

Elana Wilson Rowe, *Arctic Governance: Power in cross-border cooperation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018)

Either described as a peaceful and stable region where a special type of governance has been instrumental in building trust among States or as a region prone to potential future conflicts over territory and resources, the Arctic is now at the centre of many studies and research in policy-making, governance and international relations about the changing post-Cold War geopolitical world. In *Arctic Governance: Power in cross-border cooperation*, NUPI Research Professor and Adjunct Professor at Nord University in Norway, Elana Wilson Rowe, explores the contested but largely cooperative nature of Arctic governance in the post-Cold War period, and the ways in which power has shaped both cross-border cooperation and performance of diplomacy in the region. An important premise of the book is that, in global governance, power should not be viewed a zero-sum game but rather as a fluid performance between different actors. Rather than focusing on describing power as it is, the book uses different analytical frameworks from international relations to geography to understand how this performance of power plays out in practice.

Building on this idea of power, Wilson Rowe focuses on how Arctic cross-border cooperation is marked by power relations that are under constant re-enactment and renegotiation. She takes Russia's role at the Arctic Council as an example to examine to what extent Arctic governance can be understood as a competition for the exercise of authority over certain places and certain audiences. Taking a multidisciplinary approach to governance, security and diplomacy in the Arctic, it calls for establishing more inclusive and situated ways of looking at the interplay all Arctic. Throughout the book, Wilson Rowe develops four key propositions to demonstrate how Arctic cross-border cooperation has been marked by these relations of power.

After an introduction and a first chapter where the book sets the contextual underpinnings and describes the five groups of actors at the centre of Arctic governance (i.e. Indigenous peoples, States, commercial actors, NGOs, and Scientists), Chapter 2 focuses on how power relations are manifested in and shaped by the definitions and representations of Arctic policy objects and the region more broadly. The Arctic as physical space is framed and understood through specific dichotomic narratives (e.g. the Arctic as region of peace or conflict; conservation and environment against sustainable development) and visual vocabularies. However, the complexities of Arctic governance cannot be analysed through simple binary frames. This chapter illustrates that such framing is not fixed and is often contested or used by actors to promote one narrative over another when performing Arctic diplomacy. She further argues that while framings are often regarded as an academic analytical tool, they are also actively used by the actors themselves to realise their preferred outcomes. Wilson Rowe narrows her analyses down to three discursive framings: 1) "the Arctic as a zone of peace" and the challenges following Russia's annexation of Crimea, 2)

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“the global Arctic versus the regional Arctic” the involvement of new Arctic Council Observer States, and 3) “business as a tool of pan-Arctic” and the establishment of the Arctic Economic Council in 2015. Experienced players in Arctic governance seem highly aware of these framings and the importance of what Wilson Rowe calls “geo-power”. Contestation and debate only arise when these narratives and framings are placed under pressure by changing circumstances or new considerations.

In Chapter 3, Wilson Rowe studies the proposition that as policy fields come together and endure, it is important to study how structured power relations work. Having a hierarchical outlook is a useful analytical tool in an Arctic context. Apart from the more obvious “Arctic States” (A8) and “Arctic Coastal States” (A5) clubs, Wilson Rowe illustrates this proposition with the examples of Russia and the United States. According to her, both countries are best understood as resting power in Arctic relations. In day-to-day Arctic diplomacy and interactions, the two countries act like any other A8 or A5 country, however, at critical, agenda-setting junctures, their participation is seen by other states as essential and their actions have long-lasting significance for the development of Arctic multilateralism. Norway is another good example of a State that was able to navigate predetermined hierarchical norms and position itself as a ‘knowledge power’ at the leading end of Arctic governance and politics, especially as a central actor in Russia-Western cooperation.

In Chapter 4, Wilson Rowe examines the role of informal norms and key social constraints characterizing Arctic cross-border cooperation. She uses Russia’s role at the Arctic Council between 1997 and 2017 as an example to argue that countries are shaped by policy field norm constraints and seek to transform them. She concludes that between 1997 and 2007, Russia showed low levels of participation and had some successful “low-political” cooperation as the projects proposals only focused on the Russian Arctic without additional cooperation. As argued in the chapter, this challenges the expectation that all Arctic countries will participate in circumpolar governance. However, the second decade (2007-2017) saw Russia significantly invest in creating binding agreements and be a norm-making leader in the region.

Chapter 5 explores how different actors constantly work to refine or redefine power relations. Arctic governance is understood as a form of competition over who has authority and who can exercise this authority. Using negotiations at the ‘science-policy’ and ‘peoples-states’ interfaces at high-level Arctic Council meetings, Wilson Rowe uses the framework of “civic epistemology” to understand how authority is articulated or challenged. Her work examines the interplay between politics and authority in the performance of power.

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Absorbing and well-written, the book conveys complex ideas and approaches in a simple way that allows readers to engage and connect with the text. Far from the conflict-driven narratives of more realist approaches to international relations, Wilson Rowe's in-depth analysis of how power performances between multiple actors shaped relations in the Arctic provides a most-interesting perspective on the need to prioritise and expand pan-Arctic cooperation. Overall, Wilson Rowe's book is a must-read for anyone interested in international relations and the Arctic. Published by Manchester University Press and available for open-access download, *Arctic Governance: Power in Cross-Border Cooperation* offers one of the most timely and refreshing takes on Arctic governance.

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