

Calotte Academy 2017

Perceptions of the Arctic: Rich or Scarce, Mass-scale or Traditional, Conflict or Cooperation?

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The 26th [Calotte Academy](#) took place in early June 2017. The travelling symposium had its sessions in familiar places: in Inari, Finland, in Kirkenes, Norway and in Apatity, Russia. This year, part of the caravan continued their way to Umeå, Sweden where final sessions of the *Calotte Academy 2017* were organized back-to-back with the International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences (ICASS).

This year's academy consisted of twelve full working days, eleven sessions, more than 30 presentations, two excursions, five border crossings and plenty of questions, comments and discussions during and outside the sessions. This would not have been possible without the committed participants, who were ready to allocate their time, were open-minded and willing to share their expertise. More than 30 participants representing thirteen different nationalities formed the group, with approximately half of the group participating for the first time. The multi-national and multidisciplinary background of the group, as well as different levels of experience in Arctic studies, fit very well with the main theme of this year's academy.

After travelling north from Rovaniemi, and entering Sami land and the Sami capital of Finland, Inari, the first working day of *Calotte Academy 2017* began on June 1st. Even though June is considered to be one of the summer months in Finland, the weather was not very summery, as it was snowing and temperatures were around 2°C. However, the atmosphere and discussions were warm, while participants debated on the themes of the first two sessions. The sessions were held in a modernized Sami hut, 'Lassin kota' (see image below) owned by the Sami Education Institute, that for many of the participants offered a unique and exotic experience. In the first session, the main theme of the Academy, "Perceptions of the Arctic," was approached by how people living outside the region perceive the Arctic, while the second session, "The Sami and diversity of energy," focused on Indigenous peoples and energy issues.

After the sessions, the group had a chance to relax in the traditional Finnish way: by having a sauna and dip in the ice-cold lake, which was still partly covered with ice. Part of the group also defied

the harsh weather conditions to attend a local demonstration against new fishing regulations, which came into force this summer. The new regulations limit the right of local people to fish free in the rivers of northern Lapland.



Lassin Kota, Inari.
Photo credit: Salla Kalliojärvi

On the morning of June 2nd, *Calotte Academy* continued its way northwest to Kirkenes, Norway, which hosted the next three sessions. Compared to the last year (see Zojer & Olsén, 2016: 210), this time the border crossing between Finland and Norway went without any inconveniences. The sessions in Kirkenes continued to explore perceptions of the Arctic from different angles. The vivid discussions were debated around the themes of “Energy,” “Security” and “Arctic urbanism and tourism.” The first session in Kirkenes raised many important questions concerning the production, utilization and future developments of oil and gas in the Arctic region. The presenters highlighted the crucial role hydrocarbons, and especially oil, play in societies living in and out of the Arctic region, and addressed some of the problems governments are faced with as the Arctic climate is getting warmer. The effects of changing climate and oil-dependency were also discussed in the second session that took place on Saturday morning under the topic of “security.” The presentations approached security from theoretical and practical perspectives and covered both traditional and non-traditional security issues from the obstacles of military control posed by the ocean to the potential shifts in the meaning of security itself.

The afternoon session of June 3rd greatly elucidated the value of multi-disciplinarity and provided a visual and illustrative outlook to the current and future Arctic landscape(s). Discussions during

the session introduced many valuable perspectives and questions of the linkages between identity and Arctic development and reflected the nature of Arctic urbanization.

After one and half days, the symposium continued its way northeast toward Murmansk, Russia, in the early evening of June 3rd. If the border crossing between Finland and Norway was easy, entering from Norway to the Russian Federation was the opposite. The control at the border was stricter than previous years – even a year before, when the border restrictions between Finland and the Russian Federation were in force. Nevertheless, the whole group managed to enter Russia and continue its way according to the travel plan. After an overnight in Murmansk, it was time to have the first excursion.

On the way to Apatity, about 150 km south of Murmansk, the *Calotte Academy* visited Lovozero, the town of local Sami community. The first stop in Lovozero was in a Sami museum where the group had an extensive guided tour around the museum. The second visit in Lovozero was in a Sami Centre, where the president of the Sami Council of the Kola Peninsula hosted the group. In the discussion between the *Calotte Academy* group and the local Sami representatives, the focus was on the rights of Indigenous peoples and how Sami people are presented in the decision-making process in the Kola Peninsula region.

The next sessions took place in cold and rainy Apatity, where the Academy attracted local media to the venue. The intense work, discussion and debates continued, despite the long travelling and hard work already accomplished. The first session held in Russia introduced topics under the theme of “science diplomacy,” discussing how issues such as global warming, paradiplomacy and scientific relationships are influencing Arctic politics. The presentations highlighted the diversity of actors impacting the policies of the Arctic region, and raised discussions about their mutual imbrication. The afternoon session on June 5th discussed the perceptions of the Arctic from an environmental point of view, and further contributed to the session on the diversity of actors. The focus of the presentations ranged from case studies to theory-developing approaches, and introduced insights to the ways in which environment has been affecting Arctic politics and vice versa. In the follow-up discussion, the group keenly debated the premises behind the presented linkages between environment and politics, as well as how the introduced connections could impact the future of the Arctic region. Introduced by professor Lassi Heininen – who argued that Arctic cooperation is strongly built on the Nordic peace and model of cooperation – the group also discussed the idea of further utilizing the Nordic model in finding common solutions to the environmental problems the region is faced with.

The theme of environment was very much present in the last session held on Tuesday morning, June 6th, under the heading of “sustainability and communities.” The first two presentations introduced case studies giving insights about the developments that have been occurring within Arctic communities and discussed how global effects, such as tourism, popular perceptions and international agreements, are impacting on local level. The following two presentations shifted the focus on more general issues behind policy decisions. In her presentation, Anastasia Gasnikova argued that the sustainable development plans of particular districts in the Russian Arctic are primarily dependent on the stage of industrial development of the district and of the availability and type of energy resources the district has. The presentation by professor Rasmuss Bertelsen introduced ideas about how political psychology plays a role in both Arctic affairs and in the perceptions of the Arctic. The presentation formed an argument against the

“rational agent” model and raised discussions about the role of psychology in understanding political decision-making. The thought-provoking session – the final one of this year’s academy – provided a perfect platform to brainstorm for *Calotte Academy 2018*. The brainstorming session took place right after the last session and offered several inspiring ideas for the following years.

The sunny afternoon in Arctic Russia provided perfect weather conditions for a second excursion that this time took the group into a small mining-town, Kirovsk, located at the spurs of the Khibiny Mountains, 17 km northeast from Apatity. In Kirovsk, the group was welcomed at the Khibiny research station of Lomonosov Moscow State University, and visited a mining museum, which offered an outlook to the history of the town and to the development of a mining sector more broadly within the Murmansk region. Aligned with the theme of *Calotte Academy 2017*, the excursion raised discussions about the meaning of excursions to perceptions, and raised manifold questions about the relationship between ethics, economy and governance.



View of Khibiny Mountains from Kirovsk, Murmansk Oblast. Photo credit: Salla Kalliojärvi

The travelling symposium then departed from Apatity, Russia to Finland on the sunny morning of June 7th. This year the group crossed the border between the Russian Federation and Finland, at Salla. However, the actual border crossing between these two states was time consuming, although the distance is short. Before showing our travelling documents to the Finnish border guards, they were checked three times by their Russian colleagues. First, when we entered to the extended border zone. Second, when we entered to the actual border zone. And finally, when we entered to the state border. The border guards were extremely interested in our passports, since presumably they do not often face such an international group crossing the border at this northern border crossing point. Overall, the border control was stricter when entering but also when exiting the Russian Federation.

In previous years, the final destination has been Rovaniemi, but this time part of the group continued their travels to the ICASS conference in Umeå, Sweden, where three sessions of the *IX International Conference of Arctic Social Sciences (ICASS)* were convened under the umbrella of the *Calotte Academy 2017*.

Altogether, *Calotte Academy 2017* was comprised of eleven sessions and thirty-eight presentations held in the Northern parts of four different Euro-Arctic countries, five border crossings (including entrance to Sápmi) and more than 2000 km of driving, as well as innumerable questions, comments, debates and perceptions.

Details about next year's *Calotte Academy 2018*, as well as previous editions, is available here: <https://calotte-academy.com>.

