

Megatrends

Peter Arbo, September 2011

1. Project / publication	Rasmussen, R.O. (ed.) (2011): <i>Megatrends</i> , TemaNord 2011:527. Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers, 205 pages. http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publications/2011-527
2. Initiator	The book is produced by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the Nordic Council of Ministers. The project received financial support from the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Danish Ministry of Climate and Energy and the Danish Ministry of the Environment.
3. Objective	The purpose of the book is to draw attention to the most important changes which penetrate and transform the Arctic. In the foreword, written by the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs, she says: "In the long run it is not enough to confirm that the ice is melting. We have to move forward, if we are to secure the future for our Arctic world and ensure that developments happen in accordance with the wishes and priorities of the societies in the Arctic". The authors want to outline the set of pre-conditions, challenges and tendencies that influence contemporary and future issues in the region. They also hope that the book will be useful for policy-makers from across the region and beyond.
4. Geographical delimitation	The Arctic region, but with focus on the Nordic countries and adjacent areas.
5. Time horizon	The book tries to identify <i>trends</i> in terms of developments over the next five years and <i>megatrends</i> attempting to characterise what is presumed to hold for the next 10 to 15 years.
6. Thematic focus	The scope is broad and encompasses most aspects of life in the Arctic. Emphasis is placed on demography, settlement patterns, education, employment, industry structure, energy, living conditions, environment and governance.
7. Images of the future	The book does not contain explicit scenarios or clearly defined images of the future. Instead it presents nine megatrends, understood as development processes that will have a major impact on the future of Arctic societies in a mid- to long-term time perspective. Megatrends are said to be relatively safe development directions that will undoubtedly change society.
8. Key driving forces	The nine megatrends are summarized under the following headings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased urbanisation – a global trend also including the Arctic 2. Demographic challenges – the old stay while the young leave 3. Continued dependency on transfers and the exploitation of natural resources will continue to dominate the Arctic economies 4. Continued pollution and on-going climate change will have a significant impact on the nature and environment of the Arctic 5. The Arctic needs to generate more Human Capital by investing more in its people 6. Changes in the nature of interaction between the public and private spheres will impact development 7. Renewable energy will contribute to a "greening" of the economy 8. Increased accessibility provide opportunities as well as new risks 9. The Arctic as a new player in the global game
9. Uncertainties/wildcards	The authors point out that simple predictions of future development paths, based on extrapolations of current trends, have always been proved wrong. They mention that political decisions, rapid changes in the economic fundament,

	reactions to globalisation and “marketization”, etc., may alter the fundamental conditions, but this is not discussed in more detail.
10. Accomplishment and collaboration	The project was managed by Nordregio, with Senior Research Fellow Rasmus Ole Rasmussen as project leader, and with scientific contributions from 12 researchers from Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Russia, and the USA.
11. Method	A mixed procedure was used to identify the megatrends. They were identified on the basis of empirical studies of the major development characteristics and processes of change during the last decades, expectations regarding the future of the Arctic derived from research report, government documents and Arctic Council working groups, as well as inputs from the affiliated group of scientists.
12. Sources of information	Available statistics, reports such as the Climate Assessments, the Arctic Human Development Report, Arctic Social Indicators, and findings from the International Polar Year 2007-2008.
13. Strengths	The strength of the book is the collection of data on demography, economy, environmental changes, education, provision of services, renewable energy, accessibility, and institutions in the Arctic. Many interesting cases are also presented.
14. Weaknesses	It is not clear to this reader why exactly nine megatrends are highlighted and if they really capture all the major developments in the Arctic. By generalizing trends for this vast area important differences between states and regions are downplayed.
15. Attention and significance	As far as I can see, the book has not received very much attention yet.
16. Relevance for the Fram Centre	The book provides a useful overview of socio-economic conditions and trends in the Arctic, including some comparative statistics.