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TITLE: Biopolar Disorder? Is Bioprospecting an Emerging Issue for the Arctic as well as for Antarctica?

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ABSTRACT:

Bioprospecting has recently emerged as a new challenge for environmental governance in Antarctica. While considerable attention now surrounds this issue in Antarctica, there has been little, if any, debate on the question of whether bioprospecting is also an issue requiring a policy or regulatory response in the Arctic. This article briefly considers the emerging debate with respect to bioprospecting in Antarctica. It then provides a detailed survey of the nature and extent of bioprospecting in the Arctic, with a focus on the Nordic countries. It goes on to outline legislative developments in several Nordic countries concerning the regulation of access and benefit sharing in relation to naturally occurring biological materials of actual or potential value commonly referred to as wild genetic resources. It concludes by highlighting some potential disputes raised by the creation of such regimes, especially around the disputed waters of Svalbard. This analysis suggests that a more coordinated regional response may be warranted in the Arctic in the future.

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