and culture, there has been a lot of progress, but there is still much to discuss in Saami issues.

Finland has not ratified the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) well-known Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 169, which defines the indigenous peoples and their rights. Many governments have submitted reports and made preparations, but as many times as the issue has been prepared, it has also fallen apart. All the while things have become more complicated in the dispute on where to draw the line for voting rights in the Saami Parliament elections. Ethnic origins are not registered in Finland, which means the right to vote in the election has subsequently defined ‘who is Saami.’ The government of Juha Sipilä started the preparations for a reconciliation process on Saami matters. In autumn 2018, the new draft on Saami Parliament legislation fell through because of the opposition from the Saami Parliament.

## EPILOGUE

**IN OCTOBER 2018** THE Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a report on how important it is to stop global warming in 1.5 degrees Celsius. The main message was that it is doable and that the difference between one and a half and two degrees in consequences is big.

In the Arctic Region it means that in the 1.5-degree option, the Arctic Ocean would completely thaw in the summer once every hundred years, whereas in the 2.0-degree option it would happen once every decade <sup>57</sup>.

This happened on Monday. On Thursday and Friday the same week, the Environment Ministers of the Arctic countries gathered in the Arktikum building in Rovaniemi on the invitation of Finland's Minister of the Environment Kimmo Tiilikainen. The last time environment ministers had met in Rovaniemi was in 1991 to establish the entire Arctic cooperation. Now they held speeches, participated in panel discussions and listened to the Chair's conclusions.

The Chair's conclusions state that the participants highlighted the information from the recent IPCC special report on 1.5 degrees global warming and its impacts on the Arctic. <sup>58</sup>

On top of this, the ministers stated that they would continue the international efforts to reduce black carbon emissions. According to the conclusions, some ministers highlighted their countries' ambitious goals to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases and some stressed the growth of the economy, energy security and reducing of emissions through innovations.

The ministers of the Arctic countries would have had an opportunity to make a joint statement based on the IPCC's fresh report. Nothing of the sort was presented in Rovaniemi. The only common denominator was the statement of the information included in the report. The matters regarding black carbon had been prepared properly, so it was possible to discuss them more concretely.

Two days before the meeting, Sauli Niinistö announced at the Biodiversity Conference being held in the Lappia Hall in Rovaniemi that Finland is willing to organize a state-level summit focusing on the Arctic environment, and that the environment matters deserve their own summit.

The environment ministers' papers do not reference the idea of an Arctic environment summit at all.

If we lose the Arctic, we lose the whole world. This is the slogan of President Niinistö, which has also been loaned as the name for this book. It is the clearest slogan that has been devised during Finland's thirty years of Arctic policy.

It is also a slogan that will not be used by the international forums that operate on the principle of consensus. Actors only apart from those can use it. The role of the President in Finland or in Iceland is very well suited for that.

But how to get the actual actors to act? For a long time, at the international conferences there has been discussion on how the Arctic Region is changing. Lately, almost all of them have shown displays of the sustainable development goals of the UN. Every single session that shows them seems to be disconnected from all the others with the same display and theme.

We can also see this as a sign of how far the discussion has proceeded. They are at least speaking about the same issues.

These conferences have also accumulated an ever-increasing group of Chinese participants who speak impressively of their country's initiative on the new Northern Silk Road and international cooperation. And there is no big event where they or some other delegates has not displayed world maps with marked sea routes along the northern coast of Siberia. Sometimes they have a connection to the Arctic Railway discussed in Finland, sometimes not.

At the same time, the statements and delegations from Russia reflect more and more the official position and are less representative of individual researchers, activists or other actors. The speeches coming from the United States on the other hand, reflect either the policies of President Trump's government or vehement protests against it, and the speeches by the top researchers of the country are beginning to be seen through the same dispersing prism.

The ways of life of the indigenous peoples face both the pressures from climate change and other global and national changes. When the lines of global logistics are drawn on maps, they also have to be built somewhere, and there also live reindeer herding families whose traditional lands would be construction sites for the new railways.

I have had a rare opportunity to follow the development of Arctic and northern cooperation for thirty years, often as a viewer and experiencer, sometimes as an actor. I have known almost every Arctic actor in Finland and several around the World.

At the time enthusiasm and idealism in this was very fascinating. The matters were new, they were created and modified. There was a kind of Arctic and Barents regions' family, where borders did not seem to matter.

Much of that still exists. But not everything, not even nearly. Many big actors have joined with high stakes and innocence has all but disappeared. It still exists in a way that has allowed Arctic activity to keep its specialness. The new complications from international situations will affect it, but it has less influence than in many other fields.

First and foremost, this is due to the fact that the Arctic Region itself is so special. It is beautiful, it is unique – and its foundation is shattering. From many directions.

This book tells the story of the Finnish Arctic thinking, and it begins during the time when the Arctic Region began to open up after the Cold War. While writing this book, for the first time I have started to think that what once began, might also end. After that begins a new, different story, in a different kind of world.

The Arctic can be lost in several different ways. Usually we speak about global warming. But the heated political climate can have the same effect. Both happen with small steps that are taken one after the other, until everything is irreversibly different. This does not mean an Arctic conflict. The structures can look the same as before but still something can be completely changed. One should be able to think which voices are heard and which are not.

We are not that far ahead yet, and because this book focuses on Finland, we could say: it is in the interests of everybody in Finland that we never get that far. The story of Arctic cooperation needs to continue and not remain as one phase in history.

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