

## **B09-O03**

### **FROM ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS TO SOCIETAL OPPORTUNITIES: HOW CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY DISCOURSE IS RESHAPING THE ARCTIC MAKING IT MORE ATTRACTIVE FOR NON-ARCTIC POWERS ESPECIALLY IN EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES AND MAKING IT MORE VULNERABLE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE ARCTIC**

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The climate change discourse have changed over the years at least by power position holders that now talk more about the opportunities than the problems that melting sea ice in the Arctic Ocean generates - thereby also giving new meanings to the concept of sustainability. The paper will discuss how especially a rising China but also Japan and South Korea are contributing to generate economic development in the Arctic but at the same time challenge cultural and environmental sustainability. Especially the Government of Greenland has been welcoming Asian contributions to economic development and economic development has at the same time been seen as a bringing about a sustainable economy that functions as a precondition for political independence from Denmark that is the promise of the new Self Government Act that was adopted by the Danish and the Greenlandic parliament in 2009 after a referendum in Greenland in which 75 % of the voters were in favor of the proposal. A question to be further discussed in the paper is whether the Asian countries are aware and content that they are contributing to realizing the ambition of economic and political sustainability in Greenland. The emerging situation of prioritizing economic development through utilizing the enhancing accessibility of mineral exploitation and the growing feasibility of new shipping routes in the Arctic Ocean from Asia to North America and Northern Europe will put more pressure on the Arctic Council to become a binding decision making organization instead of a debating club, as it has been called, in order to handle the growing number and complexity of governance issues that this development creates. The paper will discuss whether the Arctic Council by being an open forum actually has been able to include a growing number of very diversified actors spanning from NGOs and indigenous peoples' organizations to Arctic and non-Arctic states and how non-Arctic states will contribute to enhance the governance capabilities of the Arctic council.