

Der neue Norden

Peter Arbo, November 2011

1. Project / publication	Hannemann, M. (2010): <i>Der neue Norden. Die Arktis und der Traum von Aufbruch</i> . Bad Vibel: Scoventa, 218 pages. http://www.scoventa.de/buecher/der-neue-norden
2. Initiator	The book is written by the German journalist and historian Matthias Hannemann, who regularly writes for Frankfurter Allgemeine and the business journal brans ein. The book seems to be written on the initiative of the author.
3. Objective	The purpose of the book is to give an account of the present state of the High North, focusing on the European Arctic. On the cover page it is written that the High North is expected to contain huge reserves of raw materials and energy. Climate change is making the exploitation of these resources possible, and this in turn could transform Northern Europe and the Polar Ocean into a key geopolitical region. The northerners' years of waiting for industrial take-off would then come to an end. However, it is asked, is the wish for industrial development compatible with the longing for untouched nature and life far away from civilisation? What are the consequences for the ecosystem? The author set out on a journey to provide answers.
4. Geographical delimitation	Northern Norway, Northern Sweden and Greenland.
5. Time horizon	The author is primarily interested in the expectations and assessments of the future that people living in the region have themselves.
6. Thematic focus	The backdrop is the general transformations taking place in the Arctic, which is very briefly touched upon. The book concentrates on observations and reflections from daily life and interviews made with various people in Iqaluit and Maarmorilik (Greenland), Kiruna, Narvik, Nyksund, Harstad, Hammerfest, Kirkenes, Havøysund and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oslo.
7. Images for the future	<p>The author is obviously fascinated by the future optimism of the people he met. He says that the new generation, to which the author belongs himself, is the generation that has stepped out of the shadows of the Cold War. On the cover page it is emphasised that men and women, everywhere in the High North, seem to believe as firmly in the future as once the American settlers. There is a spirit of operating in a frontier area. They are building factories on the seabed, planning new railways and harbours, and hoping for tourists, great stocks of fish, and the exploitation of everything. While the ice is melting they are beseeching the march towards the land of the future, where everything is possible, even the combination of nature, old traditions and industrial modernisation. Actually, the book itself provides a more modest and less hyped account of the prosaic lives and plans of actors in the region. It also highlights some of the tensions between people who are keen on letting foreign oil companies and cruise tourism in, and those who regret what is actually being lost, notably in the case of Greenland.</p> <p>In the last part of the book the author deals with future developments. This is done by referring to Petrodevelopment 2030, the study undertaken for Statoil by a group of researchers in Tromsø, Alta and Apatity. Hannemann presents the three scenarios – The marginalized region, The shifting balance, and The Frontiers. According to him, the High North is the frontier.</p>
8. Key driving forces	This is not dealt with in any systematic way, but unlike most other authors, Hannemann has travelled to see local people and provide his version of their life and projects. Thus, indirectly he makes them the authors of their own destinies. Or

	maybe the book should rather be read as a story about how they all are hit by the new High North fever? In that case, they are not the heroes of the High North but naïve cultural dopes.
9. Uncertainties/wildcards	This is only touched upon very indirectly. The case of Nyksund is illustrative in this respect. German youth came to rebuild an old, depopulated, dilapidated but still picturesque fishing village. As they gradually succeeded, the place attracted new investments and is now changing into a tourist spot with less of the idyllic qualities that the enthusiasts were dreaming of. The threat of big capital and massive exploitation of resources is an underlying concern throughout the book. In the concluding part the author emphasises that without clever local politicians, education and development of infrastructure, the future of the High North will be the future of the Others.
10. Accomplishment and collaboration	The book is a travelogue, a book of travel.
11. Method	The author has a background in Scandinavian studies and is an experienced journalist.
12. Sources of information	Mostly interviews and own reflections, written in an impressionistic style.
13. Strengths	The strength of the book is the attempt to grasp the prevalent atmosphere in the High North. He is preoccupied with how the image of the region is changing. His main message is that the old myth of the North as a cold and isolated area will disappear as the Arctic becomes accessible for industry, trade and tourism. Instead a new myth is emerging, fostered by business leaders, engineers and politicians, who all dream of a new future. Interestingly, the author also refers to many previous descriptions of journeys in the same region and old books written in the first half of the 20 th century, especially by German authors, about the industrial potentials of the region.
14. Weaknesses	The book is very micro-oriented. It tells about places, peoples and some local companies, but the promises of the cover page are definitely not met. Most of the stories are rather trivial and boring. Ach Europa, the book by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, seems to be a model, but Hannemann never reaches the intriguing observations and short and apt wordings of Enzensberger.
15. Attention and significance	The author has presented the book in various settings, but its reception is hard to gauge.
16. Relevance for the Fram Centre	Some of the references to old literature are interesting. The High North fascination of foreign journalists is also worth noting.