

Thematic Network Update

Calotte Academy 2014: Resource Geopolitics, Sovereignties & Cross-Border Arctic Dialogue

Hanna Lempinen & Joël Plouffe

For over twenty years now, the *Calotte Academy* (CA) has been organized as an international symposium that travels across borders in the Euro-Arctic as a means to initiate and sustain dialogue on Arctic security and geopolitics with researchers and practitioners. In 2014, the CA took place during the first week of June with a focus on key issues under the umbrella of this year's theme: *Resource Geopolitics – Sovereignty*. The CA consisted of 10 working sessions held in Rovaniemi and Inari, Finland; in Kirkenes, Norway; and in Murmansk and Apatity, Russia. Altogether nearly 40 participants from 10 countries as well as local stakeholders from the towns and cities we visited took part in the working sessions.

Similar to last's year's CA, the High North went through record warm temperatures for early June in 2014, reaching almost thirty degrees at Murmansk! It is definitely perfect weather for continued dialogue under the midnight sun after a full day of sessions, or even for fieldwork in the Kola Peninsula.

Hanna Lempinen is a researcher at the Arctic Centre in Rovaniemi, Finland, and PhD Candidate at the University of Lapland. Joël Plouffe is a researcher at the Center for Interuniversity Research on the International Relations of Canada and Québec, and a PhD candidate at the École nationale d'administration publique (ENAP) in Montréal, Québec, Canada.

la. Then again, it is another reminder of extreme weather patterns witnessed throughout the Arctic.

State Sovereignty(ies), Indigenous Rights & Local Voices

Issues related to sovereignty were a central theme of CA 2014, as one of the aims of the discussions was to reflect on, re(de)fine and (re)conceptualize the notion of sovereignty in order to include ideas and values coming from indigenous interpretations and non-governmental perspectives. The goal of



such a broad discussion was to introduce and debate changing understandings of security premises and paradigms in a very constructive way.

Especially the rights of indigenous peoples ranging from individual and group rights, to rights to protect native languages and culture, livelihoods, and land were all topics brought to the fore, equally in the context of national policies and legislation, regional developments and programmes, and localized decisions over resource utilization, management and distribution of revenues. Discussion revolved also around the contro-

versial issue of defining *indigenouness* as well as the position, voice and rights of non-indigenous northerners.

Levels & Scales

During the Academy, the overarching issues were discussed both in very localized contexts – even through case studies focusing on individual communities – as well as in broader terms. Questions such as cross-border cooperation and communication in the context of regional development were pervasive topics on the agenda as were changing national policies, strategies and positions both in terms of domestic and international developments.

The importance of the Arctic region globally and in terms of shipping, climate and environmental policies and mineral reserves was repeatedly underlined by presenters and participants. In a similar manner, the roles and interests of actors not traditionally perceived as of relevance in the context of the Arctic region were debated. As events and developments in the north have wider repercussions far beyond the Arctic region and its borders (and vice versa), conclusions were presented, on the one hand, in terms of different levels and scales particularly because of the characteristically interconnected nature of those developments taking place on different levels, and on the other, reflected the ongoing debate over the conceptual artificiality of the idea of scales and levels altogether.



Economic Development vs. Sustainable Development

Arctic resources – both living and non-living as well as renewable and non-renewable, ranging from utilization of marine mammals to forestry and small- and large-scale extraction of mineral and fossil resources – were the main feature of many talks during the Academy. Moreover, questions relating to the management and governance of resource development as well as the practices and pitfalls of sharing the revenues of resource utilization were addressed and discussed by many speakers. Others highlighted the importance of economic activity and development not based (solely) on natural resources or on nature and knowledge *as* resources in their own right. An overarching



theme underpinning all debates related to resource-driven developments in northern areas was the irreconcilable incompatibility between increasing industrial activity based on mass-scale utilization of finite resources and the idea(l) of sustainable development in the environmentally and culturally unique Arctic region, where everyone seems to be preparing for “a” boom, but where no one foresees or prepares for the bust.

Discourses & Debates

Throughout the week, many presentations and discussions either touched upon or explicitly dealt with conceptual questions and concerns. Several speakers addressed and analyzed political discourses and debates and the manners in which different issues such as indigenous rights, local identities

and the roles of different actors are perceived and constructed; while others took a focus on the ways in which some key issues are conceptualized and discussed in academic forums and debates. Among others debated, the contested concepts of sustainability and security, their different definitions and contradicting and complementing dimensions. Vivid and recurrent attention was also drawn to the value *basis* and *biases* inevitably embedded in all systems of knowledge, including the western scientific worldview frequently (implicitly) conceived as “objective” and thus value-free.



Cross-border Dialogue Through Practice & Continued Engagement

Since its inception twenty years ago and in the wake of the

collapse of the Soviet Union, the guiding principle of the CA has been a real commitment to dialogue and bridge-building between people, communities, regions, nations and states. It has also been a method for engaging such dialogue through knowledge sharing both between individual researchers, different disciplines as well as amongst the scientific community, the local stakeholders and the wider public across borders.

The principles of inclusion and dialogue were, this year, embraced even to a greater extent against the evolving political situation(s) between Russia and the West. As the CA approached, significant effort was channeled into making the participation of researchers from different areas of the globe possible.



In these times of geopolitical apprehensions, the CA once again proved its *raison d'être* by bringing together thinkers and practitioners, sometimes lost in translation, around one table to take the necessary time to talk, share and learn amongst each other on pressing topics. The CA method allows all participants to bring back home invaluable knowledge, nuances and often unheard-of issues or solutions as a way to contribute to the policy dialogue. This year, the traveling symposium was invited to listen *patiently* as the translation assistance provided the words and common understandings for a constructive exchange of questions, ideas and answers that, in our view, would not have been possible otherwise.

This type of dialogue in the North, between North(s), and elsewhere around the world, should not be undermined.

About the Calotte Academy

The Calotte Academy has been arranged annually since 1991 with an aim to bring together students, other experts, local stakeholders as well as scientists with different academic backgrounds and in different stages of their academic careers. It aims to create an alternative model for conventional academic conferences where the time allocated for discussion often remains very limited. The Academy also aims to contribute to discussions and debates over regional development through inviting local politicians and stakeholders to participate in the sessions with the intention of sharing research results and insights, creating networks and fostering dialogue between the local actors and the international scientific community.

The full and detailed Final Report of the Calotte Academy 2014 with abstracts and written summary reports from all sessions is available online in address www.nrf.is.

The Calotte Academy organizers and participants wish to thank the following 2014 sponsors:

