

discussions/4033475/roundtable-xx-33-ag-hopkins-american-empire-global-history (accessed 1 March 2021).

**Elana Wilson Rowe: Arctic Governance. Power in Cross-border Cooperation, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018, 176 pp.**

Reviewed by  
Liubov Timonina, Stockholm

As the recent years have shown, the Arctic has come to occupy a distinguished place in contemporary social imaginaries and global political agendas. Together with climate change, environmental sustainability, and ecological biodiversity, *Arctic governance* is perhaps the most favoured and revisited topic within Arctic-related research and policy-making. Yet, grasping the many faces of the Arctic and the complexity of actors and factors involved in shaping its dynamic governance landscape poses an analytical and methodological challenge, which requires not only extensive research experience but also, and perhaps more so, academic sensitivity, creativity, and investigative thinking.

This is exactly why Elana Wilson Rowe's book is wholeheartedly recommended for both academic and non-academic reading. Written in a scientifically eloquent yet comprehensive and clear language, it is a unique combination of critical multidisciplinary approaches and a nuanced analysis of key actors in Arctic governance

reweighed anew. Aiming to go beyond the disciplinary constraints of international relations (IR), the author employs analytical tools from critical geography studies and science and technology studies (STS), seeing them as "windows on how relations of deference and dominance [...] shape Arctic cooperation" (p. 2), and carefully tests their applicability throughout the book.

*Arctic Governance* is by and large a quest for understanding what power is and what power does in current global politics. The book revisits the notion of power and reassesses its analytical productivity in studying cross-border cooperation and diplomacy in the Arctic. With a particular focus on power representations and performances, the book takes a "systematic and theoretically informed look at how power relations are enacted, maintained and contested in the production of Arctic cross-border governance" (p.12) and "sensitises" the readers to significant elements of these relations. Conceptualizing cooperation as an ecosystem of intersecting policy fields, Rowe finds her own way of demonstrating the hierarchies and inequalities inherent to relations among Arctic actors, depending on their ability to successfully define what matters most and thus gain and maintain authority.

Unlike many publications on the topic, *Arctic Governance* is explicitly "selective" and "concrete", as Rowe points out in the very beginning. The selectivity is clearly seen in the choice of actors and analysed themes informed by the extensive body of interviews with Arctic actors conducted from 2004 to 2017. The specificity of the primary sources brings a human, intimate dimension to Arctic governance and provides a unique insight into the everyday

politics of Arctic governance, making it easier to understand the background and motifs of its actors. At the same time, this inevitably raises the question of empirical representativity and consistency and thus dictates the rules and forms of storytelling. Arctic Governance therefore reads more like a compilation of interconnected and interdependent cases – examples of maintaining and contesting power relations in cross-border cooperation – neatly interwoven by a conceptual common thread. The indisputable advantage of this book is its self-reflective stance: it “engages in theorising by bringing hitherto underused concepts generated by research on other global policy fields and empirical findings on Arctic governance into productive, if not predictive or generalisable, conversation” (p. 17). Rowe is well aware of her own aims and limitations – an attitude that establishes an honest communication line with her readers and leaves no gap in expectations.

To illustrate her theoretical and analytical claims, the author guides the readers along five chapters of the book. Chapter I provides a brief yet significant introduction to Arctic international affairs from a historicized perspective and gives an excellent overview of key actors in the Arctic. Moving further, the author develops four propositions on power, grounding them in empirical cases. In Chapter II the author illustrates various ways of seeing and framing the Arctic, which consequently affect political outcomes. The main contributions here are two profound in-depth case studies on non-Arctic states seeking membership in the Arctic Council and business actors negotiating their agency within Arctic governance landscape.

Chapter III introduces an additional analytical entry point and takes on the task of theorizing hierarchies in order to show the “hierarchical elevator” in action and the malleable dynamics of power relations in the Arctic. According to the author, thinking in terms of hierarchies allows one to “acknowledge the presence of leading actors, while explicitly directing attention to many other [...] roles available within a policy field [...] Hierarchies can differ across global policy fields and can change without disrupting broader stability in world politics” (p.59). Using the example of Norway and its status-seeking pathway in Arctic governance hierarchy, Rowe traces Norway’s way to being recognized as a “knowledge power” and being able to find its niche based on its “creative approach” and a well-informed, disillusioned position in relation to Russia and its “great-poweriness”.

One of the most intriguing parts of the book is perhaps Chapter IV. Here, the author offers an analytical exercise for its readers: “we need to consider how delimited and ‘local’ the meeting places of cross-border politics – what we can term global governance policy fields – frequently become” (p. 83). Localizing and contextualizing power performance is a crucial practice in developing a critical approach to power in Arctic governance, as the common bird’s-eye view of the Arctic inevitably upscales any matters and thus diffuses the materiality of discursive interactions. The chapter focuses on the evolution of Russian Arctic post-Cold War diplomacy, which is unpacked to “illustrate that Arctic governance takes place in a highly socialised environment layered with field-specific norms” (p. 103).

Chapter V contemplates the agency of scientific and indigenous stakeholders within the Arctic cross-border cooperation. By applying the concept of civic epistemology as a “framework of indicators that helps us think comprehensively about different ways in which authority can be articulated or challenged” (p. 129), the author seeks to address the uneasy question “whose knowledge matters?” and outline the ways non-state actors negotiate and establish their authority in collecting, representing, and applying knowledge in policy-making. Drawing on the year-long research observations of the author and scrupulous analysis, *Arctic Governance* can be seen as a handbook on Arctic governance. For newcomers to the Arctic, it is an excellent starting point for familiarizing oneself with international relations and developing a critical perspective on the matter. For professionals, this book is a brilliant collection of case studies on high-level power dynamics in the Arctic, which not only advocates new ways of conceptualizing Arctic actors but also serves as a practical guide for researchers keen on grasping and investigating the fugitive, tacit mechanisms of Arctic governance and diplomacy.

**Élise Féron / Jyrki Kähkönen / Gabriel Rached (eds.): Revisiting Regionalism and the Contemporary World Order. Perspectives from the BRICS and beyond, Berlin / Toronto: Opladen / Barbara Budrich, 2019, 302 pp.**

Reviewed by  
Jens Herpolsheimer, Leipzig

Ten years after the first summit of the BRICS grouping (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) the editors of this book have taken the opportunity to reflect on the role of this grouping and its participating states in what they (and many other observers) call a changing world order. Identifying the BRICS as potential challengers of one or several Western-centric international orders (IO) (p. 22), the volume’s declared interest is in specifying what exactly is changing when new stable forms of international cooperation are emerging and what responses these propose to current challenges (p. 21). Aiming at a critical study from a multidisciplinary and pluralist perspective (p. 25), the volume comprises an introduction and 11 chapters, organized into 3 parts: “Emergence and Challenges of Regionalism” (4 chapters), “Contemporary Regionalism in Practice” (4 chapters), and “Theoretical Perspectives on the Changing World Order” (3 chapters). The authors of these chapters hail from “around the world” (p. 25); however, most of them are associated with a research project titled “Regional Challenges to Multilateralism”,