

Lindroth, Marjo; Sinevaara-Niskanen, Heidi & Tennberg, Monica (eds.) *Critical Studies of the Arctic: Unravelling the North*, 2022. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. XII, 283 p, hardcover. ISBN 978-3-031-11119-8.

The book *Critical Studies of the Arctic: Unravelling the North* is an extremely timely piece of work and a highly welcomed addition to Arctic research. The book stems from the idea of critique, aiming to enrich the perspectives and the taken-for-granted aspects of Arctic research. The problematisation of the familiar by making it strange is at the core of the book, which in the Arctic setting is much needed. The book doesn't settle for the most obvious topics and questions of the region but goes beyond them in a way that brings also the reader delightful eureka moments. The editors start the book with a description of the blind spots prevailing in the Arctic social scientific research, which originate from the colonial, racist and white masculine premises of doing Arctic research.

As the editors note, much of the literature on the Arctic stems from empirical phenomena instead of theoretical ponderings and conceptualisations. Hence, this book begins with the idea of critically looking at the different Arctic(s) and building on careful theoretical considerations. The structure of the book is created through the issues and questions the current research is oblivious to, and different chapters aim to challenge the way we see the Arctic(s). The book is an edited volume with 14 chapters, including an introduction and epilogue by the editors. The simplicity of the titles of the chapters creates unity, as well as arouses the reader with curiosity.

The chapters start with *Aesthetics* by Joonas Vola. The chapter shows how aesthetics are connected with our conceptualisations of the Arctic, and how the aesthetic constitution of the Arctic is a matter of politics. Delving into the theoretical considerations of aesthetics and its meaning, Vola addresses a case of a video artwork *Grind* presented in the Finnish contemporary art museum Kiasma. Vola shows how the aesthetics of such a work continue to exploit the Arctic as the Other. The second chapter turns into the world of *Affects*. Kristen Thisted guides the reader into the "affective turn" within social sciences and examines the Greenlandic–Danish relations and the interplay of economic and emotional elements within the discussions present. The colonial history and ties between the two nations are sharply examined with a closer look at Greenland's nation-building process after the introduction of self-government rule.

Continued, Julian Reid turns to the concept of *Biopolitics* and considers the "understudied relations of biopower to colonial strategies of rule" (p. 61). Reid examines thoroughly Lisa Stevensons' work on biopower in the Canadian Arctic, and the way the Canadian state has used care as a way of legitimising intervention and presence. Examining the entanglements of suicide, resilience and indigeneity, Reid looks into the Arctic Councils' aims of governing those issues, and the problems that arise. Moving forward, *Critical Geopolitics* by Klaus Dodds, Chih Yuan Woon and Liling Xu include three core elements to their understanding of critical geopolitics: performances, imaginaries and practices, and through those three elements analyse China's role in Arctic events. Critical geopolitics sees geopolitics as something that is being played out through language and context, a notion that becomes especially interesting in a space like the Arctic. Next, the book turns into *Indigenous Archaeology* by Carl-Gösta Ojala. Looking at the interrelations of archaeology, colonial history and heritage, Ojala addresses ways of decolonising traditional archaeology. As the discipline of archaeology is entangled with land, landscapes and territory, discussions about colonialism are inevitable. While Ojala focuses mainly on Sápmi, the questions of repatriation of cultural objects are relevant also elsewhere in the Arctic.

Continued by Heidi Sinevaara-Niskanen, the chapter *Intersectionality* focuses on the significance and applicability of the concept in the Arctic. As the Arctic is characterised by "multiple socio-historical and cultural differences" (p. 134), it is a suitable ground for the ideas of intersectionality, as Sinevaara-Niskanen notes. The chapter takes a closer look at violence against indigenous women in the Canadian context and concludes that there is a need and room for more intersectional analyses in the Arctic, also without the precondition of analysing gender. Shifting into *Legal Anthropology* by Reetta Toivanen, the chapter focuses on the intersections between anthropology and law. After a book review of legal anthropology in the Arctic, Toivanen then turns to the connections of human rights and indigenous rights in three


Arctic localities, and how law and legal provisions are present there. The next chapter is by Frank Sejersen on *Moral Economy*. The concept of the moral economy refers to the normative aspects of economic relations. The chapter captures the reader with an overview of how commercial fishing was first introduced, and how it disturbed the traditional way of organising life in Greenland. Sejersen points out the moral obligations, responsibilities and social structures embedded within these economic changes, and how the encouragement of fishing was utilised by the colonial power Denmark in order to transform the Greenlandic society.

In her chapter *Narratives*, Monica Tennberg focuses especially on the International Relations narratives of the Arctic. She begins by introducing the famous concept of Orientalism by Edward Said and the colonial lens through which the West has looked at other parts of the world with. Tennberg applies a contrapuntal reading to the IR narratives “Arctic exceptionalism” and “Global Arctic” and concludes that in these dominant narratives nature is the Other, something under human rule. She then moves to the possible post-anthropocentric narratives including the more-than-humans and introduces two post-anthropocentric IR plots: “Multiplicity” and “Pluriversity.” *Neoliberal Governmentality* by E. Gail Russel delves into the world of neoliberalism, its supporters and its critics, and the Canadian Arctic policy. Approaching the topic with the Foucauldian concept of governmentality, Russel concludes that neoliberalism as a mentality of rule governs both the development of Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework, but also the idea of the Canadian Arctic itself, and comprehending this might offer a different outcome with the future northern policies.

After that, Leena-Maija Rossi brings forward *Queer Studies*. One of the aims of queer studies has been “to analytically unravel the tenets of naturalized heteronormativity” (p.230) that has been normalised and to make epistemological space for non-normative sexualities and genders. Pondering the meaning and relevance of the term queer in the northern context, and its relation with settler

colonialism, Rossi offers a glimpse into queer literature describing life in the North. Finally, Marjo Lindroth concludes with an insightful chapter *Socio-Legal Studies*. The chapter begins with the notion that rights are the predominant way how indigenous–state relations are being organised in today’s world. The notions that law is a myth, both in its origins and as a social force, and that law depends on mythical categories as the sovereign are highly interesting and echo the whole idea of Critical Arctic Studies, questioning the things we take for granted. Lindroth addresses how colonialism and international law are entangled and how the law has also been utilised as a tool of colonialism. To conclude, Lindroth shows a case from Canada, where the rule of law, meaning the Canadian state law overrules indigenous law and sovereignty.

The book ends with an epilogue by the editors, where they reflect on the changing circumstances of the Arctic and Arctic Council. The idea of the Arctic as an arena of peaceful cooperation has melted away, and the authors wonder if the recently grown importance of traditional geopolitics and matters of hard security will push other issues out. However, a crisis for Arctic cooperation is also an opportunity to rethink the Arctic. Rethinking the international Arctic would be a possibility to shake off the Western and Eurocentric roots of the Arctic idea – and that is the task of Critical Arctic Studies, the authors conclude.

Together, the chapters form a coherent entity presenting an intriguing and convincing overview of Critical Arctic Studies. The book is relevant both for students and scholars, who wish to engage with the various Arctics. The book combines well-developed theoretical thought with empirical examples and achieves to challenge the clichés and the taken for granted of Arctic research. (Sohvi Kangasluoma , University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland (sohvi.kangasluoma@helsinki.fi)).

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