

# Understanding Arctic Change through Assessments and Stakeholder Engagement

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## Abstract

The introductory chapter opens with a background overview of the change occurring in the Arctic and the international attention to the Arctic regions which is a result of that transformation. The discussion proceeds with the methodology and process of the *Strategic Assessment of Development of the Arctic* report, on which this book is largely based. The assessment analyzed changes in the Arctic, with focus on the European Arctic, identified trends and drivers of changes, as well as considered the presence of the European Union in the region. Particular attention is given to the methodology for stakeholder consultations and the overall role of the stakeholder engagement in the assessment process.

## 1 Introduction

The Arctic environmental, economic and social landscape is complex and diverse. EU institutional and regulatory frameworks are no less complicated and even confusing for many actors from outside of the EU. This book presents the results of over year and a half of work within the project “Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment of Development of the Arctic”, implemented by a network of 19 European research and communication institutions and funded by the European Commission. The volume aims to provide a balanced and up-to-date overview of trends and changes occurring in the Arctic, with the focus on the European part of the region. Moreover, it is hoped that – by building and adding to earlier analyses<sup>1</sup> – the book will help the reader to

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\* The editors own acknowledgment to all members of the EU Arctic Information Centre initiative network (see [www.arcticinfo.eu](http://www.arcticinfo.eu)), who participated in the design of the methodology for the assessment.

1 Cavalieri, S. et al. (Ecologic Institute and others) (2010). EU Arctic Footprint and Policy Assessment Report. European Commission: DG Environment, [arcticfootprint.eu](http://arcticfootprint.eu). Accessed

better comprehend the multifaceted role of the EU in the region and to understand the broad array of EU-Arctic interlinkages. The core of this volume comprises contributions constituting updated and slightly expanded chapters of the *Strategic Assessment of Development of the Arctic* report (SADA).

Naturally, all topics and questions could not be addressed. The authors focused on issues currently at the centre of Arctic debate as well as those not well covered in earlier studies. All components of the project were implemented through various modes of stakeholder engagement. This applies in particular to the assessment of development of the Arctic and the analysis of information and knowledge gaps.

The chapter opens with the bird's view at the Arctic transformation. Then, a brief overview of the objective, scope and methodology of the assessment work are given. In addition, a more general discussion on the effectiveness of assessments and their potential as tools for decision-making can be found in the chapter by Śmieszek *et al.* The introduction closes with the presentation of the outline of this book.

## 2 Arctic in the Global Spotlight

Around 2007, notions of climate change doom, the scramble for Arctic resources, potential inter-state conflicts, resource bonanza and new ocean highways had become commonplace in discussion about the Arctic.<sup>2</sup> However, after a few years of the “Arctic boom, Arctic doom”<sup>3</sup> narrative, a more in-depth and balanced understanding of the Arctic reality has started to emerge. Some scholars even refer to a notion of “Arctic bust”. This book constitutes a contribution to this shift in discourse about the Arctic, as the discussion gradually focuses on designing realistic responses to concrete challenges. And these are plenty. The changes in sea-ice, terrestrial snow and ice cover, thawing permafrost, and shifts in ecosystems amount to profound transformation of region's landscape. The economic activities, even if

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25 January 2015; Koivurova, T., Kokko, K., Duyck, S., Sellheim, N. & Stepien, A. (2010). EU competencies affecting the Arctic, EP/EXPO/B/AFET/FWC/2009-01/LOT2/04, European Parliament, Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union.

2 Koivurova, T. (2011). ‘The Actions of the Arctic States Respecting the Continental Shelf: A Reflective Essay’ (2011) 42 *Ocean Development & Intl L* 211.

3 To quote a title of an insightful book by Barry Zellen, see Zellen, B.S. (2009). *Arctic Doom, Arctic Boom: The Geopolitics of Climate Change in the Arctic*, Praeger Security International.