

Sustainable Urban Development in the European Arctic. Towards Enhanced Transnational Cooperation in Remote Regions

The proposed project investigates how transnational cooperation among urban areas of remote regions can be enhanced to better harmonize sustainable development practices in such places. This will be achieved through a combination of theoretical and empirical analysis which include comparison of the decision-processes on sustainable development practices in seven selected cities located in the European Arctic.

The main research goals are to answer the questions of why approaches differ throughout the European Arctic and how Arctic urban development can be steered more effectively in alliance with local and global policies.

This research goes beyond existing knowledge because it focuses specifically on hindrances and pathways for enhanced transnational cooperation in remote regions, and as such in the specific case of the Arctic. Based on the idea of interactive governance, the main research hypothesis is that urban development in the Arctic will be more sustainable if simultaneously the positions of local stakeholders are reflected in decision-processes and policies are aligned across the national and regional levels. The project is based on the assumption, that currently, to a varying degree, urban development in the European Arctic is shaped by both national and sub-national policies of the different Arctic states, and also by international arrangements such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The research team will conduct qualitative and quantitative research, including: content analysis of relevant policy and legislative documents and a critical reading of the scientific literature. Additionally, the team will organize focus interviews with local stakeholders (residents, businesses, civil society organizations, representatives from local administrations, and elected officials) in seven selected case study cities in the European Arctic to verify and expand on the information gained from the document analysis.