

***Arctic Governance: Power in cross-border cooperation.*** Elana Wilson Rowe. 2018. Manchester University Press. 176 p, hardcover, illustrated. ISBN 978-1-5261-2173-8. £20.00

The Finnish chairmanship of the Arctic Council ended in a non-declaration in the Spring of 2019. The headlines that followed highlighted the historical nature of this situation. “Disappointment,” “upset,” “concern” and “spoiler” were some of the common words used to summarise the conclusion. The participants to the 2019 ministerial meeting highlighted that this result was not in line with the cooperative spirit that the Arctic Council is generally characterised by. Elana Wilson Rowe’s *Arctic governance – Power in cross-border cooperation* offers backstage access to the performances of power that preceded this situation.

Wilson Rowe’s work covers discussions and meetings between Senior Arctic Officials, Arctic Council’s working groups, ministers of the Arctic states, non-governmental organisations and representations of non-Arctic states. It also introduces individual Arctic health projects, national Arctic histories and strategies, which together with the international institutional politics associated with the Arctic Council form the “checks and balances” that since the end of the Cold War have kept the Arctic as the often highlighted “zone of peace and cooperation.”

The book begins with a review of how the Arctic has been situated in the literature about the shifting global power landscapes in the post-Cold War World. Wilson Rowe introduces this literature in three main categories that deal with (a) institutions/legal frameworks/regimes, (b) interests and (c) discourse and representation. Her own analytical approach of “ecosystems of policy fields” compliments these studies of soft competencies, hard resources and their performances by not following any previously set analytical frameworks of regimes, territoriality, sovereignty, security or discursive constructions of identity. Instead, they “undergrid the informal politics of the interstices of Arctic policy complexity, and the resources, representations and positionings involved in delivering a performance of competence that matters in Arctic politics” (p. 10).

Chapter 1 introduces the five “Arctic action groups” that are at the centre of Wilson Rowe’s analysis of the ecosystems of policy fields through a brief review of their historical experience. This review is meant to set the stage to a better understanding of how Arctic politics today are “shaped by layers of historical experience” (p. 20). The five groups under analysis are Indigenous peoples and their organisations; commercial actors; states and their representatives; scientists; and non-governmental organisations and their representatives.

Chapter 2 studies how the different Arctic action groups have used particular discursive framings to further their own interests in their meetings with participants from other policy fields. The meetings under analysis have taken place in the framework of the Arctic Council with a focus on the ministerial meetings between 2011 and 2015.

The first framing that Wilson Rowe analyses is “the Arctic as a zone of peace.” She studies how this discursive framing was used by different actors in the 2015 Arctic Council ministerial meeting in Iqaluit, Canada that followed Russian annexation of Crimea. The second framing she examines is the global versus regional framing of the Arctic, which Wilson Rowe tells us come up “repeatedly in a number of guises at the Arctic Council” (p. 51) but, which culminated in the adoption of the Nuuk criteria for observers in 2011. The third framing describes the role of business in cross-border Arctic governance focusing on the establishment of the Arctic Economic Council in 2015.

The conclusion of the analysis of the three framings is that maintaining the interest in cross-border cooperation within the work of the Arctic Council requires the five Arctic action groups to constantly anchor their preferences in richly weighty narratives about identity, norms, values and space. The meaning and interpretation of these performances can come under threat especially at times, which Wilson Rowe summarises as “critical junctures” such as the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea.

Chapter 3 draws attention to regional hierarchies and the kinds of roles that are available to those participating in Arctic governance. Wilson Rowe studies these elements through how states have taken leaderships in Arctic Council projects, chaired binding treaties produced within the framework of the Arctic Council, and how the Council of the Baltic Sea States’ task force on health has worked. Her examples from different levels of cross-border cooperation

illustrate how social and epistemic hierarchies that do not originate from the Arctic can structure the form Arctic initiatives and governance takes.

Chapter 4 examines the role of norms in the establishment of Arctic governance as a site in its own right. Wilson Rowe studies the constitutive power of these norms through the analysis of the tensions between the balancing acts that characterise Russian Arctic governance and concern between commercial and environmental concerns in the work of the Arctic Council between 1997 and 2017. Her conclusion is that in the 1990s and early 2000s norms of procedure within the Arctic Council framework included the expectation that projects have broader appeal than just one country's North and that the entire range of cooperation should be able to take place without additional layers of legal agreement (p. 101). Later constitutive norms have included a cooperative, coalition-building approach to leadership and assertiveness to great power concerns (p. 102).

Chapter 5 looks at how Arctic cross-border governance can be understood as a site of competition over the exercise of authority. The focus in this study is the construction of the science-policy interface in the Arctic Council. By using the example of the discussion on the right of working groups chairs to speak publicly about policy issues, Wilson Rowe illustrates how there is no agreement on the borders between science and policy amongst the Arctic Council member states. She also explains how permanent participants use the Arctic Council setting "to hold state representatives to account" (p. 118). In sum, how progress in the Arctic Council is highly reliant on the work of the semi-autonomous working groups, but other actors "actively engage in efforts to secure their own authoritative position" (p. 123)

Wilson Rowe's work gives an excellent cross-cut into how politics of power and authority work in different stages of Arctic governance. The richness of performances and stages under analysis illustrates how specific roles and framings of Arctic governance require constant work. They also illustrate how possibilities of change are constantly present. Both are of high importance at the time when the pressure and global attention in the Arctic are growing with increased interest on impacts of climate change, rise of populism and the return of nationalism in the Arctic countries.

The multitude of theoretical and methodological approaches from critical junctures to performances, frames, ecosystems of policy fields, status positions and civic-epistemology that are introduced throughout the book make it sometimes difficult to come to a fully rounded analytical argument. The historical review of the five Arctic action groups, for example, does an excellent job in reminding about their historical precedence. It does a lesser job in explaining why these action groups came to be in the first place and why we should care of the historical variance of their constellations and struggles.

Because of the wealth of methodological and theoretical review, I would recommend Wilson Rowe's *Arctic Governance: Power in cross-border cooperation* to both graduate students and researchers in political science and political geography. As it is beautifully written and includes a wide array of empirical cases, I would also recommend it to those who study Arctic governance and to those that have just learnt about it for example in through reports in the New York Times, the Economist, CNN or even Fox News (Justiina Dahl, Swedish Polar Research Secretariat, c/o Luleå tekniska universitet, SE-971 87 Luleå, Sweden ([justiina.dahl@polar.se](mailto:justiina.dahl@polar.se))).

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