The Role of Governance in Promoting the Resilience of Arctic Communities
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Introduction
For thousands of years communities have survived, and thrived, in the Arctic. The Indigenous societies located in Alaska, Canada, Greenland, Europe, and Russia have withstood changes in climate, food sources, location, diseases, and in more recent generation, threats from colonisation, land grabs, cultural integration, and social, economic, and political marginalisation. The threats to Arctic communities are no less today than they have been in the past and, if anything, the threats are greater in modern times than they have ever been. The ability of a community to endure threats and to recover from disruptive events is known as resilience. A resilient community will undergo a threat—whether physical, emotional, environmental or cultural—and recover either to the same status as experienced previously, or, if the community so chooses, to a different state of their choice.

Using a systematic comparative case analysis technique this article analyses the ways in which governance can increase, or decrease, resilience within Arctic communities.1 The authors identified a number of case studies representing different scenarios from across the Arctic in which resilience was a factor. Detailed analysis of the different types of resilience was then undertaken. Through this analysis a discovery was made that the case studies could best be grouped into two different categories: situations of ‘in-situ’ resilience and of ‘ex-situ’ resilience. The nature of resilience in these two categories is quite different, but within them resilience can be much more similar. Analysing resilience in this way allows the comparison of situations which initially appear to be quite diverse, but may actually call for similar forms of governance to enable resilience. This enables lessons to be learned from the varying case studies and facilitates the definition of best practice of the ways in which governance can

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support, or hinder, resilience. The conclusions drawn from the analysis of the case studies have resulted in some recommendations which can be found at the conclusion of the paper.

In the Arctic, resilience is becoming an increasingly important attribute. Climate change and modern economic conditions, as well as increasing opportunities for young people outside the Arctic, may result in some of the greatest changes Arctic communities have endured. Proper governance can result in resilient communities which can thrive despite these changes, while poor governance can cause significant harm. This article identifies the characteristics of the types of governance which enhance resilience and which should, as far as possible, be adopted in the management of Arctic communities.

Definitions

Governance

The Canadian think-tank the Institute on Governance identifies three key dimensions of governance: authority, decision-making, and accountability. Using this as a base, the Institute broadly defines governance as “how society or groups within it, organize to make decisions... [it] determines who has power, who makes decisions, how other players make their voice heard and how account is rendered.”

The Arctic Resilience Report defines governance slightly differently, as “the capacity for making deliberate choices, revising and employing knowledge for making those choices, and for organizing collectively to navigate challenges and opportunities — in short governance is ‘the shared process of shaping change.’” This definition is more human-centred; governance is not an abstract institution, but rather an active process in which people, communities, and groups can participate and change. Governance, therefore, is distinguished from government, which often focuses on the official institutionalization of

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decision-making processes. Governance includes not only regulations and laws, but rules, norms, and procedures for decision-making.

This paper will use the Arctic Resilience Report’s human-centred definition of governance, but employ the three-prong approach of authority, decision-making, and accountability to explore how governance at different levels can help or hinder resilience in the Arctic. Additionally, it will focus on governance at all levels - community, regional, national, and international - as necessary to provide a complete picture of governance in the Arctic.

The Arctic is governed in a unique way, subject to Indigenous self-governance, local governments, regional governments, national governments, and increasingly international governance, simultaneously. The region is composed of eight nations: Canada, Denmark (via Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Russia, and the U.S. All eight nations are members of the Arctic Council, an intergovernmental body that addresses issues faced in the Arctic. Six Indigenous groups are permanent participants in the Arctic Council, along with a list of approved observers including non-Arctic States, intergovernmental organizations, and NGOs.

Additionally, each of these countries has its own set of domestic laws that apply to its territory, and fragmented Indigenous, local, and state law that is applicable. For example, about sixty-one percent of Alaskan land is under the control of the federal government; twenty-five percent is owned by the State of Alaska; and twelve percent is owned by twelve Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs), with around 225 different Village Corporations controlling the villages which are built upon that land. As a result, decisions often have to go through federal agencies, state agencies, local governments, bureaus, ANCs, and village governments. Similarly, the Sámi people in Norway, Sweden and Finland each have their own Sámi Parliaments as well as the federal and regional governments. As will be shown, cooperation between these different levels of government is key to promoting resilience and stability in Arctic communities.

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**Resilience**

The need for Arctic communities to be resilient is becoming increasingly critical as rapid changes envelop the region and communities must adapt to the new climate. However, different people and communities define resilience differently, and as the concept increases in popularity, the definition continues to evolve.

The Arctic Resilience Report (later renamed the Arctic Resilience Assessment, or the ARA) originally defined resilience in its 2013 Arctic Resilience Interim Report as the “capacity [of people] to cope with disturbances and recover in such a way that they maintain their core function and identity. It also relates to the capacity to learn from and adapt to changing conditions, and when necessary, transform.”7 In the three years between the publication of the Interim Report and the publication of the first Arctic Resilience Report in 2016, the ARA shifted their definition slightly to focus more on human agency: “The capacity of people to learn, share and make use of their knowledge of social and ecological interactions and feedbacks, to deliberately and effectively engage in shaping adaptive or transformative social-ecological change.”8 The 2016 Report emphasises that resilience is a “system property” that “provides the underlying capacity for navigating” change.9 Therefore, resilience can be applied to many different things, such as communities, infrastructure, institutions, and culture.

The Arctic Resilience Action Framework (ARAF), published in 2017 defines resilience more broadly as the “ability of a system to bounce back and thrive during and after disturbances and shocks.”10 These shocks can be natural—a tsunami, earthquake, or flood—or man-made—an economic downturn, change in policy, or the introduction of a new industry into a community. The goal of the forum is to increase the resilience of Arctic States and communities, or “increase... [their capacity] to understand and respond to risks and changes in ways that support socio-economic development and healthy, functioning

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9 Arctic Council, 9.
ecosystems and ecosystem services.” The ARAF definition has a distinct environmental focus on ecosystems and includes the same aspects of human agency to respond to the changes, disturbances, and shocks.

Relying on these definitions, this paper recognises that resilience covers both physical and psycho-social aspects of life, and examines how ecological, social, economic, and physical factors play into the creation of resilience. The case studies chosen exemplify how broad the concept of resilience stretches—the physical location of villages, cultural practices, and participation in decision-making can be resilient in and of themselves, and contribute to a communities' overall resilience.

**Types of Resilience**

The identification of case studies demonstrating different kinds of resilience in the Arctic enabled analysis to take place regarding the similarities and differences between different scenarios across varying cultures, countries, geographies, and situations. By combining a familiarity with case studies on a micro level with the ability to generalise on a macro level, this systematic comparative case analysis technique allows lessons drawn from one scenario to be used in a scenario that initially seems very different but, in reality, shares a number of factors with the first scenario.  

The analysis works by choosing relevant case studies, comparing and contrasting the case studies to distinguish key defining factors as well as the similarities and differences already mentioned, identifying categories into which the case studies fit, and allocating the case studies to the identified categories. From here it is then possible to compare case studies within each category by focusing on the similarity factors which have led to the case studies being categorised in the same way.

The analysis led to the identification of two types of resilience in the Arctic. The first is ex-situ resilience, where a community is required to relocate. Sometimes this movement is forced, sometimes it is entirely by choice, and other times it is because there is no other

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1 Arctic Resilience Action Framework Review Committee, 4.
2 Charles C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (Univ of California Press, 2014), chap. 3; Rihoux, “Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Related Systematic Comparative Methods,” 680–82.
3 Ragin, *The Comparative Method*, 2014, chap. 3; Rihoux, “Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Related Systematic Comparative Methods,” 680–82.
4 Ragin, *The Comparative Method*, 2014, chap. 3; Rihoux, “Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Related Systematic Comparative Methods,” 680–82.
option. The relocation of entire communities can be dramatic and incredibly disruptive, especially in cases where it occurs as a result of an emergency such as a natural disaster which destroys the community. A relocation can also take more time and be planned, such as the cases of Arctic villages which are undertaking planned relocation as a result of climate change. One of these villages, Kivalina in Northern Alaska, is included as a case study below. Ex-situ resilience is also required for relocation which does not involve an entire community. Throughout the Arctic individuals and families find themselves moving away from their towns and villages to cities further south in search of work, education, healthcare, or housing. For those relocating, the establishment of communities, through culture, education, and language can be an important aspect of their ability to remain resilient; examples used in this study of ways in which cultures can be re-established in large non-Indigenous cities are those of Indigenous culture pre-schools in Helsinki and Anchorage. Regardless of the reason for relocation and the manner in which it occurs, communities which demonstrate ex-situ resilience are ones which are able to re-establish their culture, community, and way of life in their new location.

In contrast to ex-situ resilience, in-situ resilience is required where a community does not need to relocate. Although the community and its people remain in the same place, this does not mean that the status quo is maintained. Threats to and changes in culture, language, and way of life can all affect the resilience of a community and its ability to survive and to thrive. The changes are often less dramatic than those seen in situations where communities are relocating, but the threat to resilience, well-being, and community cohesion

can be just as great.\textsuperscript{20} The case studies which were chosen to demonstrate the need for in-situ resilience and the ways in which governance can support that resilience include the establishment of the Alaska Whaling Commission which works to safeguard the ability of Alaskan villages to maintain their traditional whaling practices and a study of the ways in which the name of a place—and the removal of colonial names—can boost the cultural resilience of a community.

The analysis conducted by this study found that most, if not all, situations in which Arctic communities need to be resilient in order to survive can be categorised as needing either in-situ or ex-situ resilience. The analysis also demonstrated that scenarios which fit into each category showed sufficient similarity in key factors to enable lessons to be learned through the systematic comparison of the case studies. Although this study focused on Arctic case studies, it is likely that the categorisation of resilience types into in-situ and ex-situ resilience will apply equally to other geographic regions around the world. The case studies described below each show ways in which governance can be used, within Arctic communities as well as elsewhere, to strengthen or weaken resilience within each category.

\textbf{Ex-situ Resilience Case Studies}

\textit{The Relocation of Kivalina, Alaska}

One of the challenges for building community resilience in the Arctic in the face of climate impacts is ensuring that communities are able to move out of harm’s way as landscapes change, while preserving their cultural identity, fate control, and important social support systems. While resilience frameworks should put an emphasis on helping people adapt and stay in their traditional locations, increasingly adaptation measures are not enough to prevent harm to communities, and relocation is necessary.

Arctic Alaska is already facing massive climate impacts, including sea ice loss, coastal erosion, and melting permafrost, which are threatening native villages and the ecosystems they depend upon. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has identified over thirty villages in Alaska that are currently at risk and need to implement adaptation

\textsuperscript{20} Arctic Council, “Arctic Resilience Report 2016.”
measures or relocate to prevent crisis scenarios. However, the statutory scheme governing relocation in the American Arctic is convoluted, with many different entities having jurisdiction over the territories and decisions related to village relocation. As of yet, no government structure exists to manage relocations, and multiple federal and state agencies have statutes giving them jurisdiction over pieces of the relocation process.

Kivalina, Alaska is one such village facing imminent risk from climate change. Situated on a small barrier reef island over 100 miles north of the Arctic Circle, the village is threatened by rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and heavy storms. It is home to around 400 Inupiaq, who rely on the traditional cultural practices of hunting bowhead whales, seals, walrus, caribou, and fish, and gathering edible plants and berries, to support their livelihood. The village began considering relocation as early as 1911, and took their first vote on relocation in 1953, less than 50 years after the U.S. Government forced them into permanent habitation on the island in 1905. Since the first vote, the island has lost over half of its land area. In 1992, the village voted to relocate; in 2021, they are still situated on the same island.

Why has this delay occurred? The answer is governance challenges. No one entity has the complete authority to decide to relocate, choose the new location, and facilitate the move, and the U.S. government has not supported the village's right to self-determination. Kivalina’s relocation efforts have been plagued by irreconcilable differences between the village's needs and USACE's preferred plans, and without a central body to facilitate decision-making and to be held accountable for delays, the process has dragged on for years.

22 “Alaska Native Villages: Limited Progress Has Been Made on Relocating Villages Threatened by Flooding and Erosion, Report GAO-09-551” (noting that “there is no single comprehensive proactive federal program to assist villages with their relocation efforts”).
The village originally chose Kiniktuuraq, an island about eight miles away, as the site for their relocation. The new island would provide the same access to the ocean and land necessary to continue their cultural traditions of hunting and gathering. Fourteen years after the initial vote to relocate, USACE completed a study titled the “Relocation Planning Project Master Plan: Kivalina, Alaska”.\(^{26}\) The study determined that relocation was the best option for the village, but that Kiniktuuraq would be subject to similar climatic variances, and was an unsuitable site due the high cost of preventing coastal erosion and flooding. It analysed seven locations for relocation and suggested two based on a variety of factors including: physical environment, construction and utility, social and access, and cost.\(^{27}\) However, the locations suggested by USACE were unacceptable to the village, as they would not enable the continuation of subsistence hunting. The study itself noted that among the sites considered, those that were lowest ranked by USACE were the ones with the highest “social and access” values, the values that consider access to traditional hunting and gathering grounds, as well as the ability to continue with cultural practices such as ice cellar construction.\(^{28}\)

USACE cannot force the Village to move to a location they do not wish to move to; the Village cannot move itself without access to government funding resources. As such, the relocation process has been stalled for years as the village’s fight for self-determination continues. The Village of Kivalina instead has had to focus on smaller measures that increase resilience. In Fall 2020, an access road was completed to allow for quicker and safer evacuation of the village in cases of emergency.\(^{29}\) Additionally, the community has been working to relocate its school 7.5 miles inland, and has had to piece together funding from local, corporate, and state sources to fund the project.\(^{30}\) While these moves are important steps to full relocation, each step has been hard-fought, and time is running out.

In 2020, frustrated by the lack of response of the U.S. government, Kivalina along with four coastal tribes in Louisiana, USA, filed a complaint with the United Nations, alleging

\(^{27}\) “Relocation Planning Project Master Plan: Kivalina, Alaska,” 93–96.  
violations of Indigenous communities’ human rights through continued failure to provide adequate relocation assistance. The complaint highlights two important issues necessary for successful relocation efforts: respect of Indigenous sovereignty and a coordinated response at the federal level. Without a clear process for relocation and respect for Indigenous peoples’ right to self-determination, the relocation process in the U.S. will continue to be fraught with difficulties and delays.

**Blok P, Nuuk, Greenland**

Blok P, located in Nuuk, Greenland, is notorious for its demonstration of the way in which poor governance structures, in this case colonial and remote governance, can harm the resilience of a community which is forced to relocate. Greenland has been colonised by Norway, then the Norwegian-Danish-Swedish Kalmar Union, and then Denmark for ten centuries. Since 1953, Greenland has been an equal part of the Kingdom of Denmark rather than a colony, and it achieved home rule and then self-government in 1979 and 2009 respectively. Regardless of the official status of Greenland as part of Denmark, the Danes are very much viewed as colonisers within Greenland, bringing their different culture, language, religion, and values to a country with its own rich cultural history. In some ways, Blok P is merely another miserable 1960s concrete construction, such as could be found in towns and cities across Europe. In other ways, however, the apartment block represents the ways in which the Greenlandic culture and way of life was damaged by the colonial actions of the Danes.

Blok P was so enormous that it alone could house 1% of the entire population of Greenland. It was located in central Nuuk, spanned a quarter of a kilometre in length and

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contained 320 apartments. It was built as part of the Danish government’s modernisation and urbanisation policy which it imposed on Greenland in the 1950s and 1960s. The policy involved relocating Indigenous people from small villages and communities and concentrating them within larger urban areas. The Danes believed that this would increase standards of living and provide access to healthcare and education for communities which had previously not had such access, but no thought was given to the right of, or need for, local people to determine their own future. The block was built in the early 1960s, opening its doors to its first residents in 1966.

Unfortunately, the building was entirely unsuitable for the lifestyle of the people who had been relocated. The corridors and doors were so narrow that they were difficult to navigate in thick winter coats and there was insufficient storage for fishing gear, so it was left in places which caused a fire hazard. No facilities had been provided for the preparation of fish or hunted animals which had been and remained an important source of food for the residents. The lack of facilities led to some families using the bath to prepare meat and fish, but the plumbing system had not been designed to deal with blood and guts and repeatedly failed. As well as the practical failures of the policy, the Danes had failed to consider the impact of forced relocation and of colonisation on the residents. The damage to people's sense of belonging, which had been strong within their previous communities, the harm to their self-esteem, and the poverty endured by families relocated to an urban setting led to Blok P gaining a reputation for crime and anti-social behaviour. The block was eventually demolished in 2012.

The failure of the Blok P, and the associated failure of Denmark's modernisation and urbanisation policy, provides an example of how poor governance can destroy a community's resilience, and highlights the importance of involving Arctic Indigenous communities in decision and policy processes. The planning and decision making were

36 “Blok P in Nuuk.”
37 “Blok P in Nuuk.”
39 Nielson.
conducted by the Danish government located in Copenhagen; the decision to relocate was imposed on communities for the convenience of the decision makers rather than for the benefit of the community; and the accommodation was built without consideration for the cultural needs of the community. Remote, paternalistic governance will often result in solutions which fail and, as a result, damage the local community. The removal of autonomy, the destruction of community structures and the provision of solutions unsuited to a community’s culture and lifestyle remove the ability of a community to ‘bounce back and thrive’; it destroys resilience, leading to social problems such as those witnessed in Blok P.

**Indigenous Culture Pre-Schools, Finland and Alaska**

Many Arctic Indigenous people do not live either in their ancestral villages or even within the Arctic. Many move to cities to the south in search of housing, education, healthcare, or employment. As a result, cities like Fairbanks, Anchorage, Oslo, Stockholm, and Helsinki are home to large populations of Arctic Indigenous people. It is often said that the Helsinki is the Sámi ‘second city’, with almost 60% of Sámi people in Finland living outside of Lapland. The relocation of people to cities can lead to problems involving loss of culture, history, sense of belonging, language, and traditional knowledge. This loss is harmful to those who have moved and can also be damaging to communities left behind, as young people living outside their traditional homeland may grow up without learning their language or a connection to their culture.

Resilient communities are ones which can re-establish themselves following relocation. There is a particular challenge in re-establishing a community when members of the community relocate in small numbers, over time, rather than all together at the same time. In such situations, physical re-establishment is less relevant than cultural re-establishment. One way that communities have found to increase their resilience is the provision of pre-school education in their traditional language and focussed on traditional culture. Known as language nests, minority language full-immersion programmes were first

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40 Karin Beate Nøsterud, “Sámi and Sápmi – Addressing the Issues of Indigenous People and Natural Resources in the Northernmost Parts of Europe” (Nordregio, 2018).
created in 1982 in New Zealand for Maori families.\textsuperscript{42} The programmes give young children the opportunity to spend their early years immersed in their own language and culture, ensuring that this knowledge is not lost and providing a sense of cultural identity. Alongside this, Indigenous pre-schools can be a cultural hub for parents and other adults, giving them friendship, community, and culturally important activities.

There are a number of benefits of focussing on young children in a pre-school setting. Small children have the ability to absorb language extremely fast, even if the Indigenous language is not spoken at home.\textsuperscript{43} Their ability to do this is far superior to older learners and the earlier a child is exposed to a language, the more likely they are to be able to become fluent. Pre-school is also a good opportunity for language and cultural learning as ‘the demands of formal schooling have yet to dominate the curriculum’.\textsuperscript{44} This enables teachers and parents to design a culturally relevant curriculum which provides the knowledge and culture that would traditionally have been absorbed within the community. The space to focus on minority or Indigenous culture allows children to develop their minority cultural identity despite living outside their cultural homeland.\textsuperscript{45} As Brown explained, “[w]ith Indigenous identity foregrounded, language nests emerge as a particular epistemological space to preserve (or reintroduce) foundational community concepts and knowledge distinct from the majority (or those in power).”\textsuperscript{46}

While most of the Sámi language nests in Finland are located in Lapland, since 2013 there has been North Sámi nursery provision in Helsinki for Indigenous children whose families have relocated from Lapland.\textsuperscript{47} Päiväkoti Susanna (‘Susanna Kindergarten’), provides early education for children aged one to five in North Sámi as well as Sámi cultural education.\textsuperscript{48} In addition to speaking Sámi, the kindergarten celebrates important Sámi

\textsuperscript{43} Brown, “Language Nests on the Move.”
\textsuperscript{44} Brown, 32.
\textsuperscript{45} Brown, 32.
\textsuperscript{46} Brown, 32.
cultural festivals within the eight seasons of the Sámi calendar. The values of the Sámi people are prioritised, including family, community, nature, traditional livelihoods, and peace and reconciliation. With 75% of Sámi children in Finland living outside Lapland, and around 6700 Sámi people living in Helsinki there is a need for further provision, including Inari Sámi and Skolt Sámi. However, with the history of colonisation of the Sámi people and their oppression through schooling, it is important that the Sámi people are given the autonomy to decide what urban preschool education in Sámi should look like. The first Sámi language nest in Helsinki, *Máttabiegga Giellabeassim*, was funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and the Finnish Cultural Foundation but the money, and therefore decision making power, was directed through the Finnish Sámi Parliament and the City-Sámit organisation which represents Sámi people in Helsinki.

Like in Helsinki, pre-school education for Indigenous children living in Anchorage is funded by central government, with the money, and autonomy, funnelled directly to Arctic Indigenous communities. The Head Start programme is a US federal programme which was first established in the 1960s with the aim of supporting disadvantaged children and families. One of the ways in which this is carried out is through the provision of early years care primarily for those living under the Federal Poverty Level. Finance for pre-schools is given to local organisations so that local and culturally appropriate solutions can be provided for local problems. In Alaska, the Head Start programme is administered through 17 organisations of which three serve populations in Anchorage, including Cook Inlet Native Head Start. The Cook Inlet Native Head Start is a preschool which aims to “build[] strong

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52 Joona; Keskitalo, Määttä, and Uusiautti, “Sámi Education in Finland.”
foundations with Alaska Native Families through Alaska Native cultures and education.”56
This involves caring for children in line with Alaska Native values, using stories, games and
songs from Alaska Native culture and in languages such as Yup’ik and engaging children and
families with cultural activities. Such schools help communities to build resilience by
meeting the specific cultural needs of the community, providing culturally relevant early
education and immersing children in their own culture despite living in Anchorage.

In both Helsinki and Anchorage, and in urban areas across the Arctic, Indigenous
immersion pre-school education helps communities and families to remain resilient through
supporting their cultural identity, strengthening ties among Indigenous families which have
relocated to urban areas and between urban Indigenous families and their traditional
homelands, and through supporting the use of minority languages and cultural activities
among Indigenous children.

**Conclusion**
Whether moving entire villages, merging communities, or providing individual capacity to
relocate, the above case studies highlight the necessity of self-determination and
participation of Indigenous peoples in ex-situ resilience. Governance policies should include
a comprehensive framework and supervising authority for decision making, and the
framework must incorporate the voices, needs, and culture of the affected communities.
Without proper consideration of cultural values, people removed from their homes cannot
be resilient, and the projects are often not completed or fail. When national governments
attempt to choose relocation sites, as in Kivalina, or build housing, as in Blok P, they should
not only include Indigenous voices, but give them the authority to make decisions. Wherever
possible, decisions should be made as locally as possible and by people who share the same
cultural values and knowledge. Financial support is also key to successful ex-situ resilience;
without the providing funding that communities can use as they see fit to move villages,
create schools, and design resilient infrastructure, many of these projects remain plans.

56 “About the School,” Cook Inlet Native Head Start, 2021,
In-situ Resilience Case Studies

The Whales and the Oil, Alaska

Subsistence hunting for bowhead whale is an important cultural activity for Indigenous populations across the Arctic. In Alaska, Indigenous communities have hunted for bowhead whales for millennia, the practice surviving cultural changes brought by trading posts, commercial whaling, the purchase of Alaska, statehood, the introduction of the modern economy and dramatic technological developments. While each of these changes, and many others, have had their own influence, the core cultural identity associated with the whale hunt has survived. Jessica Lefevre noted that “subsistence whaling, as it has throughout their history, continues to serve as the single most important culturally defining activity for these communities.”

Despite the ability of subsistence whaling to adapt to various threats over the centuries, the advent of oil and gas exploration in the Arctic Ocean, which began during the 1980s, posed a new risk. The majority of the oil and gas development covers a similar area to that which the bowhead whales use in their fall migration to warmer southern waters. Industrial noise, movement, pollution, and even smells can cause, and during the early days of oil exploration in the 1980s did cause, the whales to alter their migration patterns, preventing the capture of bowhead whales by Indigenous communities. As migration paths moved, the hunt either became considerably more dangerous, with crews needing to venture further out to sea, or it became impossible to hunt whales, resulting in considerable cultural and nutritional loss for communities.

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60 Freedman.
When the federal government did nothing to ameliorate the problems, local people realised that they needed to act to protect the whale hunting if their culture was to survive. They looked to the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, an organization established by community leaders to take responsibility for representing the interests of the whaling villages, to negotiate with the developers. The Commission is governed by whaling captains, with one captain elected from each village. Seeking authority to conduct the negotiations, the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission reached a cooperative agreement with the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) which gave power to the Commission to co-manage the stock of bowhead whales.

Using their co-management authority and the community status of the whaling captain representatives, the Commission was able to persuade the oil and gas corporations to meet with them and to negotiate an agreement to enable hunting and industry to coexist. Over the years, these meetings have become a forum in which an annual agreement, the Open Water Season Conflict Avoidance Agreement, now with statutory backing, between the parties is reached. The Conflict Avoidance Agreement provides for important management tools including communication between ships and hunters to ensure safety, limits on pollution, and the establishment of times and places, so called ‘quiet zones’, where no industrial activity will take place so as to allow bowhead whales to migrate unimpeded and for whale hunting to take place. The presence of whalers at the negotiation table means that the agreement is based on the local and traditional knowledge of those whalers.

There are a number of ways in which matters of governance have contributed to the successful management of the conflict between the Indigenous whaling communities and the oil and gas industries. Key among these were local initiation of the negotiations, delegation of power from central government to a respected community body, respect for traditional

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knowledge and the granting of authority to local people to make their own decisions. The exercise of power at a local level in this way has frequently been demonstrated to be an important aspect of creating resilient communities.

What's in a Name?
The importance of names to a community’s sense of culture cannot be underestimated. The traditional names of towns and villages, mountains, lakes, rivers, and other landmarks, passed down through generations, connect the people to their history, their ancestors, and to the space in which they live.66 Given the oral tradition of many Indigenous communities, the name of a particular place is used to convey information about the geography, history, ecology, or spiritual significance of the place, or assist as a navigational aid for nomadic communities.67 For example, the traditional Inupiaq name of the town of Point Lay, Alaska is Kali, which means ‘mound’ because the original village was located on a coastal barrier island near a mound.68 Similarly, the Sámi name of the Norwegian town of Kautokeino is Guovdageaidnu which means ‘midpoint’ because it is positioned approximately in the middle of the reindeer herding routes between a number of important ancient trading points.

However, despite the importance of using traditional names, for many Arctic communities, those names were replaced with western names as the lands were colonised. Many villages were renamed after western men deemed to be important such as Chesterfield Bay, Nunavut which is named after Philip Dormer (Stanhope), 4th Earl of Chesterfield; Frobisher Bay, Nunavut, named after British navigator Sir Martin Frobisher; and Wainwright, Alaska named after Lt. John Wainwright, one of the first non-Indigenous persons to visit the lagoon near where the town is now positioned. These names, often imposed by colonisers because they held power over the making and publishing of maps and showed no interest in (or did not recognize) the need to consult with the local people, do

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67 Cogos, Roué, and Roturier, “Sami Place Names and Maps,” 43–44.

nothing to link the homes of Indigenous peoples with their ancestors. From Barrow, Alaska to Scoresbysund, Greenland, Mt McKinley, Alaska to Severomorsk, Russia communities from across the Arctic have had their Indigenous names replaced with colonial ones.

As Arctic communities increasingly assert their need for and right to cultural resilience, some are making efforts to revert to their traditional names in order to align themselves more closely with their history, language, and culture. The name of a place has political, cultural, and social power, and the use of traditional names is an important part of securing the cultural future of a community.69 Indigenous place names in the Arctic connect generations, ensure the transmission of knowledge to younger people, give Indigenous people pride in their traditional lands, help to preserve traditional languages, and demonstrate the independence of communities which have previously been colonised.70 Each of these reasons plays a role in securing the cultural resilience of the communities impacted. Across the Arctic place names are officially changing. Barrow in Northern Alaska now uses its traditional name of Utqiagvik and Scoresbysund in Greenland is now Ittoqqortoormiit again. In Canada, the Nunavut Agreement established the cultural importance of the use of Indigenous place names and the Geographic Names Program has been established to assist with the recognition of such names.71

The connection of a community with its history and culture through the names used officially for places builds cultural resilience in communities. Cultural resilience comes in part through connection to and confidence in one’s sense of place and of belonging. This is particularly true in societies which place significant importance on the role of ancestors such as Arctic Indigenous communities. Communities which have had their very names displaced have had that connection and that confidence taken away from them. Restoring it allows communities to take back their culture and their history and thereby increase their cultural resilience.

70 Cogos, Roué, and Roturier, “Sami Place Names and Maps.”
71 Agreement Between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada 1993.
The Sámi people are an Indigenous group of reindeer herders that have lived in what is now Norway, Sweden, Russia, and Finland for thousands of years. The Norwegian constitution requires the government to enable the Sámi people to “preserve and develop [their] language, culture, and way of life.” In 1987, the government passed the Sámi Act in order to help the government achieve this mandate, and created the Sameting, or ‘Sámi Parliament’. The Sámi Parliament has the authority to engage on any matter that “particularly affects the Sámi people,” and may raise an issue on its own initiative. Members of the Sámi Parliament are democratically elected, and candidates are often put forward both from Sámi political parties and national political parties. However, the Parliament only has consultative status on Sámi affairs and no jurisdiction over territory, and therefore serves more as an advisory body to the Norwegian legislature than as a functioning decision-making body.

The Sámi Parliament does have real power in Norway; it is responsible for management tasks, runs the Norwegian Sámi Development Fund, and it has assisted in getting local Sámi issues on the national agenda. However, it lacks decision-making authority, and has been ignored and overruled by national and municipal governments at various times throughout its history. In 2009, the Minerals Act was enacted without Sámi approval; and in 2013, the Kvalsund Copper Mine was approved despite Sámi opposition that the mine would have a negative impact on reindeer herding. This lack of actual authority to make decisions results in a lack of self-determination for the Sámi people—while their viewpoints may be included in the discussions, their wishes are often ignored, and they still lack the power to influence the future of their people. Even with the official recognition granted through the Sámi Parliament, the struggle continues to get Sámi rights and interests respected.

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72 Kongeriket Norges Grunnlov (Constitution of Norway) 1814 (as Amended), Art 108.
73 Act of 12 June 1987 No. 56 Concerning the Sameting (the Sami Parliament) and Other Sami Legal Matters (the Sami Act).
**The Right to Hunt and Fish, Sweden**

The *Sameby* (‘Sámi Village’) of Girjas is not a village in the traditional sense of the word. It is not a small community of homes where people live but instead is one of 51 administrative bodies established to organise reindeer herding among the Sámi people of Sweden. Each Sameby covers a particular geographic area and its members are the only people who are allowed to exercise reindeer husbandry within that area. The Sameby of Girjas covers 5,500 square kilometres between the Finnish and Norwegian borders in the Swedish Arctic, a little south of the town of Kiruna.

Reindeer herding is an important cultural activity for Sámi and other Indigenous people across the Arctic. It is estimated that up to 100,000 people are involved in the practice, and it is particularly important in Arctic Europe. Sámi people have herded reindeer for centuries and their work and leisure activities are dictated by the needs of the reindeer. As a nomadic people, they traditionally travel with their reindeer to find suitable pasture as the seasons change. Even today, reindeer herding provides a cultural focus for the Sámi people, with the reindeer playing an important role in the lives of Sámi people, in their food, their traditional clothes, the use of hides, bone, and antler used for utensils and in handicrafts.

The dispute at issue in this case study arose between Girjas Sameby and the Swedish government regarding who had authority to permit fishing and hunting on the land covered by the Sameby. Maintaining full rights over hunting and fishing, including holding the sole right to grant hunting and fishing permits without requiring permission from central government, was important to the Girjas Sameby because without these rights, the community would not have control over their ancestral homeland. The rights have significant cultural implications as so much of Sámi culture, lifestyle, and calendar is tied up

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79 Williams, “Tradition and Change in the Sub-Arctic”; Florian Stammler, *Reindeer Nomads Meet the Market: Culture, Property and Globalisation at the “End of the Land”* (Münster, Germany: LIT Verlag Münster, 2005), chap. 3.  
with the traditional practice of reindeer herding. The Sameby argued that they should have full control over small game hunting and fishing rights, despite land reform regulations which were passed in 1993 extending those rights to non-Sámi people.

The 1993 regulations allowed many more individual landowners to permit small game hunting on their private land, leading to a significant increase in hunting in the area which interfered with the Sameby’s traditional reindeer herding. The Sameby sued the Swedish government, claiming that the new laws interfered with their traditional rights over hunting and fishing. In a protracted and lengthy court case, the Sameby won at the Tingsrätt (‘District Court’) but was beaten on appeal. The case came before the Swedish Supreme Court in 2020. While the court held that the Sameby did not hold the right to issue hunting and fishing licences based on the provisions of the Rennäringslagen (‘Reindeer Herding Act’), it ruled that the Sameby had demonstrated that they had held these rights under the legal concept of urminnes hävd. Urminnes hävd means ‘from time immemorial’ and for such rights to be recognised they must have been in continual use for at least ninety years without objection.

The court was satisfied that the Sameby could demonstrate the necessary usage and held that the rights acquired under urminnes hävd could not be extinguished by the newer laws. The Sameby was therefore granted a declaration that the government could not issue hunting and fishing permits in the area.

The case was an important one for the resilience of Swedish Sámi culture. It enables the local people to make decisions about their land in ways which are compatible with their heritage and their culture, respecting the self-determination of the Sámi people. It is also important because it reduces the ability of the Swedish government, which many Sámi people consider to be a colonizing power, to control the land.
Conclusion

There are many threats to communities which can harm the community without forcing it to relocate. For Indigenous communities, many of these threats are cultural threats such as the loss of language, food and culturally important activities. In the case studies these cultural threats came from the threat to the ability of the people of northern Alaska to hunt whales in the same way as their ancestors had done, from the removal of traditional names for Indigenous places which had been used for thousands of years and from the ability of a Sámi community in Sweden to control access to hunting on their ancestral homelands. The connection with ancestors and elders is important in many Indigenous cultures and is one of the reasons why maintaining ties to cultural traditions is so important for Arctic communities seeking to remain resilient.

A clear pattern emerges through the case studies in this section which demonstrates the importance of putting power and autonomy in the hands of local people in order to enable them to remain resilient. The Alaskan whalers had the incentive to negotiate with the oil companies regarding whaling conflicts and also held the most accurate knowledge about the local environment. Once they had been backed by being granted authority by the federal government to enter into the Conflict Avoidance Agreement, the local people were able to reach an agreement which was acceptable to both sides. Moreover, the negotiations were conducted in a timely fashion and in a culturally accessible manner. The people of Girjas in Sweden had to sue the Swedish government for similar power in the Sameby and this case study again demonstrated the importance of local governance, by local people, to solve local problems.

The Sámi Parliament in Norway, as well as those in Sweden and Finland, is a larger and more formal example of the transfer of power to the local people. The concept is sound as it provides for a democratic body to represent the interests of local people and to take decisions at a local level using local knowledge. However, as was demonstrated in this case study, such governance will only promote resilience if real power is transferred and the Arctic Indigenous communities’ self-determination is respected. Where power is not genuinely transferred and local attempts at governance are thwarted, the result is not resilience but rather frustration and disappointment.
Discussion

There are a number of lessons which can be learned from the various case studies in presented in this article. The first is the demonstration that governance can affect resilience in all types of situations in which Arctic communities can find themselves. This is not surprising given that the Arctic Resilience Action Framework 2017 defines the actors within the concept of resilience as ‘a system’ and systems generally only function well when they are managed or governed. In the case studies relating to ex-situ resilience, the need for a framework or central authority to manage mobility was shown to be important. For the people of Kivalina, the need to work with, and to battle, myriad federal and state agencies, to coordinate funding from a host of different sources and having no one body in charge of arranging the relocation means that nearly 30 years after it was first agreed, no relocation has taken place. Had there been a single authority responsible for coordinating the federal response it is likely that the village would have moved by now. Where a dedicated authority is not possible or desirable, having a framework for communities to follow can be helpful. The case study on Indigenous pre-schools in demonstrates, to some extent, the way in which this can work. The Cook Inlet Native Head Start runs its own pre-school locally, rather than being run centrally by the federal government. However, as part of the Head Start federal programme, there is a framework which it follows, like all the Head Start pre-schools in the country. The Cook Inlet Native Head Start can meet the local needs of its Alaska Native families within the Head Start framework.

The second lesson is the importance of the participation of the local people in decision making. The case studies have demonstrated that this is key to ensuring the resilience of communities whether the community is relocating or is remaining in place. One of the main reasons that Blok P in Nuuk failed was that it did not meet the needs of those who would be its residents. The Danish government thought that it knew what the people needed and so failed to give any autonomy or decision-making power to the people who could have told them the faults in the plans before building work had even begun. The damage to the communities which were relocated, socially, economically, and culturally, can be traced back to the lack of local participation and local decision making. Similarly, the decisions of colonial

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explorers to ignore the traditional names of the places which they included on their maps and instead to create new names honouring western men caused damage to the cultural heritage of many communities and separated them from the knowledge of their ancestors which was tied up in the names. Had the explorers asked for information from the local people, the traditional name could have been included on the western maps from the start. Fortunately, as the case study showed, traditional names are increasingly replacing colonial names in Arctic places, although there is still some way to go.

Thirdly, and somewhat related to the previous point, money should be spent at a local level rather than by remote decision makers. In part, having financial autonomy gives communities self-assurance, confidence, and independence, all of which assist in building resilience. As well as this, channelling money from central government to local community groups gives communities the ability to solve their most pressing problems, which may be different from other similar or nearby communities. Being given money and left with the decision as to how that money is spent demonstrates trust in local governance structures and allows the community to plan for their own future. This is a key aspect of resilience as defined by the Arctic Resilience Report 2016. The success of a model where money is transferred to the people most affected is demonstrated in the case study about Indigenous pre-schools. The Sámi pre-schools in Helsinki are funded by the central Finnish government but financial decisions are made, and the money is spent, by the Finnish Sámi Parliament and a Sámi community organisation in Helsinki. As a result, the Sámi language nests have been popular with families and the community is engaged and invested in the project.

Finally, this study has shown that governance structures may need to be different for different cultures. Governance structures established for Indigenous communities should reflect traditional decision-making structures, the role of elders, social hierarchies, and the desires of the community itself. The Alaskan whalers were so successful in their negotiations with the oil companies because the structure put in place accurately reflected the traditional ways in which the local cultures governed themselves. Those selected to represent the community were the whaling captains who have very high social standing and are often older members of communities which value the experience and wisdom of their elders.

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desired governance structure over hunting and fishing rights in Girjas was different to the Alaska Whaling Commission, but the local people were fighting for, and eventually won, the right to have hunting and fishing governed in the traditional way by the Sameby.

**Conclusion**

Resilient communities are ones which can “bounce back and thrive during and after disturbances and shocks.”\(^{90}\) They are also communities which have autonomy and the ability to make decisions for themselves about the present and the future, and whose self-determination is respected by the governments of nations, states, and localities. This study has shown that in order to ensure ex-situ resilience, there is a need for a defined governing body, particularly to oversee mass relocations, and where an entire body is not feasible, a reliable framework in which a community can work. The study has also shown the importance of decision-making being taken as locally as possible, with local people having choices over what happens in their community. In order to ensure decision making can take place at the local level, finance will usually need to flow from central sources to local decision-making bodies and community groups. Finally, good governance which promotes resilient communities is governance which reflects the values and traditions of the community it is serving, recognising the ways in which decisions are made and conflicts resolved within each individual community. Communities with this level of autonomy, supported and respected by more remote government, and adequately funded, should be able to recover from any shocks or disturbances in a way which ensures as little physical, economic, social or emotional harm is done to the community.

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\(^{90}\) Arctic Council.