

change on production copies. It is nice to see the inclusion of traditional running heads when so many new books these days omit them. They provide a convenient and instant guide, re-engaging readers who lift their heads from the page for a moment's thought. I would have liked to see them set in lower case rather than capitals, as they are a tad too prominent on the page. On the positive side, chapter heads are nicely offset from the beginning of the text, with ample white space and good placement on the page.

These minor concerns can be put aside, however, because it is on content that most readers will judge this book, and, in this regard, the author has amply fulfilled his brief, providing the reader with a new and interesting thematic approach to the life and achievements of Sir Ernest Shackleton. The author's attempts to explore Shackleton's mind through the medium of poetry is a worthy undertaking, but is only partially successful. However, the main point of the book—to provide sometimes

little-known facts about Shackleton's lifelong commitment to poetry and poetry-writing, and to show that his love of words has helped him to express himself well—is ably executed. Mayer shows that Shackleton's familiarity with, and ability to formulate, the well-turned phrase and the well-chosen word contributed in no small way to his success as an inspirational and charismatic leader of men. Shackleton was no literary genius, as he himself would have readily conceded, but his abiding love of poetic expression was a vital part of his success as a man of action. I commend the book as an interesting and informative read. (Chris Elmore, Melbourne, Australia ([cre@me.com](mailto:cre@me.com)))

### References

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### CONTESTING THE ARCTIC. POLITICS AND IMAGINARIES IN THE CIRCUMPOLAR NORTH.

Philip E. Steinberg, Jeremy Tasch and Hannes Gerhardt. 2015. London: I. B. Tauris. xiii + 209 p, hardcover, illustrated. ISBN 978-1-78076-148-0. £56.00.

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*Contesting the Arctic* by Philip Steinberg, Jeremy Tasch and Hannes Gerhardt is a noteworthy addition to literature on the circumpolar north. Due to a steady increase in climate change coupled with investments in shipping, tourism and mineral extraction, most scholars would regard the region as being pivotal in terms of contemporary world politics and socio-economic development. Like previous studies that see the Arctic as an historic space of transition from Cold War militarisation to enhanced cooperation, *Contesting the Arctic* foregrounds the establishment of the Arctic Council and its working groups set up to mitigate risks to human and environmental security but does so critically. In terms of understanding the Arctic through a lens of security, *Contesting the Arctic* is valuable because the authors manage to explore a wide scope of power mechanisms used to govern Arctic space by understanding power vis-à-vis knowledge or ideas, which emerge within multiple sites of discourse across space and time. Arctic governance is contested according to what Steinberg et al. and other political geographers refer to as 'imaginaries' (page xii), which signify an understanding of Arctic space emerging in competing sites of discourse. Thus, the focus of the title and sub-title of the book tells a lot about the approach taken by the authors.

Through discourse analysis the authors challenge interpretations of Arctic space emerging from older, colonial forms of knowledge and power fixed on the premise of state sovereignty by drawing on imaginaries of the circumpolar north. Unlike the circumpolar south, the northernmost space of the planet is rich in natural resources, sparsely inhabited and prone to a wider variety of interpretations. In its six content chapters the book addresses the various ways in which Arctic space has been and is being interpreted, followed by a conclusive chapter on the 'normalisation of the North' (page 160). The authors are critical in each chapter of Arctic governance in its varying shapes and forms, which they often perceive as the 'status quo' (page 9) versus the 'others' (page 13). This approach draws on imaginary binaries, differences and assemblages of meaning

that Steinberg et al. conclude formulate a mythical Arctic space. In the chapter titled *Terra Nullius* the focus on claiming Arctic space is performed in acts of exploration, foreign policy, media discourse and cartographic reproduction. In the chapter titled *Frozen Ocean*, the legal regimes of sovereign states are depicted as exploring, mapping and territorialising Arctic space at the expense of others like indigenous groups who either cannot promote their imaginaries successfully or whose imaginaries are wrongly interpreted by legal experts. Several chapters on themes of 'preservation' (page 140), 'resource extraction' (page 90) or 'nationalism' (page 112) follow a similar approach in contesting Arctic space through discourse. It is contestation that forms the basis of politics of the circumpolar north which, according to the authors of *Contesting the Arctic*, emerges from discourse across space and time so as to re-/produce the material Arctic itself.

In the final chapter, the critical phrasing of the book denotes a subtle reminder to policy-makers, -shapers and -experts on the region that the Arctic is somewhat indiscernible given that multiple discourse about Arctic space co-exist. Nonetheless, images and imaginaries are powerful in the politics of the circumpolar north, which the authors argue re-imagine the Arctic as discourse is contested. For instance, an image evoking the 'nature reserve' (page 176) produced by Greenpeace on top of an ice sheet in 2010 is arguably framed against a status quo of imaginaries produced by governments, thereby calling on the world community to defend Arctic space. Therefore, while official discourse from the United States in the run up to its Arctic Council 2015 chairmanship may indeed campaign 'one Arctic' with regard to shared opportunities, challenges, and responsibilities, the authors of *Contesting the Arctic* uncover less official discourse in order to express people living, experiencing or governing Arctic space separately. The book thus provides empirical evidence in support of dissenting imaginaries of Arctic space within the world of policy-making whilst being critical of governments within the Arctic Council attempting to forge imaginaries together. Whether or not this is beneficial is of secondary importance to the authors who objectively undertake a story re-telling role. However, with regard to the future of Arctic geopolitics Steinberg et al. claim that it is more likely that finding 'the right combination' (page 179) of separate Arctic-s will continue as the agenda shared by most respondents of the book who will continue to contest the future of the Arctic.

Two features of *Contesting the Arctic* set the work apart as a major contribution to contemporary analyses of Arctic geopolitics. Firstly, the authors use feminist political geography to explore the circumpolar north as a contested space. The authors admit from the outset that in order to achieve an account of politics and imaginaries of the circumpolar north they may have needed to extend their research focus wider afield than the two hundred or so policy-makers and experts interviewed from US, Canada and Russian Arctic spaces. Despite the empirical limitations of their approach, the authors explore politics and imaginaries in the circumpolar north adeptly and encourage an insightful critical engagement with the evidence at their disposal. Steinberg et al.'s use of discourse analysis provides an enlightening perspective of Arctic governance, which is much needed in a field dominated by structuralist accounts of spaces inhabited by living and non-living subjects because such approaches can be too narrow or misleading. The focus on discourse helps readers learn about contesting spaces through real life experiences in the policy-making world by drawing on the politics and imaginaries that contradict each other. This brings a heightened degree of scientific objectivity to the research project, which is uncommon within the majority of polar social science.

Secondly, as an academic project *Contesting the Arctic* is situated within an exciting time period of geopolitical contestation and confusion. Having taken roughly five years to write and two years to publish, the focus of the book draws most inspiration from the period 2007–2008 – a time when the first exclusive inter-governmental meeting of the five Arctic coastal states took place in Ilulissat, Greenland, following the planting of a Russian flag on the north polar seabed. Speculation in media and foreign policy discourse about 'land-grabbing', 'colonialism' and 'a race for resources' is reflected in personal accounts of policy-makers and experts included throughout *Contesting the Arctic*. By drawing on major events like these the authors foreground subjective experiences enshrined in a logic of Arctic governance practices while comparing ways of thinking and experiencing the circumpolar north such as indi-

genous peoples or environmental groups. The book provides an exciting backdrop of information that reaches beyond the time of the research period itself while also transcending temporal imaginaries of Arctic governance. By drawing directly from the imaginaries of policy-makers and experts Arctic space becomes de-constructed in order to expose un-certainty surrounding the future stability of the Arctic.

Apart from a few key texts not enough literature covers the circumpolar north in a way that expresses the region's diverse human and physical characteristics. Many scholars within the field of polar social sciences remain firmly seated in positivist or structuralist traditions when analysing the past, present and future of the circumpolar north and south, which is evident with regard to the role of the Arctic Council. For more objective scholars, this can be quite disappointing. The beauty of *Contesting the Arctic* is that it deliberately avoids 'tinkering with [any understanding of the Arctic] itself' (page 55), to paraphrase one of the respondent's statements in the book. Instead the authors explore the insecurity surrounding Arctic governance that seems to stem from a shared misunderstanding of what the Arctic is and, in doing so, shed light on knowledge gaps, legal problems and identity crises that pervade Arctic governance in its present form. It is worth noting that the success of the book stems from the hard work of the authors and other scholars involved, such as Rob Shields or Klaus Dodds, who have managed to open dialogue within the academic world to enable less restrictive understandings of the polar regions.

Due to the efforts of scholars, experts and research bodies involved in the project, *Contesting the Arctic* pushes boundaries in the field of polar social science and provides a generous bibliographic essay for those willing to navigate other literature depicting Arctic and also Antarctic imaginaries. *Contesting the Arctic* is therefore recommendable for the reasons outlined in the review above, especially with regard to emerging speculations concerning the security of the Arctic as a result of growing economic interest in the Arctic's continually thawing ocean. (Michael J. Laiho, Ustinov College, Howlands Farm, Durham, DH1 3DE, UK ([m.j.laiho@durham.ac.uk](mailto:m.j.laiho@durham.ac.uk))).