

DER NEUE NORDEN – DIE ARKTIS UND DER TRAUM VOM AUFBRUCH [THE NEW NORTH – THE ARCTIC AND THE DREAM OF PROGRESS].

Matthias Hannemann. 2010. Bad Vilbel: Scoventa. 215p, hardcover. ISBN: 978-3-942073-02-8. €19,90

Silence, untouched nature, peace... This is what one might imagine when thinking of the north and the Arctic. But there is also a different north. The new north. That north that Matthias Hannemann depicts in his journey report *The new north – The Arctic and the dream of progress*. This north does not correspond to the stereotypical imagery central Europeans have of the northern parts of Scandinavia. This north does not embrace the further development of these stereotypes. No, Hannemann's north shows the European Arctic as it is: cold, resource-based and inhospitable: not a land of summer.

The new north is a book written by a German for Germans and for those who wish to encounter the Arctic from an inside perspective. Designed as a report from travels starting in Iqaluit, Canada, and Maarmorilik, Greenland, to Kiruna, Sweden, and amongst others Narvik, Hammerfest or Kirkenes in Norway, Hannemann deals with the changes the north is undergoing by interviewing local fishermen, engineers or diplomats, one way or the other involved in or affected by these changes.

It is not a scientific book. It is a book that invites the reader to think about the northern people. It is a book which combines Hannemann's personal views and experiences as a German with those of the locals, both born and raised or having moved to the north, while embedding these into the greater political contexts in order to make the political developments in the north more tangible for those affected by them. Moreover, Hannemann manages to capture the views and looks of the northern cities and environment in eloquent and picturesque language, which allows the reader to picture the place before the inner eye.

An example of this approach is his account of Hammerfest. He frames his experiences in this northern Norwegian resource town with a description of the gas-platform and its constantly burning flame, a red tanker which lay anchored in the fjord and a meeting with the director of a supply station. He manages very well to bridge these personal impressions and experiences with a history of the role of gas in the area since the exploration of several gas fields in the Barents Sea, which is underlined by direct quotes from the director. He then moves on to the geo-political dimensions of the 'Big game' of resource extraction in the area; the role the Russians play and implications for the role of Norway within the NATO; and the benefits for the city and

the region itself, for example for employment or infrastructure maintenance. The chapter concludes with the involvement of Germany in the developments in Hammerfest.

This is a fascinating book. I would especially recommend it to those who have never been to the Arctic or the very European north. I would assume that the book is particularly aimed at this audience due to the use of the German language. Also, it is neither science nor popular science, but a diary of experiences, underlined by visual impressions and framed by the history and actual political developments in the Arctic; contrary to those often depicted by the media.

It shines with its simplicity through easily understandable language and clear-cut explanations for the continuing developments and changes. Through its personal character of putting great emphasis on the interviewees, the book sometimes reminded me of Geir Hønneland's *Borderland Russians* (2010) yet leaving out the scientific touch, but rather focusing on the thoughts and ideas of the author himself while broadening the scope to a European Arctic and geopolitical account.

A downside of the book is the non-inclusion of Russian actors. It would have been great to get an insight of the ongoing changes from a Russian perspective, for example in Murmansk. Since the focus is on the European Arctic, the inclusion of the Kola Peninsula would have made sense, also because of its close proximity both geographically and politically with Norway. Furthermore, a Sámi perspective on resource development and changes in their traditional homeland would have been a great asset to the book.

In conclusion it can be said that *The new north* is a fantastic account of the north and its people having to live with the continuing changes. Not only should it be read by all those who have not yet encountered the north and are mainly subject to a stereotypical perception of the Arctic, but it is also of great value to those who work in or for the north. An utterly insightful book which offers a great basis for re-thinking outside perceptions and images while broadening the horizon of those being familiar with the area. It should be translated into English. (Nikolas Sellheim, Northern Institute for Environmental and Minority Law, Arctic Centre, University of Lapland, PO Box 122, 96101 Rovaniemi, Finland.)

Reference

- Hønneland, G. 2010. *Borderland Russians – identity, narrative and international relations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, St. Martin's Press, LLC.