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Contesting Global Environmental Knowledge, Norms, and Governance

Edited by M.J. Peterson

The Politics of Arctic Resources

Change and Continuity in the "Old North" of Northern Europe

Edited by E. Carina H. Keskitalo

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of Northern Europe

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11 Imageries and historical change in the European Russian Arctic

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Introduction

Looking from past to present, Russian policy on northern Europe and the Arctic is integral to an understanding of the deeply divided, competitive and colonializing history of the region. But how do its imageries and trajectories correspond with those of the Fennoscandian or other Arctic states today? Beginning in the 1990s, particularly after the creation of the Arctic Council in 1996, and leading up to the current decade the Arctic was internationally seen and discussed in unifying terms, as a global region in its own right. Particularly the emergence and relative success of the Arctic Council has attracted academic attention. When considered a primary political forum for deliberation concerning Arctic affairs, it too can be described as a political forum in which national governments can go beyond their immediate security concerns, cooperating for example in the areas of environmental protection and mitigation (Nord 2015).

Some scholars are more wary of the fact that international cooperation in the Arctic is founded upon the legal and political frameworks of states and, as opposed to going beyond states, represents an added layer of governance to pre-existing, deeply entrenched institutions and practices (Laruelle 2014; Tsygankov 2016). Looking for concrete examples of governance in the European Arctic, the Barents Euro-Arctic region may be observed, evolving under the crucial Kirkenes Declaration. Originally created with a nod from Moscow, the governance rhetoric of cross-border historical unity has become a cornerstone of ideas about a northern regional identity (Granberg 1998). Regardless of perspective, diplomatic or regionalist, Russian political and administrative choices emerge as particularly important to an informed overall understanding of Arctic developments and change (cf. Foxall 2014). In the North, patterns of state and civil organization differ greatly not only between the Fennoscandian countries, as discussed by Sverker Sörlin in this volume, but even more between them and Russia.

Any understanding of the Arctic as a unified region or concept is challenged by decision-making paths based on different political experiences. Experiences and events are captured and transformed in separate and different political systems.

As has been repeatedly pointed out by some scholars (Keskitalo 2004; Doel et al. 2014), there is no uniform pattern to development in the Arctic. Russia differs not only from the Fennoscandian countries, but significantly also from other states facing the Arctic Ocean, on such core institutional issues as the attribution of rights, land ownership, leasing and the social role of companies and other private actors. In addition, the borders between the Fennoscandian countries and Russia represent some of the most significant wealth gaps in Europe. Institutional variation thus not only plays a crucial role in overall Arctic political change but underscores the need for a better understanding of Russian attitudes towards appropriation of Arctic space. Currently, academic voices from inside Russia claim that Russia is likely to continue following its own route towards Arctic development (Sergunin & Konyshchev 2016). This is not necessarily the same thing as propagating the notion of a “special path” for Russia which, unfortunately, lines up closely with a comparative international rhetoric about why some countries never seem to succeed, for example in their use of technology in the Arctic (Josephson 2011). We shall refrain from such rhetoric in this chapter and thereby also try to avoid another academic caveat, which concerns whether or not successful developmental models must be borrowed from particular political contexts in the world (Kubyshev & Sergunin 2012).

The aim of this chapter is to trace the trajectories of Russian Arctic policy in the past and to discuss how elements of its imagery are substituted for different ones over time. Inspired by such approaches as the “new spatial histories of Russia” (Baron 2007) and the history of territoriality (Steinberg 2014), we assume that the Arctic as a spatial construct changes over time as a “constellation of ideas about what the Arctic is and what it can be” (Steinberg 2014, 6). We are also interested in how such imageries, or spatial metaphors, from the past could give us clues to the present and potential futures of “a dynamic and evolving region that consists of the interaction of a variety of imaginaries” (Steinberg et al. 2015, 163, see also Dodds, Powell 2014). What constitutes the North is an imagined space that “is held not just by individuals but by institutions and entire organizations” (Jørgensen & Sörlin 2013, 4). Utilizing the concept of “imagery”, as opposed to the more ethereal “imaginary”, however, we further assume that the policy concept can be utilized in a wide sense, broadly indicative of the “tools” a government intends to use in order to reach its goals (Schneider & Ingram 1990; Colebatch 1998; Omelicheva 2016). The imagery used in governmental policy, then, is one of several keys to an improved understanding of how government speaks to its citizens and tries to rally support for the implementation of a particular developmental path (Rappaport 1981; Leiserowitz 2006; Macdonald 2009; Ahn 2012). The imageries that we present and discuss in the following overlap in time. We do not intend or seek a strict chronological order of imageries or events, but rather to paint the history of Russian Arctic imagery with broad strokes and bring it up to the present.

Based primarily on secondary sources and meta-analysis, we set out to observe how the Russian national interest and government policy shifts toward a northern periphery over time and how this periphery is integrated with a political, spatial

Table 11.1 Imageries, breaking points and trajectories

Imageries	Breaking points	Trajectories
Frozen frontier	Before 1850s	Colonization, early industrialization
Backyard	Up to 1930s	Industrialization, securitization
Closed façade	Up to 1990s	Industrialization, modernization
Open or “whipped”	Up to 2010s	Experimentation, reintegration
Screen	From the 2010s	Resecuritization

mind map. Some scholars have reasoned that generic Arctic policy in Russia flows from a Soviet legacy, that of extreme decision-making centralization and economic resource concentration (Josephson 2014). As will be shown, however, Russian Arctic policy is not linear or unidimensional. If temporalized, albeit in broad strokes, different stages characterized by almost cyclical periods of intensification and weakening of the Russian state interest can be discerned (see Table 11.1). Turning points always seem closely connected with political flux, indicative of different logics, drivers and shifts in the need to increase state revenue, improve resource governance, urbanize and allocate resources or, for that matter, either ignore or try to mitigate environmental degradation.

Before the early 20th century in Russia, the term “Arctic” referred only to the Arctic Ocean, while polar territories were referred to as the North (Ostrovskii 1899). In the Russian context, the Arctic was and still is largely understood as a remote and frozen maritime realm with islands. Today, the terrestrial Arctic and sub-Arctic is mostly referred to different Norths: as “the European North” (historically known as “the Russian North”) in the northwest, or more broadly as “the Far North” when northern Siberia is included. There is also the vague term *zapoliarie*, which was widely used in Soviet times to refer to all regions above the polar circle (Piliarov 2018). In the Russian context, the maritime image of the Arctic is significant as the country has a vast Arctic coastline and a number of islands in the Arctic Ocean, which is generally heavily reflected in Russian Arctic imagery (Stolberg 2016; Sörlin 2018; Avango et al., this volume). The geographical focus of this chapter nevertheless is upon the European part of the Russian Arctic, which will be referred to as the North.

The Russian European Arctic as a frozen frontier

Like in other northern countries, the expansion of Russia in the North was motivated chiefly by the search for valuable natural resources and the extension of state territoriality. Oceanic resources were important, as was fur from forest animals. In long-term perspective, the colonization of the Russian North can be seen as a combination of frontier movement and internal colonization within the Russian state (Lajus 2011). Expanding at first as a frontier movement, colonization stopped when it reached the ocean and started to evolve through assimilation of local peoples and appropriation of territory. The real frontier movement was

redirected from the Russian North to Siberia and Russian America. The Arctic lands “had to be perpetually colonized, and yet it remains the bulk of the country and unassimilated, uncivilised, unconquered space” (Kaganovsky 2016). The imagery of “frozen frontier” is useful for this historical period because it represents the Arctic as a long-lasting, not expanding but still attractive, not fully explored but gradually domesticated open border zone (see Sörlin this volume).

Colonization of the North by Russians began around the 13th century and, as the land was nowhere appropriate for agriculture, by exploiting fisheries and hunting. The main target for fishery was Atlantic salmon, which was easily accessible. Salmon-for-grain and trade in iron tools with southern Russian areas and settlements became the pivot of survival and maintenance of the Slavic cultural identity. Salmon fishery, however, provided only limited resources (Lajus et al. 2009). Pushing colonization further northward, the much richer fish resources in the Barents Sea became available. From the 16th century on, with the establishment of permanent settlements, seasonal fishing along the Murman coast was established as the most economically viable occupation, which also came to last for centuries (Lajus & Lajus 2010; Lajus 2011).

At the core of a Russian understanding of resource use lay a feudal understanding of land rights, putting all available resources under the jurisdiction of the tsar. In legal terms, the tsar granted different users (nobles, churches, peasant communities) access to land and resources. The latter provided services or paid taxes and tribute in kind. In practice, however, the tsar’s private property was kept well separate from state property. A characteristic feature of Russian institutional development, including the spatial development of the country, is historically rooted in this era. State “paternalism” emerged, dominating systems of production, administration, knowledge and planning. Even back then, Russian monocentrism in state building and early policies of settlement and colonization contrasted with the more polycentric Western Europe (see Sörlin this volume), displaying less local and regional autonomy. The legal base for resource governance evolved only very slowly. Even in the late 19th century, property rights remained vague and boundaries between private and public property undetermined (Pravilova 2014).

Beginning in the 15th century, the state regularly produced cadastral descriptions of available arable land, which also included the availability of potential resources, for example hay lands and areas suitable for fishing and hunting. Since the prime objective was to calculate and keep track of taxation, unsettled territories received little or no state attention. Only resources used by local populations whereupon taxes could be levied were of state interest (Martin 1986; Lincoln 1994). In the 15th and 16th centuries, orthodox monasteries and fortification settlements became the main tools of colonization in the remote and underpopulated northern lands. Monasteries actively participated in the organization of fisheries, involving peasants and distributing fishery products among the population. The state gave the monasteries tax collection rights, and collecting the “tenth fish” became the main public intervention. That lasted until 1764 when, as a result of secularization, monastic possessions were handed over to the state.

In the 18th century the natural riches of the Arctic Ocean were realized by Tsar Peter the Great as important to his vision of a “Europeanized” Russia. Monopolistic companies became significant agents of state modernization. Fish trade was concentrated to private hands but under strict control by the state (Dadykina et al. 2017b, 31–32). Local fishermen were forced to sell their catch and the blubber from marine hunting cheaply to monopolies. These then sold most of the products abroad for a much higher price. While Arctic islands like Novaya Zemlya had been observed and included in Russian economic thought since at least the 16th century, only in the 18th century did Russian industrial-scale marine hunting expand (Dadykina et al. 2017a). Under Catherine the Second, the Russian economy was liberalized (Dixon 1999, 225) and the colonial approach to the North, first via large monasteries and then monopolistic trade companies, was abandoned.

Up to the middle of the 19th century the Russian state paid little attention to the North. The local inhabitants not only went back to their traditional ways but also managed to start a profitable trade in Arctic marine resources with Norway. In the course of the 1800s, however, the world markets for such resources went into decline, ultimately to remain significant only for local sustenance and resilience. Only after Russia’s defeat in the Crimean War in the mid-1800s did the central Russian authorities begin to securitize the relative openness and vulnerability of its sparsely populated Arctic spaces, and to campaign for their renewed integration (Lajus 2011).

The Russian European Arctic as a backyard

The backyard imagery stems from a time when Russian, later Soviet, authorities considered both the North and the Far North exclusively as a resource base. In this imagery, the well-being of local inhabitants was of little or no interest to central authorities. The backyard should be functional, and it should be protected, but there was no perceived need for local development or improvement. In effect, the backyard imagery points in the direction of isolation from the outer world. Such Arctic imagery has been used descriptively in the policies of other countries, such as the United Kingdom (Powell 2013).

After the Crimean War, the interest of the Russian state in strengthening the North for reasons of security initiated a period of slow but intentional increase in natural resource extraction. This also started the infrastructural integration between Russian core areas and the North. In the 1860s, a governmental programme for colonization of the Murman coast of the Barents Sea went into effect. Colonization of Novaya Zemlya was organized via the resettlement of several indigenous Nenets families from the mainland tundra. In the 1880s, the railway to Arkhangelsk was finished and telegraph connections soon to follow. In 1898, the railway connected the city-port of Arkhangelsk with the mainland to the south through Vologda. The first Russian year-round northern port, Aleksandrovsk, was opened on the northern shore of the Kola Peninsula in 1899. The Murmansk railway was constructed during World War I and connected Petrograd (earlier and

today St. Petersburg) with the Barents Sea port Romanov-on-Murman, later to be renamed Murmansk.

At the time, scientific research moved forward in close cooperation with the Nordic countries, which among other things resulted in the establishment of the International Council for Exploration of the Seas (ICES) in 1902 (Lajus 2002). This cooperation mostly represented a transfer of Western, not least Norwegian, approaches and methodologies to Russian science and to cooperative field work at sea (Lajus 2013b). Technologically, the crucial event to determine all further development of the marine industry in the North was the introduction of bottom trawls in the 1910s. From 1920s on, and particularly in the 1930s, trawling was established as the main fishing technique in the Barents Sea despite its negative effects on the sea bottom and on fish communities (Finstad & Lajus 2012).

Russian, and later Soviet, governments tried to adopt different models for colonization of its European North: at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th centuries it looked to Norway. Later, in the second half of the 1920s, the idea evolved into one of making the region a “Soviet Canada”, since the practices of railway colonization had been successfully developed (Lajus 2013a; Bruno 2016). Before the revolution of 1917, industry in the North was based mainly on logging and water and railway transportation for the import of goods and export of raw materials, especially timber and fish. Russian coal mines were established on Spitsbergen in 1913 but operated only on a minor scale all the way through the 1920s. Import of coal from Spitsbergen was nevertheless embedded in the future planning of the Russian Empire. At the time, coal mining on Spitsbergen was organized through a state-owned timber trust, Severoles (Northern Timber), which was later to become the major Soviet exporter of timber from the Arkhangelsk region and Karelia, in cooperation with foreign companies operating on Spitsbergen.

After a short period of time, when small-scale private enterprises were allowed under Lenin’s New Economic Policy (NEP) between 1923 and 1928, Russia went into a new phase of large-scale industrialization based on collectivization and the prioritization of mining and metallurgy. Technocrats and executives were recruited from universities among trained technologists and scientists. For example, the mineralogist and geochemist Alexander Fersman (1883–1945) became the pioneer of mining on the Kola Peninsula in the 1930s. Such leaders were nevertheless handed the task of running everything from basic geological science and prospecting to the actual opening and running of mines. They were expected to conform to strict communist manners and be subservient to detailed economic five-year plans issued by centralized, branch-wise ministries in Moscow. Experts in the geological sciences were on the one hand raised to prominence for their socialist industrial leadership, but were on the other hand equally likely to fall out of favour with the communist party leadership. Ever vigilant and distrustful of practical from a cadre of technological advisors originally schooled under tsarism, the Communist Party added to the general problem of large-scale Soviet industrial leadership (Wråkberg 2013).

The major shift in Soviet policy towards the Arctic occurred in the 1930s when the Soviet government began in earnest to incorporate the North with the framework of Stalin's five-year plans for rapid industrialization. The policy was founded on two pillars, the first being hyper-centralization through the establishment of large institutional structures such as the Main Administration of the Northern Sea Route (GUSMP) in 1932, and the consolidation of industries into branches. The second pillar was militarization, which manifested itself primarily through the establishment of the Northern Navy fleet on the Kola Peninsula in 1933 and the forced development of heavy industries for military production. Forced industrialization on the Kola Peninsula also demanded a significant workforce. Consequently, the North was flooded with forced special settlers from the south, no small amount of which belonged to the prison population. In some cases, also contracted staff worked in strategic enterprises such as Apatity and Khibinogorsk chemical plants (apatite ore mining and processing), the Murmansk railroad, the Vorkhuta coal mines in the Komi Republic or the Norilsk nickel plant among others (Bruno 2016).

There were also middle range industrial plants like the coal mining trust "Arctikugol" (Arctic coal) established in 1931 on Spitsbergen but with its headquarters in Moscow. Up until World War II, Spitsbergen coal was seen as strategic to avoid fuel shortages in the newly established industries and fleets located in the USSR North. Industrialization brought first and foremost the partly voluntary, partly forced migration of thousands of people to the North from the southern parts of the USSR. This spilled over into a stepwise but rapid urbanization of the North through the establishment of several industrial towns in the near vicinity of mines and Arctic ports.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Arctic imagery still used colonial terms, such as bringing civilization to snowy white and silent lands. Success, however, was measured only by the intensification of industrialization and resource extraction. Numerous strategic economic reports from this period focused on the role of Glavsevmorput, in what was ostensibly the people's economy. There was, however, no mention of gulag settlements, forced labour or the plight of indigenous peoples (Slavin 1945). A new element was that movies and books contributed to powerful popular images of the Arctic as an uninhabited, hostile environment challenged and defeated by brave Soviet men (McCannon 1997; Bugaeva 2015). Nevertheless, the North was interesting to the Soviet state primarily in its capacity as a resource base. The backyard imagery was ever present, although the heavy investment in infrastructure and connectedness seems to have worked towards a more integrated Soviet North. Narratives, institutions and infrastructural development portended what one scholar has called normalization (Frank 2010). The duality of imagery and political practice, however, pointed to an imminent change of imagery.

The Russian European Arctic as a closed façade

The façade imagery has a long history in Russian politics. Astolphe de Custine, a Frenchman who visited Russia during the reign of Nicolas I, called Russia "a

country of façades", describing a simulative character of Russian political culture in the 19th century, where a plan and a concept were more important than the reality behind them. Façade imagery was first used in conjunction with the Arctic in the late 19th century by Russian admiral and polar explorer Stepan O. Makarov, who wrote: "If comparing Russia with a building, one has to admit that its façade faces the Arctic Ocean" (Makarov 1943, 47). By this he sought to highlight the importance of further exploration of the Arctic seashore and development of shipping, especially by furthering the construction of icebreakers. What is particularly relevant to the use of façade imagery here, however, is its directional aspect – the façade represents a specially developed frontier facing the outside world. At that, it differs from the backyard or frozen frontier which are directed inward.

Although rooted in deeper history, the Cold War processes of securitization amplify the façade imagery (Doel et al. 2014). As has been shown, elements of Russian securitization with regard to the North carry over from earlier decades, such as the shift from primarily economic and industrial development of the Soviet Arctic in 1922–1939 to gradually increasing military concerns. During World War II and the ensuing Cold War periods, economic concerns return on the political agenda (Østreng et al. 1999, 45). Parallel with these changes, an increasing political obsession with secrecy contributed to making for example successful ocean floor expeditions unknown even inside the Soviet Union – to be compared with the blatant propagandistic use of such exploits in the 1930s (McCannon 1998).

In the late 1950s, after the end of Stalinism, the Soviet Union became increasingly susceptible to influences from the international arena (Doel et al. 2014). The core principles of Soviet Arctic policy began to change. Although militarization continued, an element of thaw and opening in the Cold War made it possible for example for Soviet Arctic scientists to become members of international scientific organizations and participate in events like IGY. Reorganization, ultimately to become the abolishment, the gulag prison system had begun. Glavsevmorput was replaced with civil scientific institutions. Both the government and the newly established civil research institutions of the North had to find new ways to manage economic and social development. Above all, Soviet individuals had to be stimulated to move to northern cities of their own accord. A policy to attract young workers to the North and Far North was established and civil strategic plans for Arctic development were designed. In 1954, within the Academy of Sciences framework, the Commission on the Problems of the North was established and tasked with the examination of economic potential and productive forces in the Soviet northern territories. The official aim of the Commission was "the guidance and coordination of the main researches of northern issues conducted by institutions of the Soviet Academy of Sciences for the development of the people's economy and Soviet science" (Kalemeneva 2018a). Significant shifts also occurred in modes of production, and some industries even faced crisis. The timber export industry was one example, and Severoles was liquidated in 1957 due to export substitution from wood to more capital-intensive pulp and paper products.

Northern fisheries remained an important source of income in the Soviet North, not least due to territorial expansion from the Barents Sea towards the waters of

Iceland and Svalbard. The first signs of a growing understanding of the necessity of international regulation in fisheries appeared already in the 1960s. A key role in international collaboration was again attributed to the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and a first, albeit unsuccessful, attempt at introducing international quotas was made within the framework of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) in 1959 (Hønneland 2012; Höhler et al., this volume). After decades of negotiation, the Soviet Union and Norway were to establish their respective Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) only in 1977, following the 1976 Joint Norwegian-Russian Fisheries Commission which managed to establish and introduce an international quota on cod and other species. In the period from the late 1960s and up to the early 1980s, herring and capelin – the key commercial fish of the Barents Sea – went into drastic decline caused by both a decrease in water temperature and excessive fishing, however. The latter was also exacerbated by technological improvements to the deep-freezing of fish, introduced in the early 1980s (Finstad & Lajus 2012). From the 1950s and on, the exploitation of oil and gas became more significant and were, by the mid-1970s, established as the main Soviet export item (Hogselius 2013). Although the main industry was developed in Western Siberia and, with the exploitation of natural gas taking off in the mid-1980s in the northern part of the Yamal Peninsula, the North was also touched by this major industrial development in the Pechora region. Both hydropower and nuclear power were rapidly developed on the Kola Peninsula in the 1970s (Bruno 2016, 220–266).

Driven by economic change, urbanization took off in the form of industrial towns near newly discovered deposits of oil, gas, diamonds, gold and other valuable resources. Beginning in the 1950s, however, resources were exploited without the use of forced labour or prisoners. Urbanization introduced new elements to life in the North, fomenting different social, cultural and material structures (Kalemeneva 2017, 2018b). Already in the 1950s, referring to themselves as “ordinary Soviet citizens”, urbanites would expect access to all the basic elements of life in a modern Soviet town, such as nurseries, schools, shops, restaurants and a developed public sphere. An article from the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia* from this time ran the remarkable headline, “Our Arctic”. It highlighted the similarities between new Arctic settlements and central or southern cities by saying that “streets in our settlement are as liveable as in other towns. Cars are constantly driving [. . .] children are playing the same games: ski, skates” (Kolokolov 1958). Arctic settlements were suddenly becoming signifiers of technological advancement and social diversity.

Polar family-based towns also became one of the main policy tools for connection and assimilation. Modernization of transportation networks, namely, the construction of airports and modern roads, was considered as interesting as the new technologies of transistor radios and television. Personal and family connections with “the Big Land” (an unofficial but widely spread euphemism for central Russia among northern settlers) linked northern towns to the rest of the country. While in the 1930s the regional imagery focused on polar heroes, it was subsumed by modernizing elements of Soviet identity already by the 1960s. The

policy rhetoric of a fight against Severe Nature, as witnessed in the 1930s, was now fully transformed into narratives of everyday Soviet life in which people in the North could live “almost like in Moscow” (Komsomolskaya 1956). The 1950s also saw the reinstitution of the Main Administration of the Northern Sea Route. This administration had been subdivided into a number of specialized agencies in 1939, but played a significant role as a unit during World War II, keeping the Northern Sea Route navigable for lend-lease convoys. In the 1950s, it became an ordinary department within the Ministry of Maritime Transport, specialized in transportation and modern technologies such as nuclear icebreakers and helicopters. By the 1970s, the Soviet Arctic was also covered by a functional network of airports and airlines, further increasing its accessibility and integration.

Particularly affecting development in the Soviet North, however, Russian Arctic coastal zones were divided into two different types of space: secret military spaces that were restricted even for visitors carrying Soviet passports, and more open spaces where international presence and cooperation was allowed. These spaces were often situated close together, sometimes no more than a few kilometres apart. Murmansk and Severomorsk are cases in point. While Murmansk could be visited freely by foreigners, Severomorsk was the base of the Soviet Northern Fleet and closed. Submarine bases in the Kola Bay were under severe restriction, most of which are still present. By the mid-1980s, the North was extremely dense with naval vessels, the Barents Sea sporting some 203 submarines and 220 surface vessels (Østreng et al. 1999, 286). For military strategic reasons, even civil scientists studying the Arctic environment were forbidden to go abroad or communicate their results to the broad Soviet public. The creation of a façade had reached its peak in the 1980s, making large parts of the North invisible even to the country itself. Propagating ever-greater Soviet state achievements in the Arctic, the Soviet state contributed to a state of mind where the imagery of policies was generally regarded by citizens as separate from the realities of life in the North (Piliashov 2018).

The post-Soviet North: opening or “whipping” it?

After the fall of the Soviet Union, and in a serious break with the “paternalistic” Russian state tradition, oblasts and new republics of the new Russian Federation were very much left to their own devices. The Arctic façade that had looked so solid eroded rapidly and crumbled. In a seemingly unprecedented retreat of the Russian state, even international business partnerships were free for the taking. After a period of turbulent sell-outs of state socialist enterprises and the horrors of economic “shock therapy” during the 1990s, however, the Russian state re-established its power over straying regions. For example, foreign ownership of land and concessions to extract raw materials or energy assets yet again became prohibited and permissible only after political approval from central government. Post-Soviet Arctic policy took off in two different directions simultaneously. On the one hand, it prescribed an unprecedented opening of borders and the establishment of cross-border cooperation, particularly with the Fennoscandian countries.

On the other hand, there was a process of what some analysts refer to as a “whipping” of Russia’s northern borders, more or less harking back to the colonizing imagery of near national border territories (Korolev 2002, 12).

The opening imagery is particularly manifested by Russia joining the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) in 1993. Among other examples are the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) in 1990, the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) in 1991 and the Arctic Council in 1996. The Russian government was slow in realizing that the North could not adapt to new market conditions and overcome systemic and economic crises solely by relying on its own resources and capacities (Østreng et al. 1999, 237). For example, in 1992 special anti-crisis and stabilizing measures were to be implemented in the North under the State Committee of Northern Issues (Goskomsever). The organization was abolished already in the year 2000, clearly signalling that things in the North were now normal and not in need of separate or specific governance (Blakkisrud 2006). The policy imagery also underwent major change at the turn of the millennium, substituting an inward-looking focus on economic and social development for a primarily geopolitical and global outlook (Piliashov 2018).

The two parallel policy trajectories played out differently in the North and in the Far North. In Siberia, austerity measures and a “whipping” of borderlands was more pronounced, also involving mass migration to the centre. Even ghost towns started to appear (Heleniak 2016). In the North, transnational regional development schemes followed the successful introduction of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region in 1993. Cross-border economic transactions flourished and started to make an impact on regional identities (Gnatenko & Vlachov 2018). During the 1990s, Norway more or less focused its own Arctic policy upon Russia and upon bringing the Russian North into different collaborative networks. Bilateral agreements ensued in such areas as environmental protection, nuclear safety and the management of fisheries (Hønneland 2017). Cross-border investment and business development initiatives abounded in the North through the 1990s, for example with Norwegian banks opening branch offices in Murmansk. Mainly due to legal difficulties and, in the 2000s increasing centralization in Russia, few such initiatives were able to last, less so because of hostility towards markets or foreign owners, and more so due to a general insecurity regarding the status of small and medium size enterprises in the Russian system.

As has been shown, the extraction and export of natural resources was always a staple of economic development in the North. In modern times it involves the extraction and primary processing of ferrous and non-ferrous metals, apatite mining, oil and gas extraction in the Pechora region, coal in Vorkuta and some other industries. Forestry and fishing has remained in crucial sectors as well. The breakup of the Soviet Union meant the end of the economic sector principle, however. For example, the once monolithic industrial fishing complexes rapidly disintegrated. Production and management functions were split up, leading to further processes of fragmentation within each of the two new administrative spheres (Jørgensen 2009). Furthermore, state enterprises were privatized and divided up on a plurality of owners, each of whom would hold a permit for a small fish quota.

Organized in this way, efficient fishing was made difficult due on the one hand to the large amount of small private enterprises, and on the other hand to a lack of public resources for common and effective management. IUU (illegal, unreported and unregulated) fishing was commonplace in the 1990s and early 2000s. The parallel processes of enlargement of firms, privatization and out-competing has carried over into the present. Fishing companies in the Russian Arctic have continued to grow, and the largest ones have increased their overall political influence both locally and nationally, even on the level of the Russian state, despite a major shift in 2008 when the principle of quota allocation was adopted (Jørgensen 2009). The Russian fishing industry of the North has done little or nothing to improve overall social organization or political goal setting for the region. Currently, it seems as if the big private companies have simply taken over the role which used to be held by state-run businesses in Soviet times. There are, however, some signs of new managerial patterns and influences from globalization. For example, ecological certification of fisheries according to standards of the Marine Stewardship Council are a source of change (Lajus et al. 2018). A general change of atmosphere in management, increasingly influenced by international negotiation and organization, is also detectable despite signs of resistance from the regional industrial complex.

If the 1930s was an historical point of divergence between the institutional developments in Russia and the Fennoscandian countries, the breakdown of the Soviet Union in the 1990s brought back a potential for convergence. The destruction of the Soviet state and its policymaking structures was rooted in a deregulation of socialism, which was crowned by Mikhail Gorbachev’s attempts at perestroika in the second half of the 1980s. As observed by Bunce, it was “a process that necessarily destroyed socialism, given its dependence on economic and political monopoly” (Bunce 1999, 157, cf. Nove 1969; Sakwa 1989). After the breakdown of the Soviet Union, however, political institutions in Russia were metaphorically discussed as “delegative democracy”, “guided democracy”, “electoral clanism”, “oligarchy” and “low calibre democracy” (Robinson 2003, 149). As the prospect for pluralism in Russian politics started to wane in the early 21st century, oligarchy became the metaphor of choice among analysts (Satter 2003; Fortescue 2006; Goldman 2008; Hollingsworth & Lansley 2009). Solid pacts of mutual recognition by interdependent elites at the top of the Russian state structure continue to be the primary institutional source of state policy (Gelman 2001, 2012), although the system is insufficiently suffused by common codes of conduct (Gelman 2012, cf. Linz & Stepan 1996). Thus the imagery of Russian Arctic policy may change quickly to meet with one of many potential Arctic futures. Then again it may not, depending upon how the political elites in Russia perceive of the relationship between different developmental drivers in the Arctic, external or internal, environmental or extractive, benign or belligerent. Even if there has not been a “whipping” of the borders in the Russian North on the scale of what happened in the Far North, the opening policy imagery of the past 30 years seem to have outlived itself. Institutional centralization and geopolitical concerns overshadowing regional developmental concerns has, as has been shown, a history in the North.

From façade to two-way screen?

Attempts at reconstructing the Arctic façade imagery become particularly visible after 2014. Although the imaginaries and infrastructures of the Cold War era are gone, there is a possibility that showcasing, façades and “Potemkin villages” may be part of current and future imageries (Medvedev 2018). Although this will become clear only in a longer historical perspective, it is possible to tease out and hint at some of the current trajectories. To the extent that Russia is yet again beginning to project a façade to the other Arctic states, it is noteworthy that it is of a different kind from before. It carries over from the 1990s and 2000s in that it sends two different messages to insiders and outsiders. To Russian citizens, the imagery is of heroism, vigilance and militarism. To the rest of the world, it is a call for sustainable international cooperation between equals (Grischenko & Tynkynen 2018). To the extent that what we see is the emergent imagery of another façade, we suggest to call it a screen pretending to be a wall, the most important function of which is to produce shifting imageries for different needs. In this light, even the digitalization of information and communications can be means to an end in the production of imagery.

Different elements of imagery and policy change affect how Russia can be gauged as an Arctic actor today. As observed by Laruelle, the 1990s more or less took Russia out of the international Arctic political equation for a period, only for the country to reassert itself in the 2000s, standing “on the cusp of multiple potential Arctic futures” (2014, xxiii). There is variation in how Russia approaches different partners, observable not least in the North. Russia applies a soft-power, regionalizing rhetoric vis-à-vis the Fennoscandian countries, whereas the tone intermittently hardens against Canada and the United States (Laruelle 2014, 3–23). Economic sanctions from the West have as yet done little to change this political pattern. On the other hand, Russia and the other Arctic rim states are also deeply involved in the production of sea-floor maps for acknowledgement by the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, most of them similarly active in negotiations about how the borders of EEZs should be drawn. Geopolitical interests and complex global geo-economic considerations are significant strategic drivers for all of the states involved (Henriksen & Ulfstein 2011; Konyshov et al. 2017, 113–117). To further complicate things, economically powerful and technologically advanced nations, transnational enterprises and global investors who are external to the Arctic proper are also involved, some of them as observers in the Arctic Council. To Russian policymakers, at least one potential Arctic future is driven by Southeast Asian and European economic interests in the Northern Sea Route and its potential hubs, linking it with a potential further extraction of Arctic energy and raw material resources. Whether or not international law, through precedence and regulation from other oceanic contexts, will suffice to dampen national interests in this process remains an open issue (Coates & Holroyd 2017; Koivurova 2018; see also other chapters of this book).

Competing imageries in the Arctic policies of states emerge in different institutional settings. In the liberal democracies of Fennoscandia, for example, national

policymaking is tangled with constitutionally guaranteed collective decision-making mechanisms, also involving local and regional government. It is, as discussed by Sverker Sörlin in this volume, even possible to talk about liberal democracies of the Nordic type (cf. Flora 1999). In these countries, significant levels of consensus are politically necessary for Arctic policy imageries to play out. Regardless of their shared Old North history, Russia and the Fennoscandian countries came to an institutional bifurcation point in the 1930s. Whereas the Fennoscandian forms of government were democratized and started gradually to progress towards welfare-statism and social integration, the then emergent Soviet Union followed a path towards state centralism (Elenius et al. 2015, 235–291).

The imaginaries of Russian Arctic policy are less constrained by local political and economic interests (cf. Sakwa 2008, 2009). State policy is generally more declarative and unidirectional, constrained only by its potential lack of roots in local and regional motivation structures. Coming out of the Soviet breakdown in 1991–1993, the new Russian Federation went through a period of relative decentralization, only to be recentralized in the early 2000s. State centralism remains a central tenet of Russian statehood since the role of the Russian government is crucial to law making, public reform programmes and finance. As described by Hill and Gaddy, the current system of governance in Russia can be described as “a tiered system – or perhaps better, a series of concentric circles [. . .] the sphere of governance that is supposed to function like a ‘Swiss watch’. Finally, beyond the circles of governance are the governed, the Russian populace” (2015, 190–191). Hence, in political institutions of the Russian type, social consensus is less important in the shaping of Arctic imaginaries. For such imaginary to play out as a guideline for implementation of various policy programmes, it nevertheless is (Isakova 2005; Maslov 2012). The sheer vastness of territory and the expanses of land in the Russian North make them incommensurable with those of Fennoscandia or other European regions. There are the infrastructural challenges of extending pipelines and opening new oil and gas deposits to replace those of Soviet times. This entails very large infrastructural investments as well as a new view to customer relations and up-to-date technology, all of which is sorely missing from Russian Arctic policy (Gjedssø & Gallucci 2016). The weak property rights and uneven wealth distribution remained an obstacle for future development (Nysten-Haarala 2015).

The Arctic is a Russian high-security area, in modern times marked by both air force, ground force and naval activity. The modern cross-pressure from Arctic and military policies on the North is therefore considerable. Adding to that, both industrial and military activities are conducive to serious and various types of pollution (Sokolov 2013). To some extent, the gradual accumulation of pollutants in the European North can be seen as a manifestation of how the industrial-military cross-pressure morphs into political and economic inertia. In the 2000s, increasing pollution, health issues and economic changes have contributed to a more widespread social understanding of the need for scientifically based checking and control of exploitative activities guided by contradictory policies (Lukin 2013; Sokolov 2013). Among the pollution problems attracting increasing public

attention is the risk of oil spills. Another is the fallout from solid and liquid radioactive waste resulting from Soviet-era dumping in the shallow bays of the Kara and Barents Seas (Sivintsev 2009). Another factor, no less important to the public debate on Russian Arctic policy, is the huge amount of debris left along the coastlines of the Russian North, including on islands and in archipelagos. Among the heavy by-products of both industrialization and military exploitation can be found decrepit buildings, stray building materials, rusted ships and machinery, clapped-out vehicles, containers, 200-litre barrels and even more huge empty petroleum tanks. Recently the successful programme for cleaning up the Arctic islands and coasts from all this garbage was developed. It should be noted, however, that despite international descriptions of the cost of extreme Soviet environmental degradation, severely damaged land in the region constitutes only 2.7% of the total Arctic territory. There are 243 protected areas located only in the Russian North, which makes up 5.2% of the total territory (Hønneland 2011).

Pollution aside, climate change represents a serious contemporary challenge for Russian policy and management in the Arctic. With the forecasted global temperature increase of approximately 2 degrees Celsius, which might rise to as much as 5 degrees Celsius in the Arctic, what was historically perceived of as white land and sea in the Russian spatial construct might simply become land and sea in the near future. For policymakers, this is a mixed blessing. For example, most of the important commercial fish stocks in the Russian North currently occur on the northern border of their distribution range. Moreover, the abundance of populations is increasing but also changing migration routes, all due to warming. The Arctic, including the Barents and Bering Seas, is one of the most significant regions for both Russian and world fishing, which is likely to capture the policy interest of states not only beyond Russia but also beyond the Arctic proper (Sergunin & Konyshov 2016). Taking the high vulnerability of Arctic ecosystems and the absence of long-term data on their variability into account, Russian and other policymakers are wont to claim some stakes for themselves (Bokhanov et al. 2013). From the Russian point of view, with economic crises and international sanctions fresh in mind, international austerity measures are likely to run afoul of policy trajectories and imageries (Hønneland & Jörgensen 2003).

Conclusion

Moving from past to present, considerable change can be observed in the different imageries and trajectories of Russian Arctic policy. Human activity in Russian Arctic areas has had, and continues to have, significant effects on almost all aspects of Arctic livelihood. Looking at how some historically and economically significant sectors have evolved through the imagery of Russian Arctic policy over time, specifically in the form of substituting interests in taxation, colonization, industrialization, urbanization and other aspects of Arctic resource use, we find that different drivers are equally likely to capture its future imagery. The days of colonization and façades may be gone, but Russia continues to follow policy trajectories that only partly correspond with those of the Fennoscandian countries

In this chapter, we have tried to follow the long-term trajectories of Russian policy imagery in the North. By way of conclusion, it seems clear that if we temporalize and throw a very wide analytical net, significant changes become manifest in the way Russian Arctic policy attributes different roles to the Arctic over time. Tracing what seems like the dominant policy imageries over time, we may conclude that the Russian North has changed place several times in the Russian spatial imagery and that the “costs of reversal” (Levi 1997) have been considerable at each juncture.

Looking at imagery, as opposed to models or scenarios, we hope to illuminate not only the past and the present but also to open up for potential futures (Wormbs & Sorlin 2017; Wormbs 2018). Perhaps, as it is gradually becoming clear that models and scenarios utilized in the 1990s and early 2000s were too narrow to capture potential developmental paths (Brunstad et al. 2004), we hope that a closer look at Russian thought about the Arctic in general and the North in particular might be more fruitful. For peripheries, perhaps there is no choice between large-scale natural resource extraction and wildlife preserves. While belonging to completely different policy imageries, the political reality of life in a historically rich periphery, such as the Russian North, is to try to live with both.

Today, as before in history, it is difficult to try to capture unfolding events and policy trajectories by resorting to a single or dominant event or image. This is, as historians and political scientists will recognize, much easier to do with hindsight. What we find, nevertheless, is an intriguing mix of institutional path dependencies and potential policy change which may carry Russian Arctic policy and its North over into the future. There is great potential for policy change in the first half of the 21st century. Such change, however, hinges on the internal Russian discovery and deliberation of its potential trajectories, about achieving a future imagery, the character of which we can only speculate about today. Northern Europe is not one unit, and as illustrated by the discussion in this and other chapters of the volume, the balances of Russian policy imagery are largely determined by forces and interests beyond the Russian North, even beyond the Arctic seen as a whole.

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12 Regional futures nested in global structures

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Introduction

There are extreme opportunities for economic growth and there are extreme challenges in order to do everything we want to do in a sustainable way.

—Finnish Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen at a Barents Euro-Arctic Council Summit, 2013, quoted in *Barents Observer*, 4 June 2013

The language of opportunities speaks about how the future might unfold, where challenges are obstacles to overcome so that the path continues in the desired direction. It has built-in assumptions of path dependence. In practice, the future is inherently uncertain, influenced by unpredictable events as well as by social and environmental dynamics whose combined effects are difficult to forecast. One way to manage uncertainty is to think systematically about different futures. Using a time perspective of two to three decades, this chapter looks at how global shifts in resource markets, geopolitics, and climate might affect future paths of the Fennoscandian Arctic.¹

A time perspective of two to three decades is highly relevant when looking at past developments in the region. When Finland's Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen, together with prime ministers and ministers of foreign affairs from Norway, Sweden and Russia, took to the podium in June 2013, it was to celebrate two decades of successful economic, environmental and cultural cooperation among the members of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. Since the early 1990s, peaceful cooperation had been replacing the Cold War tensions that previously put a damper on the region's economic development. On the Kola Peninsula, internationally funded clean-up operations contributed to reducing environmental threats from radioactive and persistent organic waste (AMAP 2015, Ch. 3). Norway and Russia settled disputes over their marine border after four decades of negotiations (Harding 2010). Exceptionally high prices on the global resource markets added to the wave of optimism, with new job opportunities in the mining industry and increased exploitation of the region's hydrocarbon riches.

Yet only two years later, the tone of the political discourse had become more muted. Falling resource prices put a wrench in the optimistic plans for extractive