

Review of Wilson Rowe Elana, *Arctic Governance. Power in Cross-Border Cooperation*

Wilson Rowe Elana, *Arctic Governance. Power in Cross-Border Cooperation*, Manchester University Press. 2018. ISBN: 978-1-5261-2173-8

Elana Wilson Rowe offers an interesting overview on the powers that shape cross-border cooperation in the Arctic. Her book is based on the three main “Ws” asked by researchers: what, when and where? She develops answers to these questions by directing her attention to governance actors as power performers (“what”), at key moments when their *status quo* is contested (“when”) in an area that is “fascinatingly fluid and contested, depending on the political context and constellations of actors at hand” (“where”, p. 6). From such a perspective, Wilson Rowe’s vision reflects and applies to the Arctic envisioned in Bauman’s famous liquidity in modern dynamics: modernity as characterized by radical change, by a constant overthrowing of tradition and traditional forms of economy, culture, and relationship (Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 1999). From the author’s view, the fabric of Arctic cross-border governance is intrinsically fluid, where new areas of cooperation are in constant formation, and driven forward by broader policy networks (p. 132).

The book is developed around five chapters based on the historical context of various Arctic actors. The author follows these actors’ power relations and the importance they have attached to cross-border cooperation and cooperative governance in the Arctic region. Her analysis of the whole “range of power performances” (p. 14) is supported by reflections on fieldwork in multilateral, bilateral settings, as well as qualitative interviews with field participants. The author explains the advantages of carrying out such work by bringing forth the relevance of non-verbal power performance.

Wilson Rowe points out in an original way that Arctic cross-border cooperation should be read as a magmatic phenomenon, under constant negotiation. She shows this by exploring four main propositions: 1. Power relations are formed by Arctic policy objectives; 2. As a consequence of these policy objectives, some actors are in advantageous positions; 3. In the governance fabric, cross border cooperation is

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developed in a social space characterized by informal norms; 4. Consequently, and as a confirmation of the magmatic character of this cooperation, power relations are constantly defined and redefined.

The aspect of Wilson Rowe's work that I appreciate the most is the author's perspective on governance. From an administrative law perspective, I have studied governance as a toolbox that can provide good administrative principles and mechanisms to ensure that governing rules are building blocks of fair play. As a political scientist, Wilson Rowe views governance in the Arctic as a dynamic mechanism in a soft law power regime, where actors perform on a stage (or arena) and contribute to the creation and re-creation of power relationships. Such a view gives comfort to a reader from a legal background, because it shows the deep connection between law and politics in the study of Arctic governance and also underscores the importance of strengthening the relationship between administrative law and political science.

While the book points the way for future interdisciplinary studies on governance that merge the views of legal scholars and political scientists, it also shows that the Arctic Council has underdeveloped potential as a political forum. She envisions a Council that discusses and possibly solves challenging issues such as common strategies to effectively mitigate environmental threats, as well as a Council that implements a participatory approach that adequately involves all interested parties, not only the most influential stakeholders. The status of the Arctic Council as an international non-binding forum is a delicate issue, and one that certainly deserves more attention from the scientific community, policy makers and practitioners involved in Arctic issues.

The figures (of particular interest, are the figures on Arctic mapping where political borders are completely absent, making it is possible to grasp the concept of moving and fluid borders: see Figures from 4 to 6, pages 34–36), tables, as well as rich references and a detailed bibliography included in the book provide an indispensable tool for practitioners, scholars and any other curious reader who wants to deepen his or her knowledge of Arctic governance. For laypersons, it offers a vibrant and stimulating opportunity to reflect on power dynamics in the Arctic; for experts it offers fresh, original and deep perspectives on Arctic governance.

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