

Conclusion: Making Connections between Justice and Studies of the Arctic

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Justice is for many a reiterative and ongoing process. To see where, for whom and how justice can be achieved begins by identifying both existing and potential future injustices that form the epicentre from where transformation can emerge. The work of this volume has intended to introduce justice to the conversation on development in and research on the Arctic, but also to flag injustice and to bring forth new ideas. In this conclusion, we discuss some of the key findings of the chapters, how the chapters relate and speak to each other, and the chapter culminates with a few ideas for further research. Here we are returning to the notions of justice and injustice, and we address how these concepts have been useful in the analyses in the preceding chapters.

This conclusion provides us with the opportunity to discuss how the themes, topics under study and the different aspects of justice coalesce in the volume. As has been made clear, the chapters make use of different types and understandings of justice as analytical tools as well as descriptors for various situations. For instance, this work addresses and problematizes both legal and social justice factors in several of these chapters. Most chapters focus on the issues of procedural and structural aspects of injustice in the Arctic and many discuss aspects of representation and recognition – or lack thereof.

We find both separate and overlapping understandings of justice throughout the volume, and several of the chapters speak towards one another, sometimes from a different aspect of justice thinking, sometimes with a different form, and even others from a different realm of justice.¹ What many of the chapters have in common is the acknowledgement of

¹ For further discussions of forms and realms of justice, see Ohlsson, J. and Przybylinski, S. (forthcoming 2023) *Theorising Justice: A primer for Social Scientists*, Bristol: Bristol University Press.

the critical and necessary potential of assessing the issues of development conditions in the Arctic through the lens of justice. This furthers a clear assumption based on the premise that one cannot solve one injustice by creating another. An important assumption that much of the reasoning builds upon is that when we present features of justice, issues of injustice also inevitably become apparent. Focusing on injustice or why something is unjust (rather than explicitly focusing on what is just) reveals important information and a more nuanced understanding of the circumstances. This, in turn, contributes to a more nuanced understanding of what justice is both in general and particularly within the context of the Arctic.

The chapters in this volume are situated within the broader context of justice literature in several ways, including traditional schools of justice, in their focus on specific features of justice and their explicit consideration of forms of justice. Given the emphasis on the liberal tradition of justice (Chapters 4, 8, 11 and 12), in substance there is more focus on freedoms and individual rights. Situated within the cosmopolitan tradition Chapters 3, 9 and 10 have an emphasis on the transnational and international aspects of rights and responsibilities. The contributions within critical approaches to justice (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7) query relations of power and recognition, while the contribution using the capabilities approach (Chapter 5) emphasizes the relationship between empowerment and well-being.

The contributions of this volume also connect to existing features of justice found in the broader literature. For example, in a focus on intergenerational justice (Chapter 10), there is an ongoing discussion on the impacts of contemporary decision making on future generations. In the focus on Indigenous issues (Chapters 2, 8, 9, 10 and 11) there is attention drawn to issues of misrecognition and hierarchical inequality. Several chapters (6, 7, 10 and 11) position the environment as central to their concern of injustice and the position of the environment within decision-making processes.

Just Transition (Chapters 4, 9 and 12) takes into account a more systemic evaluation of trade-offs in responsibility and distribution of the effects of the green transition, while in the focus on energy justice (Chapter 5) there is concern for the distribution, production and consumption of energy resources.

A number of chapters within this volume connect to existing forms of justice, which address the modalities in which justice unfolds. For example, there are concerns about procedural forms of justice (Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 10) which evaluate processes and, in particular, inclusion within decision making and the formation of legal and political processes. The focus on recognitional forms of justice (Chapters 1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12) considers who is included within processes or has a voice in decision making, or who suffers the consequences of decisions. Distributional forms of justice (Chapters 2, 6, 7, 8 and 11) are concerned with how resources, power or hazards are allocated across different hierarchies and groups within society.

There are at least three significant features of the Arctic that highlight its potency for justice scholarship: (1) the evidence of feedback loops emerging in climate change; (2) the perspective that the region is a resource base for economic development; and (3) the place that Arctic communities – especially Indigenous communities – have within this landscape. These features reveal that it is a time for reckoning in the distribution of harms and benefits, the decision-making procedures, and recognition of the role, rights and stakes that citizens and inhabitants have in both the past and the future of the Arctic. The chapters within this volume have introduced us to a variety of issues of injustices and provided us with perspectives from justice theorizing that may inform more just approaches to the region – drawing attention to aspects of the who, what, why, where and how of justice and injustice, first developed by Allison Jaggar (2009). Asking these five questions helps organize and describe an issue or context where justice or injustices are present, and to conduct analyses grounded in theories of justice.

A few themes cut across several of the chapters – one of the overarching themes is how issues of justice and injustice in the Arctic could, and sometimes should, be understood. For instance, Chapters 1 and 3 address the normative principles or standards helpful for assessing justice and taking responsibility for the effects of global climate change. While Chapter 1 centres on the organizational structure of the Arctic Council, Chapter 3 contributes a discussion on the centrality of a relational model of responsibility. Both ground their arguments in Critical Theory and draw on Frankfurt School accounts. Chapters 2 and 4 discuss other models for taking and distributing responsibility for injustices in the Arctic. Here, structural injustices and Iris Marion Young's (2011) five faces of oppression and domination, as well as the JUST framework and relational model for a better understanding of corporate social responsibility (CSR), are explored in the context of the Arctic. This contributes to a critical theoretical discussion towards our understanding of the Arctic. Chapter 5 furthers the discussion on the capabilities approach by expanding the theory to include collective capabilities. This also speaks to a relational approach, not far off from the one proposed in Chapter 3, yet the approach is from a different perspective and focuses on a different subject matter.

Chapter 6 critically examines the use of justice, with an explicit focus on environmental justice. The use of justice, according to this chapter, is often limited to the mainstreaming and signposting of justice approaches in environmental policies, instead of taking the unjust structures of capitalism and globalization seriously. It then frames its argument in the realm of responsibility. By risking a reduction of justice – and even more importantly – the injustices many people face, many policy documents adopt a version of environmental justice that in strategic ways abstracts from the actual injustices. This, instead, risks reproducing the very injustices that are supposed to

be handled by not taking into account the historical and contemporary structures. Sharing a focus on environmental justice, [Chapter 7](#) expands the previous US-dominated understanding of Sacrifice Zone, and tests its applicability to an Arctic context, explicitly in Norway.

[Chapters 8, 9 and 10](#) centre on various topics, but all are related to Indigenous aspects of justice and injustice in the Arctic, primarily the Norwegian and Finnish Arctic. The features of justice they are highlighting are connected to representation, recognition and procedural justice.

Central points and avenues for future research

Many chapters offer important insights on practical processes, where issues of representation, recognition, responsibility and rights are pressing. This is often influenced by asymmetrical power relations. These asymmetries, we argue, need to be carefully assessed and taken into serious consideration when addressing development in the Arctic. As Darren [McCauley \(Chapter 4 of this volume\)](#) critically states, ‘being responsible is not enough’ when it comes to the roles and responsibilities of businesses in the Arctic. This is equally important for other sectors as well, not the least the public sector and public administration. Clearly, issues of justice and injustices are central parts of the development of sustainability agendas and the formation of just Arctic societies and territories. These issues must be treated as such.

What also becomes clear is that the just and ethical aspects of development in the Arctic are largely constituted by the relational and social aspects of power. This speaks to all chapters of the volume. It also shows that aspects of justice and injustice are important for future developments in the Arctic. This then strengthens our approach to initiating this field of study. We see this as the beginning of a very important conversation in the years to come.

The toolkit of justice theory provides richness, diversity and breadth in the options available to scholars. First, scholars can draw from the more traditional theories of justice, such as liberal, critical or cosmopolitan approaches, amongst many others. Second, there are established traditions that focus on a particular feature as the target of justice, such as climate, energy or space. Beyond this, scholars can choose from the forms of justice to investigate distributional, procedural or recognitional and retributive concerns at stake.² Depending on which justice tradition one employs, these different concerns will foreground in different ways. This makes studies of justice both complex and nuanced and at the same time provides opportunity for both narrow and broad investigations of injustice.

² For an exploration of various schools and fields of justice, see Ohlsson, J. and Przybylinski, S. (forthcoming 2023) *Theorising Justice: A primer for Social Scientists*, Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Our collective work in this volume has identified seven themes that appear promising for future research. The first theme is *recognition*. Several of the chapters discuss aspects of recognition, and this is (again) the start of a crucial discussion about Arctic development. Questions of who is seen, heard and listened to in debates, policy making, decision making, and planning of various initiatives are utterly important for addressing aspects of justice and injustice – both in scholarly work as well as in policy and business initiatives. Another separate but promising discussion is that of recognition (especially recognition of a variety of subjects – humans, non-human animals, ecosystems) in connection to issues of tolerance and respect. Other disciplines have had lively debates about these issues, but the discussion has, until now, overlooked the peoples, societies and ecosystems of the Arctic. With ecosystem services gaining attention in policy domains, studies are needed at the intersection of justice within ecosystems and the role of cultural ecosystems in prosperous and sustainable communities.

The importance of taking recognition seriously leads us to the second theme identified, *rights*. When stakeholders and rights holders are being appropriately included and listened to in various processes, more conflicts of interest and conflicts of rights may become increasingly apparent. Some of these already exist but have not always surfaced or have not been taken seriously enough. This will increase the need for (1) transparent negotiation processes, (2) enough time allocated for the consultation processes before the initiation of new projects (as well as critical assessments of the extension of old ones), and (3) knowledge of legal as well as local aspects in decision making and administrative processes at all levels. For instance, public officers at governmental agencies and municipalities must regularly review aspects of Indigenous rights to a larger degree than what currently seems to be the case. In addition, the political leadership at various administrative levels must create circumstances that properly allow for consultations with all affected people, even though industry requires a higher level of efficiency.

The third theme can also be considered to some extent as the starting point for any evaluation of justice and injustice. This speaks to the *vulnerability* present in various ways in the Arctic. The region includes vulnerable populations, vulnerable infrastructure and vulnerable ecosystems. This is made clear by several of the chapters in this volume. These chapters simultaneously serve as a venue for future research as more knowledge is needed. For instance, the connections between vulnerability and injustices in the Arctic seem to be important aspects for both theoretical and empirical exploration. This inevitably speaks to aspects of power and power asymmetries in various kinds of relationships and structures in the Arctic and of Arctic governance in particular.

A fourth theme that cuts across several of the chapters in this volume is *Indigeneity* and the challenges faced by Indigenous peoples, which is also an

understudied topic. As the original peoples of the Arctic, it is the Indigenous communities that often have the most at stake in issues and questions of justice. There is much more to be understood towards retribution of historical injustice and restoration and recognition in postcolonial justice in order to co-create a better future. Discussions of Indigeneity are often embedded in issues of the exercise and protection of rights, participation in decision-making procedures and, more recently, surfacing in questions of Green colonialism. The question of subjectivity is increasingly contested in this domain and requires deliberate and deliberative attention.

A fifth theme is that most chapters in this volume are primarily people centred or *anthropocentric*. The majority of existing research relating to issues of justice and injustice – in the Arctic and generally speaking – is primarily centred on humans. However, issues of justice and injustice could also be related to other legal and moral subjects, resulting in novel accounts that, for instance, explore the rights of nature. The interconnected nature of the Arctic means that ecosystems and their non-human inhabitants (and their valuation) are related to the issues of justice. These discussions are striking with promising connections to several of the analyses in this volume, but there is also room for future work.

The sixth theme, *environmental justice*, has been woven from different geographical positions or perspectives with a focus on social aspects of justice within some traditions and with a focus on nature in others, and contributes to expanding discourses on the Arctic beyond the initial focus on the US. Some of the chapters in this volume make important contributions toward expanding the existing debates. For instance, [Chapters 6 and 7](#) both contribute to the body of work on environmental justice. The concept of Sacrifice Zones contributes to the discussion of environmental justice in the Arctic, indicates that there is a clear gap in this area where more research is needed.

The seventh theme, on which others elsewhere have made important contributions, concerns the issue of *reconciliation* of Indigenous and minority groups in the Arctic. These are pressing issues in, but in no way limited to, communities in Canada, Sweden and Finland for instance. This doubtlessly has important consequences for issues of justice and injustices in the Arctic and reconnects to the first theme of recognition. The ongoing and recently initiated reconciliation processes sometimes relates to restorative and recognitional forms of justice, but the implications are yet to be seen.

What the work in this volume reveals is that the scope for exploring justice and the opportunities for removing injustices are many. What is required is the responsibility for this action to be assumed and for the work to begin in earnest. We hope that this volume acts as a prompt to this endeavour and becomes the catalyst for justice in the environment, societies and governance of the Arctic region.

References

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