

POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE BARENTS REGION. Monica Tennberg (editor). 2012. Rovaniemi: Lapland University Press. 386 p, softcover. ISBN 978-952-484-556-4. 34€.

Politics of Development in the Barents Region is a product of multidisciplinary research cooperation between Nordic and Russian researchers during 2010–2012. It outlines the aim ‘to raise and support further debate on sustainable development’ (page 16) in the Barents region. The book is divided into three sub-themes, each taking a focus on a different aspect of governing regional development. The first part discusses the rationalities of governing; the second focuses on questions of governance in practice. The final part looks at the manners in which the governance of developments taking place in and outside the Barents region is intertwined with issues of everyday life and experiences.

In the first chapter, Riabova takes an historical look at the changes in Russia’s northern policies all the way from the 17th century until today. In Riabova’s view, more state protectionism is needed in order to challenge the practice of treating the north solely as a resource base and to realise the human potential forming the foundation of sustainable development in and beyond the region.

Hasanat’s contribution analyses the governance arrangements of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Regional Council. He concludes that while the two bodies are ‘closely connected’ they still have ‘an individual identity’ (page 75) in the eyes of international law. Their unique nature as soft law cooperation forms may prove beneficial in terms of efficiently tackling issues that are emerging in the rapidly changing region.

Matilainen takes yet another perspective by addressing corporate actors as ‘economic, environmental and cultural forces’ (page 88) through looking at the practices of corporate social responsibility. With a focus on forest certification standards, the chapter not only highlights the diversity of actors taking part in shaping practices of natural resource use, but also raises concerns over market-driven voluntary self-regulation as taking place only as long it makes sense in financial terms.

In his chapter, Walter looks at the question of climate change as an issue being governed in the Barents region. Building on a systems theory approach, the chapter constructs an understanding of governance as shaped by a variety of actors and interests. Together, each of them with their competing logics, contribute to further adding to the complexity of climate change as an object of governance.

Didyk’s contribution focuses on the idea(l)s of local self-government associated with sustainable development. The chapter demonstrates that due to the weakly institutionalized position of sustainable development on the state level combined with the lack of economic self-determination capabilities on the local level, the possibilities of self-government in Russia have remained generally low. However, different forms of Barents cooperation can be seen to have had a positive influence in this respect.

From a very different viewpoint, Laaksonen provides a literature review mapping the field of international project marketing and summarising research conducted on the wide range of challenges, including economic, political, legal, and

cultural, faced by Norwegian companies operating in Russia. Laaksonen’s chapter aims to build ground for further empirical studies on the prospects of participation for Finnish companies in development projects unfolding in northern Russia.

Ampleman’s contribution places the focus on transportation planning in Arctic contexts. In the Barents region, the transportation issue is portrayed as crucial also in terms of region building; however, the grand stories of the north as a resource region sideline views of transportation as an issue of both development *and* well-being and ignore the views and needs of the local population.

Again in a very different context, Tyschianuk analyses how a specific raw material, timber, flows out from the ‘resource region’. As growing distances between production and consumption require external verifiers, consumers and end-users require socially and environmentally responsible production throughout the value chain. In this process, international certification standards as markers of trust have a crucial role.

Banul’s chapter addresses regional strategies for renewable energy development. Different regions are portrayed as diverse not only in their resource endowments, but also in terms of resource governance. While strongly shaped by national policies – even to the extent of ‘wind colonialism’ (page 277) – also international organisations, business and research institutions, regional cooperation and consumer demands contribute to regional renewable energy strategies and governance.

Again, with a completely different interest, the contribution by Lundgren shifts to looking at the question of happiness in the context of living in the north. Lundgren’s analysis indicates that a higher income rate is associated with higher degree of satisfaction in life; however, the chapter concludes that individual valuations matter more than background factors in terms of experiencing and expressing happiness.

Nystén-Haarala and Kuluyasova take a focus on the Pomors and their traditional fishing rights amidst the changing legislation, neoliberal resource governance practices, increasing pressure on resources and state-level understandings of indigeneity. In order to resolve the situation in which traditional means of subsistence are perceived as poaching and cultural and socio-economic survival are at stake, the chapter turns to looking at examples of good practices from Finland and Norway.

Another aspect of everyday life is addressed by Yeasmin’s contribution looking at the experiences of immigrants in the city of Rovaniemi in northern Finland. Combining statistics, participatory observation and personal experiences, Yeasmin comments on several challenges experienced by immigrants in the Barents region, where the number of foreign workers is expected to increase as the region’s large-scale resource projects begin to unfold.

In the final contribution, Sinevaara-Niskanen takes a gendered approach to the understandings of development and economy in the Arctic. Through focusing on the taken-for-granted discourses on development and economy, the chapter concludes that there are several economies with their respective logics – one of global resources, one of traditions, and one of future promises – operating in the region; in all of these, the question of gender remains to a great extent silenced or sidelined.

As a whole, the book constructs an understanding of governance of regional development and region-building as a multilevel process participated in by actors at various levels

both within and outside the region. It also draws attention to the diverse range and complicated nature of issues being governed as well as their complex interconnections. Together, the contributions raise concerns over the potentially detrimental influence of neoliberal modes of governance increasingly introduced at all levels; how to ensure that environmental and social sustainability aspects are taken into account also when addressing them cannot be perceived in terms of economic profitability?

Despite the book's explicit aim to discuss the notion of sustainable development in the regional context, the reader is left to hope for more in-depth discussion on the conceptual debate. Some chapters would greatly benefit from more dialogue with how (sustainable) development has been perceived as occupied by neoliberal market logics in other contexts; a clearer

theoretical focus would also make the book a more coherent whole. The biggest asset of the book – the multidisciplinary approach combined with illustrative case studies – is indeed also its most considerable weakness. The lack of coherence in terms of topics and approaches contributes to a fragmented view on regional development issues; this experience is further enforced by the considerably uneven impression that the book leaves as a whole. On the other hand, the diversity of views, disciplines and topics reflects the changing and challenging puzzle of actors, institutional arrangements, logics of governance, and understandings of development in the region far more complex than the conceptualisations focusing solely on natural resources would imply. (Hanna Lempinen, Arctic Centre, University of Lapland, PO Box 122, 96101 Rovaniemi, Finland (hanna.lempinen@ulapland.fi)).