

## The New North

Maaïke Knol, June 2011

<b>1. Project / publication</b>	Smith, L. C. (2011): <i>The New North: The World in 2050</i> . London: Profile Books, 336 pages. <a href="http://www.profilebooks.com/isbn/9781846688768/">http://www.profilebooks.com/isbn/9781846688768/</a>
<b>2. Initiator</b>	The project is financed with a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation, and carried out under the UCLA Department of Geography (University of California – Los Angeles).
<b>3. Objective</b>	The objective is to present a balanced, science-based projection of what the world in general, and the New North in particular (see pt. 4) might look like in 2050, driven by four global forces of (1) population demographics, (2) resource demand, (3) globalization, and (4) climate change. The book is intended to be readable to all, and is not written for a particular audience.
<b>4. Geographical delimitation</b>	The book covers developments in the circumpolar Arctic, but is not limited in scope to this area. The book starts out globally in part 1 (which discusses the global forces). In part 2, it focuses on the implications of these global forces in what he calls “the New North”. Smith uses “the New North” in different ways, but mostly to point at the “NORCs” (Northern Rim Countries: Canada, the United States, Russia, and the Nordic countries). In global terms, Smith sometimes even speaks of the North indicating the areas north of the 45 <sup>th</sup> degree of latitude.
<b>5. Time horizon</b>	This study discusses historical developments of global trends from some decades to many centuries back in time, dependent on the issue at hand. The focus forward reaches to 2050.
<b>6. Thematic focus</b>	The focus of the study is rather comprehensive. The four global forces (the “push factors”) are climate change, globalization, increasing resource demand, and population dynamics.  When Smith discusses the “pull” forces related to the conditions in the North, he thoroughly covers a variety of themes: culture, demography, climatological issues, geology, and legal conditions (the centrality of UNCLOS for structuring future developments).
<b>7. Images of the future</b>	Smith mentions some explicit developments, such as the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Arctic will soon be open for shipping during the summer. Smith puts much emphasis on the conditioning factors (only parts of the Arctic Ocean area that can be crossed; only a few weeks per year; few available harbours for large ships, etc.).</li> <li>- As the Arctic sea ice melts, the area will be increasingly available for resource extraction. There will be great technological and environmental challenges. Smith doesn’t foresee any large resource conflicts in the Arctic area.</li> <li>- Large cities in the North will grow in size (i.e. Vancouver, Montreal, Ottawa, Oslo, Stockholm, Helsinki, St. Petersburg, and Moscow). Important future harbours will be Tromsø, Kirkenes, Hammerfest, Nuuk, Archangelsk, Murmansk, Dudinka, Prudhoe Bay, Churchill, and Reykjavik).</li> <li>- The NORCs are the only countries which will see an increase in agriculture due to climate change.</li> <li>- The NORCs together will constitute the fourth largest world economy (after the BRIC’s – Brazil, Russia, India, China -, the EU, and the US).</li> <li>- The North will be of increasing importance due to its fresh water resources, which may be sold and transported to other regions.</li> </ul>
<b>8. Key driving forces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate change</li> <li>• Globalization</li> <li>• Increasing pressure on natural resources</li> <li>• Population dynamics (population growth)</li> </ul>
<b>9.</b>	Smith argues that we can predict and foresee many developments, but that many important

<b>Uncertainties/ wildcards</b>	<p>developments are dependent on human choices. He finishes his book with the question “what kind of world is it that we want” and thereby argues that the direction of future developments is dependent on <sub>present</sub> and future human decisions – and that there is thus a limitation to foreseeing the future.</p> <p>He works with the following assumptions (“the rules”) in his book (which could be translated to uncertainties):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No radical technological breakthroughs</li> <li>• No large conflicts</li> <li>• Major laws and treaties stay in place</li> <li>• No high impact events</li> <li>• Climate models function well</li> </ul>
<b>10. Accomplishment and collaboration</b>	<p>No formal cooperation with other authors/institutions.</p>
<b>11. Method</b>	<p>The book consists of qualitative descriptions of (future) developments. These are based on thorough documentation, including quantitative studies.</p> <p>The topics of demographic developments and climate change are based on models, and these are used to predict future scenarios. But Smith uses no scenarios based on quantitative modelling to predict industrial activity in the New North.</p>
<b>12. Sources of information</b>	<p>Use of interviews and scientific publications (from demographic studies to climate modelling). The book has 537 notes with a vast number of references.</p>
<b>13. Strengths</b>	<p>This work is very well written, and impressive because of its thorough documentation from many different sources. Parts of the future that Smith sketches seem to be very plausible, which results from his balanced arguments based on multiple perspectives.</p>
<b>14. Weaknesses</b>	<p>By heavily leaning on the large variety of scientific sources, the book tends to become more of a presentation of scientific material than a vision for the New North.</p> <p>Furthermore, it might be argued that the book is too ambitious. The four large global forces by themselves are big themes (climate change, population dynamics, resource pressure, and globalization). These forces are first discussed on a global level, while in the second part the focus is on the North. The “New North” concept remains a bit problematic – Smith uses this concept with large definitional flexibility, dependent on the issues he discusses. The book could have been more focused if the author made more explicit choices. This also counts for the issues he discusses. The author remains inexplicit on the choice of themes that he elaborates on (e.g. why does he thoroughly elaborate on fresh water issues, while current industrial developments in the Arctic could have deserved more space?).</p>
<b>15. Attention and significance</b>	<p>The book has received quite some attention in the media (primarily blogs, websites, and newspapers). Overall, the reviews are positive and mainly emphasize Smith’s realistic account and lack of political agenda. As such, the book contributes to the general debate on Arctic development.</p> <p>See for example:</p> <p><a href="http://www.theecologist.org/reviews/books/825963/the_new_north_the_world_in_2050_by_laurence_s_mith.html">http://www.theecologist.org/reviews/books/825963/the_new_north_the_world_in_2050_by_laurence_s_mith.html</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.arcticprogress.com/2010/09/new-north-well-positioned/">http://www.arcticprogress.com/2010/09/new-north-well-positioned/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20727796.500-triumph-of-the-north-or-technological-salvation.html">http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20727796.500-triumph-of-the-north-or-technological-salvation.html</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/6516/the-new-rules-global-warming-shifts-focus-to-the-friendly-north">http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/6516/the-new-rules-global-warming-shifts-focus-to-the-friendly-north</a></p>

	<p><a href="http://www.scotsman.com/news/book_review_the_new_north_the_world_in_2050_1_1587156">http://www.scotsman.com/news/book_review_the_new_north_the_world_in_2050_1_1587156</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2011/03/natural-resources-world-global">http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2011/03/natural-resources-world-global</a></p>
<b>16. Relevance for the Fram Centre</b>	<p>As a geographer, Smith holds relevant viewpoints and knowledge on Arctic development that integrate climate and social science. Smith's strength is his interdisciplinary way of analysing the development of the North. Such ways of thinking are very relevant to learn from for interdisciplinary projects in the Fram Centre. It might be interesting to invite Smith for future workshops.</p>