

## **Governing the Polar Regions in an Era of Global Change**

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I address three themes: the focus of my research program, lessons learned about governance that are relevant to the polar regions, and the consequences of the onset of the Anthropocene for polar governance. Focusing on governance as a social function centered on steering societies toward desirable outcomes (e.g. long-term sustainability) and away from undesirable outcomes (e.g. the tragedy of the commons), I analyze the creation and effectiveness of governance systems. Key lessons include: (i) regime design matters, (ii) international legally binding instruments often have drawbacks, (iii) regulation is not the be all and end all of governance, (iv) clustering regimes into complexes makes sense under some circumstances, and (v) regimes can produce islands of cooperation even in times of conflict. The onset of the Anthropocene, occurring at a more rapid pace in the Arctic than anywhere else on the planet, will have major consequences for the development and implementation of effective governance systems for the polar regions. Among other things, we will need to: emphasize early warning; beware of the dangers of institutional reductionism; avoid institutional lock in; and learn to live with high levels frequent surprises.