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Original Article

# THE ARCTIC COUNCIL AND THE INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL. GOVERNANCE IN THE ARCTIC REGION.

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## ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the forms of governance in the Canadian Arctic. It relies on two perspectives. First, by looking at the mechanisms of governance in the circumpolar region through the Arctic Council, and second, by analyzing the paradiplomacy of indigenous groups in Canada, particularly the Inuit, through the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC). It explores the ICC's international actions to promote their identity and cultural practices, but also to defend their economic interests as the original people of the circumpolar world. This article analyzes the fragmentation of the nation-state, and the emergence of non-state actors contesting its supremacy in international relations, leading to new forms of governance. In Canada, indigenous groups such as the Inuit, through the Inuit Circumpolar Council, have regained power and influence, creating new forms of governance in the Arctic.

**Keywords**: *Canadian Artic, governance, cultural paradiplomacy, Arctic Council, Inuit, Inuit Circumpolar Council.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

This article addresses a contemporary trend that is becoming increasingly relevant both domestically and internationally: the growing participation of a variety of non-state actors in decision-making and public policy formulation to defend their interests in local and regional settings, through cross-border organizations. Several studies have referred to the international activities of subnational actors, indigenous groups, professional organizations, among others, alluding to them as manifestations of paradiplomacy, which translates into non-state actors becoming poles of contemporary governance (Aldecoa and Keating, 1999; Lecours, 2008; Shadian, 2016).

Although the cases of these activities differ and respond to different motivations, it is pertinent to underscore the role of these types of actors as manifestations of a decentralization of power from nation-states to non-central governments and other non-state actors; but at the same time, they

represent evidence that power is no longer centralized and that new centers of power have emerged, among which are subnational governments, social groups, and indigenous groups such as native nations that organize to defend their interests by deploying actions beyond national borders. The fragmentation of the power of the nation-state creates new centers of power in whose new reconfiguration various subnational actors and non-governmental organizations stand out, which, despite their territorial limitations, deploy actions of international and regional scope.

We do not mean that the nation-state is in the process of extinction; in contrast, we argue that it is still present, but it is no longer the only exclusive actor in international relations and in decision-making regarding global problems, but it must negotiate and share its power with other actors of great diversity, as mentioned above.

In this context, it is relevant to analyze the case of Canada's indigenous peoples, in particular the Inuit. In Canada, the international activities of non-state actors and sub-national governments predominate; in this respect, several factors may help to explain this situation. First, Canada has a parliamentary democratic political system, characterized by a federal system of government, and at the same time it is a bilingual, multicultural and multinational country; in other words, it is a diverse and heterogeneous country, which means that each province and each minority group promotes its cultural identity and fights for its interests in a federal and democratic system.[1]

This article focuses precisely on the international activities, known as paradiplomacy, of the Inuit of Canada and other Arctic regions through international cooperation schemes such as the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC). This article argues that governance in various forms, combined with a predominantly cultural paradiplomacy, has allowed indigenous groups such as the Inuit to preserve their cultural identity and promote their interests in the Arctic region. They have achieved this through the ICC, an international non-governmental organization that is a permanent participant in the Arctic Council.

In the first section of this article, we analyze the concept of governance to elucidate its scope and settings; we then focus on the characteristics of cultural paradiplomacy that focuses on international activities carried out by international organizations such as the ICC. Finally, we will look at the case of the Inuit and ICC paradiplomacy in the Arctic region.

## II. GOVERNANCE

Towards the end of the 20th century, increasing economic globalization and political transformations, tending towards global governance, have generated unprecedented challenges that in many cases exceed the management capacity of the nation-state, giving rise to new spaces for action and decision-making. In this context, a series of subnational actors have emerged as relevant players in global and regional governance. Nation-states have been unable to solve the new global problems, which are finding solutions at supranational and regional levels, often promoted from subnational levels.

Several scholars have referred to the fragmentation of nation-state power and the emergence of new actors in the international system (Rosenau 2002, 2006; Scholte, 2005). This fragmentation of the power of nation-states has moved outwards, towards international organizations, but also inwards, towards local actors such as subnational governments and other organized groups such as professional

[1] At the same time, Canada is one of the most decentralized countries with federal systems in the world, wherein the provinces exercise a wide range of powers, for example, in the education and health sectors, labor issues, provision of the welfare state, among others. In addition, the provinces exercise one of the highest percentages of total public spending in OECD countries.

associations, NGOs, trade unions, indigenous groups, and other types of actors, whose organizational capacity goes beyond national borders.

Rosenau (2002) has warned that national government is increasingly constrained by a multilevel system of governance - local, national, regional and global - that is difficult to monitor, let alone control. For example this author observes that global problems are governed through a bifurcated system - in which there are two worlds of global politics - the first, an interstate system of states and their national governments that has long dominated the course of events, and the second, a multicentric system of diverse types of collectivities that has recently emerged as an opposing source of authority, with actors sometimes cooperating, sometimes competing, but continually interacting with the state-centric system. Viewed in the context of proliferating centers of authority, the global era is thus thick and characterized by a variety of actors, large and small, formal and informal, economic and social, political and cultural, national and transnational, international and subnational, aggressive and peaceful, liberal and authoritarian, who collectively form a highly complex system of global governance (Rosenau, 2002; 2006).

These processes have increased in a complex international context, characterized by the intensification of economic globalization, but also due to the democratization of countries, which has led to decentralization as a mechanism for transferring greater representation to local actors and indigenous groups. These processes have also occurred because of major changes in the international system, such as the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

In this context, the intensification of the international activities of some organized groups in Canada can be placed in the context of actions that contribute to governance in regions that go beyond national borders.

Governance is understood as the participation of diverse actors in the formulation and negotiation of agreements and public policies. Governance goes beyond government and includes organized social actors, non-governmental organizations, transnational corporations, among others. Indigenous and native groups are also important actors in regional and transnational governance.

According to Bevir (2012), governance refers to all processes of governing, whether implemented by a government, market, or by groups such as a family, tribe, formal and informal organizations, whether through laws, norms, power relations, or through language. Continuing with this same author, governance differs from government in the sense that it focuses less on the state and its institutions and more on social practices and actions. Understanding governance requires that we look at the international system as a series of multilevel networks with a diversity of actors, rather than as hierarchical organizations.

The governance process does not necessarily need to be carried out by a series of hierarchically organized actors. Markets and networks of actors can govern, coordinate and make decisions. While government refers to political institutions, governance refers to the processes of governing that take place anywhere. States and international organizations increasingly share the activity of governing with social actors, including private companies, non-governmental organizations and non-profit service providers. Governance requires new governing strategies that transcend jurisdictions, bring people together across different levels of government, and mobilize a variety of stakeholders (Bevir, 2012).

A fundamental element of governance is paradiplomacy, since the latter includes international activities carried out by subnational and non-state actors, disputing the exclusivity of nation-states in international relations, thus leading to the consolidation of governance as the modern paradigm that contributes to a more precise understanding of the international system.

## III. PARADIPLOMACY

Paradiplomacy refers to the international activities of non-central governments and non-state actors to promote their interests. The category of non-state actors includes non-governmental organizations -national and international-, interest groups, associations, among others. Paradiplomacy also refers to the participation or involvement of constituent units (regions) of national states in international affairs, such as provinces in Canada, states in the United States, autonomous communities in Spain. The international activities of such actors are diverse: they establish trade and cultural missions abroad; sign treaties and agreements with international state and non-state actors; participate in international networks of regional cooperation; and sometimes question the official foreign policy of their central governments through speeches or actions (Kuznetsov, 2014: 3-4).

On the other hand, several authors highlight the cultural aspect of paradiplomacy. According to Lecours (2002), paradiplomacy preferences can also pursue the cultural aspect in the definition of interests. In fact, cultural advocacy and promotion tend to be the most important issues in paradiplomacy because they are central to its underlying force, nationalism. Paradiplomacy extends the domestic struggles of nationalist movements for cultural preservation into international politics. For Noe Cornago (1999; 2011), paradiplomacy can be defined as the participation of non-central governments in international relations through the establishment of permanent or ad-hoc contacts with public or private entities abroad, with the purpose of promoting socioeconomic or cultural issues, as well as any other international dimension within their constitutional competencies.

Considering the mentioned above, it is evident that in the motivations of paradiplomatic relations, there is a cultural and identity component of the non-state groups and actors that put them into practice. On the other hand, it is pertinent to emphasize that paradiplomacy does not only involve subnational governments, but also non-state actors such as non-governmental organizations of various kinds, in this appreciation agree Shadian (2016) and Heininen (2016), who describe as paradiplomacy the international actions of international organizations such as the ICC, in the Arctic region.

Concomitant with the mentioned above, various scholars have distinguished three main factors for governments and regional actors to become involved in the international arena: economics, culture and politics. In terms of economic motivations, regions strive to find new markets for products produced in the region, investment opportunities, access to modern technologies, as well as to promote tourism in the region. Cultural motivations are especially evident in contexts where national governments remain indifferent to regional cultures and/or languages. Being active in the international arena can help the region obtain support and resources for cultural development and promotion, as well as more formal objectives such as language and identity recognition. The political motivations of subnational and non-state actors may appeal to economic and cultural motivations, but include the formalization, legitimization and institutionalization of regional objectives, such as claims for territorial recognition, devolution of powers and recognition of political authority, both nationally and internationally. In this way, foraying into the international arena can therefore help regions mobilize greater support for their cause (Eliasson, 2015).

Jessica Shadian (cited by Ackrén, 2014) refers to the cultural paradiplomacy of indigenous peoples in the Arctic, especially the Inuit through the ICC. She warns that the involvement of Inuit communities in diplomatic activities dates back to the first encounters between these indigenous communities and early European explorers, fishermen and whalers. Furthermore, this author focuses on the emergence of indigenous internationalism in the 1970s, a decade that marked the beginning of a new era of Inuit diplomacy, which was put into practice through a series of disputes over oil and gas extraction in Alaska and Canada (Ackrén, 2014: 46).

In the following sections, we focus on the Arctic region to analyze the governance of this region. First, the composition of the Arctic Council is defined and contextualized. We then examine the role of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) in the structure of this Council, but also look at the paradiplomatic activities of the ICC in the region.

## IV. THE ARCTIC

There is no recognized political unit as "The Arctic", even from the perspective of the countries of the region: Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark (Greenland), Iceland, the Russian Federation, Canada and the United States (Alaska). The Arctic may be best perceived as a peripheral region from the point of view of the region's nation-states and their capitals, which are located much further south (Bone, 2003). Prior to the emergence of international Arctic cooperation among the region's states, it was impossible to identify the Arctic as a single politico-legal region. It was the adoption in 1991, of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) by the eight Arctic States and the development of environmental policies to address the region's priority environmental problems, which marked the gradual emergence of the Arctic as a distinct locus for international policy and law. (Koivurova, 2012).

The Arctic consists primarily of segments of nation-states, whose political centers of gravity are mostly located more towards the south; this observation presents us with the problem of determining which specific regions of these states should be included in a region referred to as the Arctic or the circumpolar North (Young and Einansson 2004, cited by Bone, 2017).

Four million people inhabit the Arctic; many of them are indigenous peoples and other residents who are highly dependent on the Arctic ecosystem. Accelerated ice melting facilitates access to resources, which helps the economic development of indigenous communities, but increased commercial activities on the high seas and on land jeopardize the traditions and lifestyle of indigenous peoples, who want to preserve the environment and develop it using traditional knowledge (Long, 2018).

The Arctic Council has established three geographical boundaries for the Circumpolar World. For example, the Arctic Circle, which is an imaginary line that lies at latitude 66° 33' 47" N, and represents the northernmost boundary of the Circumpolar World and thus produces the smallest version of the Circumpolar World (Bone, 2017). The Arctic Council has produced two other maps showing the southern boundary of the Arctic. In North America, the more generous one is much further south and encompasses the three territories of Canada, plus two regions inhabited by the Inuit: Nunavik and Nunatsiavut. For example, the southern boundary of Nunavik is at the 55th parallel north (55° N), while Nunatsiavut reaches the 54th parallel north.

For Koivurova (2012), the Arctic is simply an extension of various existing political, economic and environmental systems. The current global (political-legal) governance system is multifaceted, comprising global, regional, national and subnational levels, including the Arctic. Major drivers of change - economic globalization, climate change and other issues - have clear impacts on the region. Long-term changes in global mineral or oil prices have direct impacts on the Arctic region (Koivurova, 2012).

## V. THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

The Arctic Council, created in 1996, is a high-level intergovernmental forum that promotes cooperation, coordination, and interaction between Arctic states and indigenous peoples, as well as

other interested parties, focusing on two thematic areas: sustainable development in the Arctic and the protection and study of the fragile Arctic ecosystem. The Arctic Council is little understood and promoted; although it cannot enact binding legislation (except among member states) or discuss military security issues, these supposed "weaknesses" have actually helped it forge consensus in other important thematic areas (Charron, 2012).

Eight permanent members integrate the Arctic Council, these are Canada, Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland, Iceland (has no indigenous communities), Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. It also includes six permanent international organizations representing the indigenous peoples of the Arctic. The most important issues within the Arctic Council are related to climate change, the environment, and biodiversity. The organization functions as a forum for circumpolar Arctic states and nations (Ackren, 2014: 52). The Arctic can be seen as an example of how centralized states are interacting to create a new type of international dialogue, where the Arctic Council is taking a leading role with both state and non-state members to cooperate and shape public policymaking in the international arena (Ackren, 2014).

The Ottawa Declaration created the Arctic Council in 1996. The Council's mandate extended a previous declaration of cooperation focused on environmental protection in the Arctic signed in 1991. The Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, a Finnish initiative with Canadian participation, established four environmental working groups and a task force on sustainable development. The eight Arctic states, observers and Arctic indigenous groups sent experts to assist the task forces with their studies and projects (Charron, 2012).

During the 1990s, the Arctic, in particular the Arctic Ocean, was recognized as an environmental hub for global environmental challenges, and a container for far-reaching pollutants, as well as a target area for rapid climate change. Because of this, Arctic states decided to foster international cooperation for environmental protection, and to call for strong international environment-related treaties and sign agreements to prevent pollution and strive for better industrial management to minimize environmental risks (Heininen, 2016).

Scientific recommendations and reports were produced on various Arctic environmental issues, including global issues such as the impact of pollution on fragile Arctic ecosystems, as well as more focused studies on specific issues in some countries, such as the impacts of nuclear waste in the Russian Arctic (Charron, 2012).

The Ottawa Declaration (1996) establishes, among other things, that the Arctic States reaffirm their commitment to sustainable development in the Arctic, for the protection of the Arctic environment. Over the past 25 years, the Arctic States and indigenous peoples have transformed the Cold War policy of confrontation into meaningful cooperation and stability by adopting an environmental protection policy as the main platform for functional cooperation, manifested in the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) (Heininen, 2016).

Thus, the Arctic is a region with an increasingly dense network of diverse (transnational) actors. : Indigenous peoples strongly emphasizing their cultural and political identity; subnational governments in charge of regional development seeking collaboration both within and across national borders, e.g., through paradiplomacy; Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with their concerns and ambitions to influence discourse; academic communities producing knowledge and thereby shaping our understanding of the region. More recently, there has also been a trend towards the reconceptualization of sovereignty, with the argument that the Arctic agenda is no longer only about interstate relations and economic activities, but also about understanding the traditional knowledge-based potential of indigenous peoples to implement sustainable resource use (Ibid, 2016).

## VI. THE STRUCTURE OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

The structure of the Arctic Council has a tripartite character; it is composed of three distinct groups; the Member States, the Permanent Participants, and the Observers. Each of these constituent groups has a distinctive representative role within the council and contributes a specific vision for the Arctic. All groups strive to articulate the aspirations and concerns of their constituencies. Through coordinated work, they seek to shape the diversity of priorities and perspectives that exist within the circumpolar region viewed as a whole (Nord, 2016).

The member states are eight: Canada, the United States, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Russian Federation (Table 1). These "Arctic Eight" have representation within the council because they have some degree of sovereign jurisdiction within the Arctic region and as a result of having signed the Ottawa Declaration. These countries are represented at the table by: government officials, who strive to articulate their overall visions of the region from their national point of view. Although they differ in size, influence, and degree of interest in Arctic affairs, each of the eight member states has the same level of opinion and representation on the council (Nord, 2016).

While representing specific national interests and perspectives, Member States have strived over the years to articulate a common vision for the Arctic, one that underscores cooperation and collaboration in the circumpolar region. Considering this vision, members conduct their deliberations and establish their decisions based on consensus (Nord, 2016).

**<Table 1> Member States of the Arctic Council (in order of occupancy of the chairmanship)**

| Country | Period | |
|---|---|---|
| Canada | 1996-1998 | 2013-2015 |
| United States | 1998-2000 | 2015-2017 |
| Finland | 2000-2002 | |
| Iceland | 2002-2004 | |
| Russian Federation | 2004-2006 | |
| Norway | 2006-2009 | |
| Denmark (on behalf of Greenland and the Faroe Islands) | 2009-2011 | |
| Sweden | 2011-2013 | |

Source: prepared by the authors with information from Nord, 2016

The second group of Arctic Council members consists of the Permanent Participants; their job is to represent the various indigenous peoples of the Arctic region. They are currently represented by: six organizations that are: The Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC), the Aleut International Association (AIA), The Gwich'in Council International (GCI); the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC); the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON); and the Saami Council (SC) (Table 2).

In the same way, these indigenous organizations vary in size, resources and influence within their own societies and regions. Collectively, however, they seek to articulate the diverse indigenous concerns and perspectives that are not fully represented by the national governments of the Arctic States. According to the Ottawa Declaration, Permanent Participants have the right to "active participation" and "consultation" in the organization's proceedings.

However, they do not have individual voting rights, as is the case with member states. This creates a certain degree of second-class status for Permanent Participants and has resulted in these groups sometimes feeling "marginalized" within the Council. In practice, however, most Member States regularly consult with indigenous groups in their region on most relevant issues and seek their views

and consent before making their own decisions. In this sense, Permanent Participants can exercise "informal vetoes", even if they do not vote within the Council.[2]

For Charron (2012), indigenous groups were granted privileged membership to ensure that their voices were included in the Council's deliberations. As a result, the Arctic Council has several levels of membership--a practice developed in the environmental protection strategy. The eight member states, which were also members of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, are the ones with voting privileges and the ability to determine public policy and make project-related decisions. For this author, the status of "permanent participants" granted to indigenous groups in the Arctic Council actually represents a more relevant role than is usually granted to these groups in UN meetings and other multilateral fora.

**<Table 2> Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council**

| Participants | Acronyms |
|---|---|
| The Arctic Athabaskan Council | (AAC) |
| The Aleut International Association | (AIA) |
| The International Gwich'in Council | (GCI) |
| Inuit Circumpolar Council | (ICC) |
| The Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North | (RAIPON) |
| The Saami Council | (SC) |

Source: prepared by the authors with information from Nord, 2016.

As we can see, there are six transnational indigenous organizations that serve as permanent participants in the Arctic Council. Each has its representatives at the national level in the countries and regions where they live. In this article, we focus on the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), which is made up of Inuit people living in regions of four different countries in the circumpolar Arctic region.

## VI. THE INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL (ICC)

According to Jessica Shadian, the participation of Inuit communities in paradiplomatic activities is both linked to and circumscribed within the context of the emergence of indigenous internationalism in the 1970s, in which a new era of Inuit paradiplomacy began through a series of disputes between Canada and the state of Alaska over oil and gas extraction.

Referring to the case of the Inuit, Morin and Saladin d'Anglure (2003) emphasize "indigenous groups realized the need to unite and transcend the borders of the national states that divided them by creating transnational organizations" if they wanted to ensure their survival. For these authors, transnational indigenous networks have been constituted "to defend their different interests and have their specificities recognized". In other words, "indigenous transnationality has become a political instrument whose lobbying force can be exerted at various levels"; moreover, these networks "have become privileged interlocutors for the international institutions that define their new rights" (Morin and Saladin d'Anglure, 2003: 244).

In order to reclaim control over resource development in the Arctic, Inuit from diverse communities joined forces to defend their collective rights on national, regional, and global platforms. This led to

[2] This was illustrated recently when the European Union's application for admission as an observer to the Arctic Council was postponed at the Kiruna and Iqaluit ministerial meetings, partly because of substantial opposition from the permanent participants (McGwin 2015, cited by Nord, 2016).

the establishment of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC). The ICC has been notoriously successful, notes Shadian (2015), in its ability to represent and negotiate Inuit public policy platforms, especially on issues such as cultural self-determination and resource management at the national, regional, international, and transnational levels through ongoing participation in the Arctic Council, and representation at United Nations negotiations, as well as forging solidarities among Inuit communities (Dittmer and McConnell, 2015; Shadian, 2015).

For Abele and Rodon (2009: 126), the ICC has worked to promote and participate in the reconfiguration of the Arctic as a coherent political region, to foster international cooperation in a strategic area during the Cold War, as well as to develop and advocate for a pan-Arctic environmental strategy, support a non-threatening decolonization of the Arctic, and establish the Inuit people as an international actor. According to these authors, various factors such as the pressure of oil development, the desire for self-government and cultural survival were themes shared by most Inuit living in the nation-states of the circumpolar region. In particular, they saw that protecting the viability of the northern ecosystem could not be adequately addressed within each nation-state (Abele and Rodon, 2009).

The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) was founded in 1977, four decades ago. This organization represents approximately 160,000 people of Inuit origin living in Alaska (United States), Canada, Greenland (Denmark), and Chukotka (Russia). The ICC effectively utilizes the state system of international relations between states, and is part of international political processes; however, it remains a non-state actor, whose paradiplomatic practices are grounded in particular Inuit conceptions of land, water and natural resources, knowledge and history. In turn, the establishment of alternative sovereignties requires new governance structures within and beyond the Arctic (Shadian, 2016).

Founded by Eben Hopson, originally from Alaska, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) has flourished and become an important international non-governmental organization. Currently, the organization has level II consultative status with the United Nations. To develop and thrive in their habitat, the Inuit realized that they needed to speak with one voice on issues of common concern and combine their energies and talents focused on protecting and promoting their way of life. The main objectives of the ICC are to: strengthen unity among Inuit in the circumpolar region; promote Inuit rights and interests internationally; develop and encourage lasting policies that protect the Arctic environment; and seek full and active partnership in the political, economic and social development of the circumpolar regions (ICC Canada, 2022).

In just two decades, the ICC succeeded, through transnational organization and paradiplomacy, in turning the Arctic into a zone of peaceful power based on a policy of sustainable and fair development. The ICC also succeeded in giving Inuit communities an international personality. At the end of the day, the ICC became a model for many peoples fragmented by nation-state borders and yearning to regain their unity within transnational political structures (Morin and d'Anglure, 2003).

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

The fragmentation of the power of nation-states has led to new forms of governance with the participation of subnational, non-state actors and organized groups of society. As we have seen, paradiplomacy refers to the international activities of actors other than nation-states, such as international organizations representing indigenous peoples. In this context, we can observe the international activities deployed by the Inuit people of the different states of the circumpolar region.

Regional governance in the Arctic comprises various mechanisms through which crucial decisions are made. Among these efforts, we can mention the organization and creation of the Arctic Council in

1996, an intergovernmental forum that brings together eight member states and six permanent participants. In this forum, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, as well as other international non-governmental organizations, plays a relevant role in Arctic governance through the coordinated action of at least 160,000 Inuit scattered mainly in Canada (in Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador), the United States (Alaska), Denmark (Greenland) and Russia (Chukotka). Through the ICC, actions have been coordinated that have allowed this community to preserve its culture and survival; at the same time, these paradiplomacy activities have allowed them a sustainable economic development based on their practices and knowledge.

New forms of governance are more common in countries with highly decentralized democratic and federal systems. In this sense, the role of the Canadian government has been crucial in supporting Inuit actions at various times. Canada has promoted and supported Inuit rights to self-determination, to natural resources in their habitat, as well as in the formation of the ICC and has been a promoter of the Arctic Council.

The Arctic has become a region with diverse transnational actors that contribute to the governance of the region through international forums and organizations; for example, indigenous peoples defend their cultural and political identity; subnational governments participate in decision-making in the international environment through paradiplomacy to favor the development of their regions; non-governmental organizations promote a region that preserves the environment by fighting climate change.

Regarding the composition of the Arctic Council, it is worth noting that there is a significant representation of the indigenous peoples living in the Arctic in the six international indigenous organizations that have the status of "permanent participants", which guarantees an important role in the discussions and decision-making of the Council. As we have seen previously, governance goes beyond state actors to include non-state actors. This category includes international indigenous organizations, including the Inuit Circumpolar Council, which represents the Inuit community in the region.

Thus, the Arctic Council is characterized by an innovative form of governance that breaks with the traditional molds and precepts of international relations in the sense that only sovereign actors such as nation-states should participate in discussions and decision-making in this region. The Arctic Council is an example of governance for other regions of the world facing similar problems.

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