Introduction

Imagining Unbuilt Infrastructures across the Circumpolar North

Natalia Magnani and Matthew Magnani

The circumpolar North has long captured the global imagination as a staging ground for state interests. For much longer, the region has been a place of human dwelling, exchange, and movement. As their paths crossed and collided over the last centuries, the lives of northern inhabitants have entangled with colonial desires to explore, map, and exploit, from the search for the Northeast and Northwest Passages to connect trade, to scientific expeditions that documented the geology, flora, fauna, and not least the cultures of these regions in the process of acquisition and governance by southern centers of power.

At the nexus of climate change and geopolitics, conflicting powers are continuing to carve the region physically and in the anticipatory imagination. Melting sea ice is being reenvisioned as shipping routes and connected land corridors, which promise to streamline trade, transport, and resource extraction. Harnessing these visions, the region has been recast as a "Polar Silk Road" in China's Arctic policy and Belt and Road Initiative, and as a "Northern Sea Route" in Russian waters. The imaginaries exist in tension with NATO nuclear submarines and military exercises amid growing American and European security concerns in the Arctic following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. As Frank Billé (2020) and the authors of *Voluminous States* argue, shifts in sea ice, geopolitics, and economic landscapes are easing the extension of state sovereignty into volumetric space: "From the Arctic to the South China Sea, states are vying to secure sovereign rights over vast maritime stretches, undersea continental plates, shifting ice floes, and aerial volumes."

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Yet for the communities and individuals who call the region home, the expectation of new infrastructures amid geopolitical proxy wars and melting sea ice is not about sovereignty as much as it is about everyday anxieties and anticipations. Seeking materialization through foreign investments and grassroots capital ventures, many of the proposed projects are abandoned, unbuilt, or sustained through perpetual promises. Nevertheless, the infrastructures' anticipation generates local economies and agencies.

Beyond the headlines and promotional materials of developers and investors, residents of coastal towns and potential inland transport hubs engage with visions of Arctic corridors to legitimize the construction and expansion of ports and railways, or conversely to resist "foreign" incursions into their lands and livelihoods. In other cases, the imagined, nascent, or latently operative infrastructures are used in unexpected ways, becoming sites of cultural and economic activity.

In this book, we follow diverse entanglements of the imagination with Arctic silk roads broadly conceived—from Scandinavia to Russia, Canada, and Alaska (see Map 0.1). This includes Arctic transport corridors directly envisioned as part of China's Polar Silk Road initiative but also broader evocations of trade with Asia and other distant markets through rapidly expanding and melting Arctic sea routes. Arctic silk roads exist as constellations of individual desires, agencies, and capital ventures that draw on a global imaginary to achieve social, political, and economic goals. We thus engage with the concept of silk roads in the plural heuristic sense to represent the imagination of global transport and exchange in the Arctic. Although, as we discuss in the following section, the concept originally emerged as a scholarly frame rather than emic articulation, many of the chapters in this volume show how in the 21st-century silk roads have taken on varying degrees of local resonance, in dialogue with their reification in official state policies, heritage development, and infrastructural planning. In addition to examining these emergent expressions, the concept allows us to think along the roads of our case studies to understand how the past is evoked in the present, interrogate how these imaginaries affect agencies, and contribute to broader questions in the anthropology of unrealized infrastructure.

Along the Russian Arctic coast, the national project of the Northern Sea Route (NSR) is circumscribed in state law and policy, carved by nuclear icebreakers controlled by the state company Rosatom (see Chapters 2 and 7 for historical discussion of the Northern Sea Route—from Soviet past to anticipatory geopolitical present). Following international sanctions with the country's invasion of Ukraine, the

route has taken on new urgency as means for Russian economic self-sufficiency, and Chinese economic partnerships and "Polar Silk Road" initiatives continue to shape its development. Stammler, Ivanova, and Vitebsky in this volume, show that as state infrastructural revival and militarization along the Russian Arctic coast create expectations for energy, port, and other transport infrastructure that may or may not materialize, and many of the Chinese projects remain unrealized, they nevertheless generate a "charismatic agency" harnessed by local actors. This agency manifests as community projects with staying power beyond the horizons and ghosts of state infrastructural anticipation. Following the flurry of construction and renovation of community buildings in Tiksi, and the work of community leaders in Naybá who create jobs on the promise of shipping access via the NSR, the authors argue a point core to all chapters in this volume, that "the nature of infrastructure anticipations, and the possibilities for their fulfilment, are strongly connected with possibilities for local participation."

Across the chapters, evocations of "silk roads" in the Arctic or more general imaginings of global transport connectivity via northern shipping routes, are harnessed by local actors to enact desires for livelihood, community thriving, and wellbeing. The studies exhibit the multitemporality of infrastructural anticipation, wherein memories of development's ruins or yet-unrealized visions, come to bear on future anticipations. These "ghosts," evoked directly in the volume's chapters by Magnani and Magnani, and Stammler, Ivanova, and Vitebsky, suggest that Arctic silk roads, as is the case with many megaprojects, often manifest as *ghost infrastructures* conjured in the imagination rather than in their materiality, and that the infrastructures' physicality emerges instead through *economies of anticipation* generated by individuals and communities who live in the currents and shadows of the regional, state, and transnational visions. Amid recent geopolitical tensions, many of the infrastructural projects discussed in the book have been recast in the language of national security and promised state support that would replace reliance on foreign investment, yet they continue a "trajectory of anticipation" (*sensu* Stammler, Ivanova, and Vitebsky) that tie past and future infrastructural imaginings to serve people's day to day needs and desires.

The book begins in northeast China, from where imaginaries of "silk roads" emanate across the contemporary melting Arctic. Fraser shows how Ewenki reinforce China's geopolitical positioning as a "near-Arctic state" to develop cultural heritage institutions, livelihoods, and revitalization initiatives, as well as ethnic tourism and

exchange with communities in Siberia and across the circumpolar North. The ethnography suggests that China's Polar Silk Road is as much cultural as it is infrastructural. Magnani and Magnani reveal similar cultural economic reverberations of infrastructural anticipation in northern Norway, where the promise and specter of a port's (unrealized) expansion to capture global markets is used instead to generate vibrant local economies from archaeological heritage to Sámi tourism, identity, and spirituality, which resurge in their physical entanglement with the port's infrastructure. Following these "economies of anticipation" enacted by local actors, the authors argue that the cultural and economic potentials of infrastructure are actualized in the anticipatory space "between operation and abandonment."

In addition to entrepreneurship, infrastructural anticipation can manifest through protest or ambivalence in relation to development. In Rovaniemi, known as the "capital of Finnish Lapland," the imagination of large-scale infrastructural networks resonates in everyday life through tourism. Amid expectations of increased connections for human movement in the "suspended world" trailing the COVID pandemic, Adams and Bennett (this volume) describe how local entrepreneurs innovated touristic infrastructures and activities in anticipation of the return of Chinese tourists, while Rovaniemi residents remained cautiously ambivalent or resistant. Lehtola's chapter, by following Finnish state dreams of an "Arctic Ocean Corridor" from 20th-century nation building to 21st-century visions of a "Silk Road" rail line across Sámi lands, points to an instance of cultural and environmental resistance as an unexpected materialization of otherwise mercurial infrastructural plans that have appeared and disappeared over the last century. The protest movement echoes emerging discussions in the region about the psychological pressures of ever-growing "planscapes" for resource extraction and development, which have been shown to exacerbate the cumulative impacts of past and existing industrial encroachments on Indigenous livelihoods, especially reindeer herding (Österlin and Raitio 2020). A range of resistance to ambivalence is similarly present in Nome, Alaska, where Povoroznyuk and Schweitzer describe plans for the "Arctic port of the US." Following over a century of "constant anticipation" surrounding new infrastructure and resources in Nome, local sentiments have steered away from enchantment (*sensu* Harvey and Knox 2016), toward a kind of silent refusal (*sensu* Simpson 2014), wherein concerns about Indigenous and other locally rooted marine resources and livelihoods, as well as housing and other services, are communicated through active disinterest. Amatulli finds a parallel trend of anticipatory entrepreneurship,

ambivalence, and resistance in the ebbs and flows of infrastructural dreaming in Canada, where century and a half old plans of turning the port of Prince Rupert into a "gateway to Asia," have given rise to smaller, sustainable, and Indigenous-inspired food economies as expressions of opposition to continued port development, amid broader concerns about socioeconomic impacts.

Looking beyond the built environment toward the infrastructural imagination, the chapters collectively interrogate the social, political, and economic reverberations of the unbuilt. Whether people resist or harness development plans, infrastructural visions generate around them agentive relations. By examining envisioned projects through a multitemporal lens, we reveal contexts in which infrastructural

Map 0.1. *Map of key places in the book intersecting with visions of Arctic silk roads, 2025. Made by Natalia Magnani and Matthew Magnani. © Matthew Magnani and Natalia Magnani.*

imaginaries facilitate or constrain the agency of actors. We argue that the so-called "failed" ventures of global capitalism and its infrastructural promises materialize in unexpected ways through the local agencies and economies of anticipation that they generate. In other words, the unbuilt has material, social, political, and economic presence.

Silk Roads: The Revival of a Concept

As a concept, the "Silk Road" emerged in the 19th century to describe an ancient constellation of trade routes that spanned Europe and Asia, moving silk, glass, animals, and plants across vast distances from the last centuries BCE into the late-medieval period. While the origin of the term is not uncontested (Mertens 2019), the phrase was used by the mid-1800s and its popularization is typically tied to the German geographer, Ferdinand von Richthofen, in the latter half of the century (Waugh 2007). Archaeological discoveries of stray materials or ideas moving long distances show up for millennia, yet the designation of the Silk Road came to retroactively describe a period when an increased flow of goods moved across growing distances between expanding regional empires.

While popularized conceptions of the Silk Road may suggest a singular long-distance exchange coalescing around a linear path, elements of the trade routes were far less intentional and unified than might be suggested by its name. Though the regional movement of plants and animals spans well into prehistory (see Taylor et al. 2018), the Silk Road proper is imagined as originating with the exchange of silk between early Chinese dynasties and nomads on the plains (Liu 2010), a demand which expanded west past the Roman empire across multiple land and sea routes. Like any other extensive system of exchange, those who participated in trade along the roads did not have such an expansive perspective, instead contributing to countless local exchanges and barter systems. Only retrospectively, during a period of expanded European conquest and colonialism, was this vast network reimagined to suit scholarly and political climes. The rebranding bolstered the centrality of early states at the expense of the agency of nomadic participants in ancient trade networks (Misra 2020).

Despite its lack of cohesion as a concept in antiquity, silk roads, as a heuristic, have retained value as a scholarly term to frame the long-distance trade and intercultural exchange that took place

from around two millennia ago and endured through the medieval era (Knutson 2020; Franklin 2024). Diverse research, drawing on excavation, genetic evidence, and chemical analyses, have revealed patchworks of local agencies that, when approached at macro scale, illuminate long-distance exchange along major global corridors of trade. For instance, studies of mitochondrial genomes suggested intermixing between eastern and western populations in Central Asia during the Silk Road era (Comas et al. 1998)—a suggestion that has been explored in greater detail using autosomal data (Mezavilla et al. 2014). Isotopic analysis of glasswork hints at the long-distance movement of wares between the Middle East and Central Asia (Fiorentino et al 2019). Genetic analysis of other species, from horses to food crops, are equally suggestive of the broad range of sharing that occurred, often mediated not by large state actors on either side of the routes but by nomadic peoples who occupied the spaces between written records (Warmuth et al. 2013; Wang et al. 2022). Drawing on a range of ancient evidence, it is certain that across its multiple lengths, an even greater diversity of actors contributed to the movement and consumption of goods. These people formed social ties and shaped cartographies of exchange that would capture the attention of future publics and scholars.

Today, from Western Europe to the Middle East and East Asia, the route continues to be historicized and memorialized in text and public exhibitions that seek to foster local identities rooted in multicultural reciprocity (see Huerta 2021). UNESCO has added dozens of heritage sites along the Silk Roads, from Venice to Java, and programs bearing the same name buoy the peaceful international exchange of ideas (Shen et al. 2024). Scholars have emphasized the inherent risks of the persistence of the term, which may be used to reify divisions between East and West, or elevate national claims to sovereignty over borderlands (see again Franklin 2024; Knutson 2020). The ongoing revitalization of the concept represents a collision of complex ancient and contemporary socio-political landscapes, as a broad range of actors historicize interconnectivity in the past to encourage contemporary visions of local improvement. And just as in earlier centuries, the reimagination of the Silk Road has been co-opted by grassroots initiatives and regional actors as states develop high-profile international and future-oriented visions of trade and prosperity.

Established by European scholars as a construct to conjure new forms of contemporary exchange, past Silk Roads, as imagined, have taken on a life of their own. In 2018, China published a policy paper on the Arctic that brought plans for a "Polar Silk Road" to international

consciousness (China's Arctic Policy 2018). The Road encourages a wide range of investment in infrastructure from ports to railways to energy tied to Arctic shipping routes, spanning the entirety of the circumpolar North and its navigable passages—Northeast, Northwest, and Transpolar.

China's Arctic goals articulate with its even more ambitious One Belt One Road strategy, also known as the Belt and Road Initiative, a push to develop and invest in infrastructures around the world such as roads, ports, railways, pipelines, and even digital technologies. The infrastructures are envisioned to form a broader network for trade and transport on land and sea, while evoking the connectivity and exchange of the historical Silk Road (Chan 2018). Just as the initial term "Silk Road" was developed retrospectively at the height of the colonial period to manifest new global ambitions, contemporary revivals of the term are embedded in broader geopolitical imaginaries that elevate intercultural trade and exchange to reach new ends, including governance (Winter 2021). At such a scale, it is not surprising that the Belt and Road is dotted with ghost infrastructures as much as operative constructions—many of the projects unfulfilled, abandoned, or built but suspended in latent or non-operational states.

Unrealized but idealized, memories of ancestral trade routes are being marshaled to support new geopolitical ambitions and unrestricted trade, connecting East and West through maritime and land routes. Conceptually, following "silk roads" allows us to analyze global networks past and present, not only as they materialize through built projects but also as they are imagined. Just as a discrete thoroughfare never existed historically, today a constellation of local agencies, aspiring toward the revitalization of global trade and interconnectivity, may be unified by current geopolitical ambitions to lay the groundwork for infrastructures underlaying a new silk road.

Arctic Passages in Context

If the evocation of ancient infrastructures conjures contemporary exchange, it is important to further situate the role of Arctic passages as long-term sites of human occupation and trade. Maritime highways through the Arctic have connected people for thousands of years; predecessors of contemporary Inuit communities from Greenland to Nunavut attest to the success of coastal adaptations. Their ancestors moved people and ideas across ice-covered corridors with kayaks and boats, subsisting from land and water and ice

(Friesen 2016). Coastal rock art depicting boating cultures appears in early Scandinavian rock art, while the northernmost regions of Russia have been settled with equally great time depth (Helskog 2014). Viking routes skirted Greenland and Iceland crossing the Atlantic, moving ivory and animals, and leaving durable expressions from Greenland to Newfoundland (Ingstad and Ingstad 2000). The Arctic waters and coastal resources that figure into contemporary imaginations have long facilitated movement and exchange.

Intersecting with these histories of settlement, the Arctic played an expanding role in the imagination of commerce and prosperity throughout the 16th century. In pursuit of improved trade routes, the region witnessed a dedication of resources by state actors and explorers endeavoring to economize travel between eastern and western ports and markets. Travel time around the Cape Horn in South America could be cut by the Northwest passage connecting the Atlantic and Pacific; the Northeast passage could allow ships to traverse Scandinavia across Siberian coastal waters and circumvent the African continent. The Scandinavian North Cape was rounded in the 1580s, and the Northeast passage traversed by the late 1870s (Armstrong 2011; Jacobsen 2015). The exploration of the Northwest passage, also beginning in the late 1500s, was hampered by ice even during the summer and was not crossed until 1906 (Williams 2010). These routes saw focused attention, but irregular crossing, due to thick and persistent sea ice through the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

A preoccupation with economizing trade reaches through the historical record to the present. Overlapping with expeditions to chart Arctic passageways in the 1800s and early 1900s, major infrastructural projects, including the Suez and Panama canals, carved pathways of water across land to circumvent entire continents. Massive rail systems were built to carry waves of raw materials, goods, and people. Despite the emergence of regular air transport and road systems since the middle of the last century, maritime trade remains essential to global commerce and energy production. Existing in perpetual states of anticipation and potential, the Northwest and Northeast passages stand to cut thousands of miles and nearly halve the distances and costs associated with major sea routes (Pharand 2007; Schøyen and Bråthen 2011). Both routes not only bypass greater distances translating to saved time and fuel, but also the geopolitics that come with reliance on narrow canal systems. Arctic passages remain more relevant than ever.

Building on the anticipation of shortcuts that reaches back centuries, travel across Arctic passages has increased in feasibility with

rapid changes in global climate. Winter sea ice has reduced by over 3 percent every ten years in recent decades and nearly 70 percent of ice is now seasonal (Stroeve and Notz 2018; Roach et al. 2025). Full-year navigation of Arctic waters is predicted by 2100 (Zhao et al. 2024). Accelerated by climate change, questions of sovereignty, development, and security in the Arctic have continued to play out among a cadre of states with borders that cross the region. The United States, Russia, Denmark, Norway, and Canada, known as the "Arctic Five," control territories that jut physically into Arctic waters. The formalization of an Arctic Council in the 1990s further includes Sweden, Finland, and Iceland, launching from international discussions of security and scientific research that reach back to the 1980s (Koivurova and Vanderswaag 2007). Significant amounts of natural resources, including oil, natural gas, and battery metals, sit in Arctic soils and coastal waters. Investments in new technology to facilitate their removal and movement have become prominent, spanning well-established Russian initiatives to extract and transport liquid natural gas, to the exploration of the Scandinavian Arctic for battery minerals (Lavrenteva 2020; Dale and Gross 2023). The scope of projects, emergent and anticipated, would have been unimaginable just decades ago, and stand to resonate and collide with the visions of local actors across diverse cartographies.

With expanding stakes, Arctic shipping lanes attract the attention of nations with physical territory in the Arctic but also a growing list with Arctic-adjacent trade and security interests. Driven by interests in energy import and commerce, China's emergence as a "near-Arctic state" has accompanied the assertion of rights and governance without territorial sovereignty rooted in "scientific research, environmental protection, sea passages, and natural resources," positioning economic venture as moral principle through articulations of "harmony between natural conservation and social development" (China's Arctic Policy 2018). Along with this framing, the country's Arctic policy emphasizes sustainable development, climate change mitigation, international cooperation, and free navigation under existing international frameworks. However, these Arctic ambitions, including the development of a "Polar Silk Road," have been lacking in practical development in recent years despite the heightening of Russia–China cooperation, and the anticipation of more regular resource extraction and transport through the Northern Sea Route (Alexeeva and Lasserre 2018; Gunnarson and Moe 2021). With all eyes on the Arctic, a scramble for influence in the region has expanded beyond traditionally conceived forms of territorial

sovereignty, following state security and commercial interests, scientific research, and tourism; these alternative expressions of governance have stoked anxieties anticipating the shape the region will take in the future.

Anthropology of the Unbuilt

Our focus on local anticipations of global infrastructures that exist in liminal states of physical realization, lends itself to intervention in the anthropology of the unbuilt. Social analyses of infrastructural plans and failed constructions have been taken up across disciplines, from human geography and history to anthropology. While many of these disciplines employ anthropology's trademark of ethnography, anthropological studies stand out in two main ways: first, the temporal dimension of fieldwork, which is often long term over multiple years and decades, thus facilitating deep ethnographic understanding of social change over time. Second, theoretical and methodological approaches in anthropology illuminate intersections between the micro and macro scales of social and material worlds—between everyday life, practice, and sociality, and national and global developments.

A burgeoning anthropological literature on the social lives of unrealized infrastructures examines the entanglement of people's daily strivings and imaginations with large-scale infrastructural development, politics, and bureaucracies, with research carried out over a period of months to years that allows for an analysis of change through time. For example, Harvey and Knox (2016) follow peoples' mundane experiences of road building over many years in Peru to suggest the role of enchanted affect in perpetuating infrastructures' promises. Similarly, Haines (2018) focuses on the day-to-day anticipations of a highway in Belize over a period of three years, to show how these anticipations shape Indigenous land and environmental politics.

Whether explicitly or indirectly, research on the not-yet-realized provides theoretical insight into experiences of time—the anticipation of what is to come or longing for that which could have been. It follows then that anthropological attempts to synthesize research on unfinished infrastructure have focused on material temporal dimensions—often as mediums through which politics and inequalities are reproduced (Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018), or as heuristics to understand experiences of the unbuilt (Carse and Kneas 2019). An anthropology of unrealized infrastructure calls for the theoretical rethinking of temporality.

When it comes to growing anthropological interest in "megaprojects"—a term that may be used to describe diverse visions of silk roads in the Arctic, analyses of their distinguishing features have focused on transnational and economic scale, as well as decentralized qualities of implementation (Ullberg, Körling, and Strava 2023). However, it may also be argued that what distinguishes these projects is the scale of their unfinishedness, and thus their temporality.

Requiring coordination between a diversity of actors and interests at multiple scales, megaprojects are likely to emerge as patchworks of unrealized ghost infrastructures and the longing and anticipations for pasts and futures that accompany them (see Magnani and Magnani, and Stammler, Ivanova, and Vitebsky, this volume).

Projections of climate change and melting sea ice add yet another spatio-temporal dimension to unbuilt infrastructures as they materially and discursively reconfigure geopolitical relations. Scientific models predict shifts in seasonal ice cover and scales of environmental change but also new possibilities for shipping and technology—for example, what ice class for ships will be required to make the Arctic navigable and at what times of year. Meanwhile, infrastructures on land—ports, roads, railways, and industrial projects—are being planned in expectation of these changes. Both developments exist in anticipatory, abstract realms, tangibly manifesting in everyday life through the initiatives of individuals who act on the projections.

Methodologies for the Unbuilt

The study of infrastructure across disciplines follows networks of human, material, and/or technological relations. Anthropologists have focused especially on infrastructure's social, political, and economic entanglements (e.g., Harvey and Knox 2015). This is partly due to the tools with which anthropology is equipped. In his review essay in the early years of anthropology's infrastructural turn, Larkin (2013) noted the difficulty of examining "technological systems" using ethnographic methods. While scholars utilizing approaches in science and technology studies were generating a robust literature for the study of technological networks (e.g., Bennett 2010; Mitchell 2011), Larkin emphasized the equal importance of infrastructures beyond their technical qualities, namely as vehicles for "desire and fantasy." Such desires were subsequently taken up in studies of infrastructure's "promises" and "enchantments" (e.g., Harvey and Knox 2016; Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018). Examining the promises of the

unbuilt, this volume locates materiality not in the technical workings of structures but in dialogues between the imagination and social, economic, and political life. Although unrealized port, road, and railway networks cannot be physically engaged, their promises manifest materially through the agency of local actors who may resist or harness large-scale visions for on-the-ground ventures.

Examining infrastructural anticipation through historically rooted ethnography, the chapters do not exclusively follow the materiality of existing infrastructure but rather the relations of an infrastructural imagination of that which is not yet built. While some of the chapters also deal with the material entanglements and affordances of infrastructure (e.g., Povoroznyuk and Schweitzer, Magnani and Magnani), overall the case studies delve beyond an analysis of the built environment to ask what kinds of relations and agencies are engendered with the *imagination* of infrastructure, rather than its physical qualities. At the same time, we show how the imagination of infrastructure can manifest materially in ways that do not align with original blueprints—as local economies and ventures engendered by the infrastructural imagination. In doing so, we theorize an alternative materiality of infrastructure.

The authors of this volume examine infrastructure through a combination of ethnographic and historical methodologies. Each chapter follows myriad social and material relations surrounding infrastructures that are in various states of imagination, construction, or abandonment. The authors of the volume are social and cultural anthropologists, human geographers, and historians, with expertise across other disciplines and sub-disciplines such as archaeology, legal, and Indigenous studies. They have long-term relationships with the people and communities of what has been conceived as the circumpolar North–from Sápmi to Siberia, Alaska and Canada, and the self-proclaimed "near-Arctic" China from which a "Polar Silk Road" emanates. Their ethnographic perspectives on the anticipatory and imaginative aspects of infrastructure, instead of their physicality, makes the primary focus of the book more on the social rather than technological dimensions of infrastructure. As we follow the social, political, and economic relations engendered through the imagination of infrastructure, we also ground the work in a broader historical and geopolitical context: Amatulli, Lehtola, and Povoroznyuk and Schweitzer connect long-term and nationally driven infrastructural anticipations with present-day ambivalences or resistance against development in Canada, Finnish Sápmi, and Alaska (respectively), while Stammler, Ivanova, and Vitebsky follow

"trajectories of anticipation" from Soviet policies and ideologies of uncurbed expansion to new mobilizations of infrastructural dreams in the Siberian Arctic.

Existing in the imagination as visions or ruins, infrastructures are not yet, or no longer, "matter that enables the movement of other matter" (Larkin 2013). Instead, they comprise non-matter that engenders matter. Our multitemporal ethnographic methodologies allow us to examine this translation.

Following Roads

The everyday lives of people in the circumpolar North and "near-Arctic" nations geopolitically tethered to the region, are entangled with local political bodies, national agendas, and international agreements that collectively govern the Arctic. Visions of global transport and connectivity across these areas are variably experienced as top-down blueprints and development ventures, or on-the-ground actions of resistance, heritage making, and entrepreneurship.

Drawing together the ethnographic experiences of this volume, we suggest that the degree to which grand infrastructural visions are engaged locally—either through their embrace or resistance—depends on the degree to which they intersect with everyday lives and livelihoods. Where the anticipation of the not-yet-realized, or its preliminary infrastructures, may be harnessed to generate local economies, anticipation takes on alternative material forms. Many of the book's chapters focus on cases of tourism, community, and heritage infrastructures that co-opt or anticipate geopolitically strategic visions of development (Adams and Bennett; Fraser; Magnani and Magnani; Stammler, Ivanova, and Vitebsky). As Stammler, Ivanova, and Vitebsky emphasize, the degree to which large-scale anticipations are actualized as local agencies depends on questions of scale and participation.

Following this logic, projects that are distant from community and economic realities are rejected or barely register in everyday discourse. Povoroznyuk and Schweitzer were surprised to find that a large port project in Nome, Alaska, was greeted with disinterest by a majority of local residents, with questions raised instead about practical matters such as housing—concerns also prominent surrounding port plans in Prince Rupert discussed by Amatulli. Resistance to port development was present to some degree in both cases, but numbed by general apathy (Povoroznyuk and Schweitzer), or manifesting indirectly as entrepreneurial forms of subsistence production (Amatulli).

Similarly, state dreams for roads and railways across Sámi lands to the Arctic Ocean, discussed by Lehtola, have been met with mixtures of ambivalent resignation and protest through the last century.

The chapters follow visions of connectivity across the Arctic to reveal potential for local agencies surrounding large-scale infrastructural projects that may or may not be realized. When people envision the use of infrastructure or its promises for their own livelihoods (i.e., tourism, political positions, investment opportunities), or conversely see them as endangering their subsistence or other lifeways (i.e., land-based livelihoods or businesses in the vicinity of expanding infrastructure), their imaginations and actions become entangled with the threats or possibilities of development. When national planning and regional developers' dreams are top-down and not directly tied to peoples' everyday economies of well-being, social networks, or political aspirations, they are less likely to draw action or attention.

In these ways, we show that global capitalism only "fails" when the projects remain at large and theoretical scales that do not intersect with day-to-day lives. In most cases, state and international visions for connectivity via expansions of infrastructure and commerce are harnessed at smaller scales long before the laying of cement and iron, as local entrepreneurs and activists act on these blueprints to achieve their own social, economic, and political goals.

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