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Title: *Transport diplomacy in the Arctic Region: Bridging the geopolitical gap between the local and the global*

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Mobility is a phenomenon unevenly distributed and the northern circumpolar world is far from being an exception. Local, national and international actors do not have the same influence, expertise and the same capacity to ensure the transport of people and goods to, from and within the regions of the Far North. Nevertheless, transportation has been identified by several Arctic scholars, political strategists and practitioners and a key issue for the development of the Arctic region.

Being aware that the specific climate, the environment sensitivity, the multicultural character, the intricate political governance, and the relative remoteness of the whole region make intervention even more complex and risky in the Arctic, is it still possible to make sustainable and efficient decisions in the field of northern polar transport? Can we limit political conflicts over these issues?

These questions are important since transport interventions comprise long processes of implementation and mobilize considerable amount of resources: technical expertise, financial investments, and human resources. Their impact at the local and global level is significant and it is not rare that point of views and priorities of local, national international stakeholder remain divergent. Indeed, transport interventions involve political decision about the use of geographical space; in this sense transport remain fundamentally geo-political issue for all actors (individual and collective).

The aim of the current paper is threefold.

I intend first to explain how the question of the Arctic geopolitics of transport has been so far little discussed and too much limited to issues related to national security, sovereignty and global rivalry concerning access to natural resources) neglecting at the same time a major issue: transport itself, i.e. the mobility of people and goods.

Secondly, I undertake to explain why the transport geopolitics in the circumpolar North is not primarily concerned by the complex natural / technical conditions, neither the long physical distances between the hyper-periphery and the main political centres of decisions, but rather by the 'political distance' between geopolitical actors at all levels of governance.



Finally, I wish to expose five (5) types of conflict, tension or divergence that create or contribute to maintain this political/diplomatic distance between geopolitical actors (local/global; public/private; individual/collective). These tensions relate to the a) network occurrences; b) fundamental mobility regulation; c) privileges of access; d) maintenance circumstances; e) political and planning narrations. All these types of conflict will be illustrated with concrete cases taken from the circumpolar North.