



Arctic Infrastructures: Histories of Exploration, Colonization and Industrial Development

Workshop organized by the ERC Advanced Grant Project InfraNorth

June 14, 2022 | 9am-5:30pm & June 15, 2022 | 9am-12:45pm
Hosted by Luleå University of Technology & Online

Program &
Abstracts below

Workshop Description

The Arctic, which often has been recognized by residents of temperate climate zones for its supposed unspoiled nature, has a long history of colonization, urbanization and industrial exploitation. From the days of Arctic whaling to gold rushes and oil booms, the Arctic has a rich legacy of built environment serving as infrastructure mainly for non-arctic resource exploitation and domination. While the ERC project InfraNorth is focused on transport infrastructures, this workshop takes a broader view and explores infrastructures from mining to hydro-power to military. It will bring together a number of academic experts working in different parts of the Arctic and aims at exploring the developments that led to the contemporary entanglements between local communities and infrastructures. The workshop will take place in a hybrid format - on-site at the Luleå University of Technology and on-line. To participate online, please register here: [Zoom registration](#)





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Day 1, Tuesday, June 14, 2022 | 9am-5:30pm

Lecture hall A109, Universitetsvägen 1, Luleå University of Technology & Online

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- 9:00 Dag Avango (Luleå University of Technology, Sweden): Introduction
 - 9:15 Philip Wight (University of Alaska Fairbanks, USA): *Cracking Open the North? Contesting Access on Alaska's Dalton Highway*
 - 9:45 Sverker Sörlin (KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden): *The Movement Heritage: Mobilities and Pathways in the Anthropocene*
 - 10:30 Coffee Break
 - 11:00 Peter Schweitzer & Olga Povoroznyuk (University of Vienna, Austria): *Beyond Wilderness: InfraNorth and the Anthropology of Arctic Infrastructures*
 - 11:30 Andreas Womelsdorf (University of Vienna, Austria): *Rivers, Energy, and Border Control: Some Notes about the Fluidity of the Alaska-Yukon Borderlands, 1890-1960*
 - 12:00 Tobias Holzlehner (Martin-Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany): *Towards a Social Archaeology of the Built Environment*
 - 12:30 Lunch
 - 14:00 Dag Avango (Luleå University of Technology, Sweden): *Built Environments and Material Cultures of Mining in Svalbard Geopolitics*
 - 14:30 Alexandra Meyer (University of Vienna, Austria): *From Coal Mining Company Town to 'Gran Svalbardia', Research Station, or Sustainable Showcase? Longyearbyen's Built Environment in the Context of Multi-layered Change*
 - 15:00 Julia Lajus (Max-Planck Institute for the History of Science, Germany): *Encounters of Connectedness and Remoteness along the White Sea Coasts*
 - 15:30 Coffee Break
 - 16:00 Dmitrii Arzyutov (Oulu University, Finland): *Tempering Seeds with Cold: Building Agricultural Infrastructures in the Russian North*
 - 16:30 P. Whitney Lackenbauer (Trent University, Canada): *Military Modernization: Continental Defence Infrastructure and the Cold War Canadian Arctic*
 - 17:00 Sophie Elixhauser (University of Vienna, Austria): *The Histories of East Greenland's Airports: Military Interests, Geopolitics and Sociocultural Changes*
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Day 2, Wednesday, June 15 | 9am-12:45pm

Lecture hall A109, Universitetsvägen 1, Luleå University of Technology & Online

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| 9.00 | Judit Malmgren (Luleå University of Technology, Sweden): <i>Historical Mining and Land-Use in Arctic Sweden</i> |
| 9.30 | Jennie Sjöholm (Luleå University of Technology, Sweden): <i>Moving Kiruna: Relocating Infrastructures in a Contested Arctic Landscape</i> |
| 10.00 | Gunhild Rosqvist (Luleå University of Technology & Stockholm University, Sweden): <i>Multiple Pressures from Changes in Land Use and Climate on Northern Landscapes</i> |
| 10.30 | Coffee Break |
| 11.00 | Johan Cederqvist (Luleå University of Technology, Sweden): <i>Lost Salmon: An Environmental History of Hydropower Expansion and Extinction in Arctic Sweden 1945-72</i> |
| 11:30 | Roundtable and Final Discussion on History and Anthropology in Arctic Infrastructure Studies |
| 12:30 | Closing |
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Built Environments and Material Cultures of Mining in Svalbard Geopolitics

Dag Avango

One of the characteristics of the mining industry, in the Arctic and elsewhere, is its sensitivity to fluctuations in world markets prices and demand. After boom periods come bust and eventually all mines come to an end. Across mineral rich areas in the Arctic are the environmental and societal imprints of more than a hundred years of mining, legacies from the past that linger on in the present, posing opportunities and challenges to Arctic societies.

In this paper I will present research results from the Nordic center of Excellence REXSAC on the role of legacies of mining in the de-industrialization process currently taking place at the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard. Over the last hundred years, coal mining has formed the basis for settlement at this archipelago. Today however most mines have been closed and different actors are seeking ways to build a post-industrial future for these communities. Based interviews with more than 50 actors and documentation of four former or de-industrializing mining settlements, I will seek to answer the following questions: what role do the material and immaterial legacies of past mining operations play in different future visions for the Svalbard archipelago and why? Can the legacies of mining become a resource for a post-mining Svalbard and in that case how, for whom and why? Which lessons can be drawn from the de-industrialisation process in Svalbard for other parts of the Arctic?

Dag Avango is a professor of history, specializing in the history of technology and cultural heritage. His research lies at the interface between archeology and history, combining theoretical approaches and methods from history, archeology, critical heritage studies and STS. In his research, Avango has examined the interaction between people and things in historical processes of change. His focus has been on the history and cultural heritage of the polar areas – the Antarctic and Arctic – exploring how and why historical processes of change have taken place there, what their consequences were for people and environments. Avango's historical research has an emphasis on the history of extractive industries and on cultural heritage.



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Tempering Seeds with Cold: Building Agricultural Infrastructures in the Russian North

Dimitry Arzyutov

In this paper, I aim to tell a story of how the Russian North got involved in a number of scientific experiments on polar agriculture. I argue that the history of turning the Arctic into an ultimate agricultural frontier significantly affected not only the technoscientific imaginaries of the North but also underlay the local politics of food security and such infrastructural projects as global seed vaults which became of planetary importance during the military conflicts and wars as those in Syria and Ukraine. The paper is based on the intertwined intellectual trajectories of two scholars -- local naturalist and ethnographer Andrei Zhuravskii (1882-1914) and renowned geneticist Nikolai Vavilov (1887-1943) -- and their contribution to building Arctic agricultural infrastructures and experiments.

Dmitry Arzyutov is an environmental historian and anthropologist currently working at the University of Oulu, Finland. His research interests comprise histories and ethnographies of human-environment relations in the circumpolar North and the history of Arctic sciences. At the moment, he finishes his book on the intellectual history of discussions about the origin of Indigenous peoples in Northern Eurasia.

Lost Salmon: An Environmental History of Hydropower Expansion and Extinction in Arctic Sweden 1945-72

Johan Cederqvist

In the wake of the 20th century hydropower expansion in the Swedish north, wild salmon went extinct river by river, along with age-old salmon fisheries. The most accelerating phase of this process took place between 1945 and 1972. Against this background, the aim of this dissertation is to understand and explain how power relations between humans – and between humans and salmon – shaped roads towards extinction during this period. With that as starting point, the examination is directed towards four types of actors: hydropower industrialists, fisheries biologists, salmon fishers and salmon. The broader intention of this dissertation is to shed light on the global problem of why humans of our time are impoverishing life on Earth at an accelerating rate.



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Johan Cederqvist is doctoral candidate in history at Luleå University of Technology. Cederqvist's main research interest is environmental history of rivers and seas in the industrial age. His dissertation project explores historical driving forces behind, and consequences of, salmon extinctions during the great epoch of hydropower expansion in the Swedish north 1945–1972.

The Histories of East Greenland's Airports: Military Interests, Geopolitics and Sociocultural Changes

Sophie Elixhauser

In this presentation I will speak about the history of and developments in relation to the small airports on the remote Greenlandic east coast, all of which were originally built by the military. I will illustrate the entanglement of military strategic interests, geopolitics and the interests of and impacts on the adjacent local communities. After some words about the airport Nerlerlit Inaat/ Constable Point on the northeast coast, I will focus on two sites in the Tasiilaq region: Bluie East 2, an American military airport operating for some years during WW2 – the area is nowadays deserted – and on Kulusuk, where today we find the main airport of Greenland's east coast that was built in the Cold War era in connection with a Radar Station of the Distant Early Warning Line (DEW) stretching across the whole Arctic region. I will end with some words about current discussions on the future of East Greenlandic air travel.

Sophie Elixhauser is a Social Anthropologist with a long-standing relation to East Greenland. She holds a M.A. from the University of Munich and a Ph.D. from the University of Aberdeen. Her research interests are in environmental anthropology, perception and movement, materiality, and climate change. Amongst others, she published a book on personal autonomy and interpersonal communication among the people of East Greenland. Sophie was a postdoctoral fellow in a project about the perceptions of climate change in the European Alps. Currently she is a senior project advisor in the interdisciplinary Snow2Rain project at Vienna University focussing on environmental changes in East Greenland.



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Towards a Social Archaeology of the Built Environment

Tobias Holzlehner

Despite a seemingly strained and estranged relationship between contemporary Cultural Anthropology and Archaeology, both fields share a long history of mutual interest and theoretical osmosis. Yet, a sharp asymmetry prevails: as current archaeological theory has borrowed a multitude of concepts from its neighboring discipline over the last decades, the reverse has rarely been true. The workshop talk aims to trigger a discussion on the potential usefulness of archaeological concepts, (e.g., deep time perspective, material narratives and typology) for cultural anthropology, specifically in respect to the built environment. Looking at current approaches to better understand the (modernist) infrastructural ruins of the 20th century, I propose avenues that might offer new insights into our intimate relationship with infrastructural remains.

Taking the history of forced village relocations in northeastern Russia (Chukotka) as an example, I explore the heuristic value of ruins as a mode of disclosure to come to a better understanding of infrastructural violence and resistance at the margins of Empire. The methodological use of disruption, a critical application of material counter-narratives, and human-thing entanglements guide this inquiry.

***Tobias Holzlehner** is a researcher and lecturer at the Department of Anthropology at the Martin-Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany. He received his doctorate in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 2007. His ethnographic research in the Russian Far East explores natural-cultural encounters and transformations in North Pacific borderlands.*



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Military Modernization: Continental Defence infrastructure and the Cold War Canadian Arctic

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

Focusing on the Second World War and Cold War, this presentation will reflect on ways that continental defence infrastructure shaped the Canadian Northwest and Arctic. These "military modernization" projects not only changed the footprint of the colonial state and "opened" the region to new influences, they also substantively altered human relationships with homelands and with other people. In seeking to establish new northern transportation arteries and sensor systems, contradictory Canadian state impulses sought both to insulate Northern peoples from the forces of modernism while simultaneously creating the spaces and dynamics that "inevitably" pulled them in.

***P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Ph.D.**, is Canada Research Chair (Tier 1) in the Study of the Canadian North and a Professor in the School for the Study of Canada at Trent University, Ontario, Canada. He is an adjunct professor at the Center for Arctic Security and Resilience at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the Mulrone Institute for Governance at St. Francis Xavier University. Previously, he has been Killam Visiting Scholar at the University of Calgary, Distinguished Visiting Professor at Canadian Forces College, and a Fulbright Scholar at Johns Hopkins University. He has (co-)written or (co-)edited more than fifty books and more than one hundred academic articles and book chapters.*

Encounters of Connectedness and Remoteness along the White Sea Coasts

Julia Lajus

In this presentation I would like to address the encounters of connectedness and remoteness in the White Sea area. It includes the short overview of history of very uneven development of infrastructure in the region and its major transformation under the Soviet power. Discussion of the current situation relates to the Soviet legacy and some more or less successful attempts to overcome it. The main focus of the analysis of the contemporary situation is on the interplay of often contradictory demands of local inhabitants, tourism institutions and tourists themselves and heritage and nature protection.



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Julia Lajus is Visiting Researcher at Max Planck for the History for Science in Berlin. Before April 2022 she was a Head of Laboratory for Environmental and Technological History and Associate Professor at the Department of History, National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE), St. Petersburg, Russia. In 2011-2015 she served as vice-president of the European Society of Environmental History. Her research focuses on history of field sciences such as fisheries science, oceanography and climatology; environmental history of biological resources, especially in marine and polar areas.

Historical Mining and Land-Use in Arctic Sweden

Judit Malmgren

Mining includes socio-technical systems of infrastructure of various kinds, which requires large areas. This in turn affects opportunities for other land-use. In Arctic Sweden, there are many different interests competing over the same land areas as the mining industry including for example forestry, reindeer husbandry, wind power, hydropower, hunting and outdoor life. Add to that contested land rights and traditional indigenous lands. Mining in Arctic Sweden has benefited the local population with improved infrastructure, population growth and jobs. However, the interests of Swedish state and private mining companies have often collided with the interests of other actors. Competing interests inevitably give rise to conflicts, but how these conflicts evolve varies.

Well-functioning infrastructure is a prerequisite for profitable mining operations, and technological innovations in connection with the industrial breakthrough enabled large-scale mining in a place where earlier attempts at profitable mining had failed, mainly due to the lack of suitable infrastructure. The technological mega-system and its affiliated infrastructures built around the mines of Gällivare and Kiruna in Arctic Sweden has enabled impressive mining operations with accompanying ancillary activities, but has also changed the area to its core.

Judit Malmgren is doctoral candidate in history at Luleå University of Technology. Malmgrens research focuses on historical Mining and Land-Use tensions in Arctic Sweden.



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Rivers, Energy, and Border Control: Notes about the Fluidity of the Alaska-Yukon Borderlands, 1890-1970.

Andreas Mentrup-Womelsdorf

As one of the major watercourses of the Pacific Northwest, the Yukon River watershed stands at the center of processes of settler colonization and the articulation of state power in the Western Arctic. The watershed which spreads over an area more than double the size of Germany is being crossed by the international boundary between the U.S.'s State of Alaska and Canada's Yukon Territory along the 141st meridian and the Alaskan Panhandle.

This contribution explores the processes by which the 1825 diplomatic determination of the 141st meridian as the principal borderline separating what in St. Petersburg was then considered Russian America from British North America has been transformed into an actual borderzone. By which types of processes has the 141st meridian been created as an international boundary between Alaska and the Yukon Territory systematically annihilating other-than-colonial boundaries? What are the roles of More-than-Human entities such as water, energy, fish, and law in these processes? Thus, in the first part, this paper addresses specifically the establishment of military and police control along the Yukon River corridor at the turn of the century transforming a rather opaque, imaginary borderline into sharply defined spatial practices. In its second part, this contribution turns to the "sociotechnical imaginaries" implicated in post-WWII attempts of engineering the Yukon River for using its hydroelectric potential. It will be argued that, historically, the international boundary takes shape along oscillatory movements between re- and de-articulation, between line and zone.

Andreas Mentrup-Womelsdorf is a PhD student at the Department of Social & Cultural Anthropology at the University of Vienna. His PhD project focuses on the histories of creating the Alaska-Yukon border with specific interests in the significance of More-than-Human entities such as water and fish, energy, law, and capital. Despite of his regional focus on the histories of settler colonization of the interior Western Arctic, Andreas has a marked interest in contemporary Games Studies, the global histories of computer games, and the gamification of processes of colonization. His theoretical interests lie in the fields of Environmental Anthropology, Global History, Borderlands History, and contemporary Black & Native Studies.



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From Coal Mining Company Town to 'Gran Svalbardia', Research Station, or Sustainable Showcase? Longyearbyen's Built Environment in the Context of Multi-layered Change

Alexandra Meyer

Longyearbyen, the main settlement of the Svalbard archipelago, located at 78 degrees North, is a town undergoing great changes. The former coal mining company town is at the tail end of a nationally driven socio-economic transition, as the last mine is scheduled to close in 2023 and tourism, research and education are promoted as the main economic pillars. Simultaneously, the town experiences the impacts of rapid climate change, as it is warming up seven times faster as the global average. In this presentation I examine the changing Longyearbyen, with a particular focus on its built environment. In the context of the multi-layered climatic, social, and economic changes, and given the town is considered a main tool for Norwegian sovereignty over Svalbard, which are the challenges and dilemmas the town faces today, in terms of its infrastructure and built environment? Placing the town's current transformation in its historical context, which futures can be imagined for Longyearbyen? Presenting data from ethnographic fieldwork, the presentation will touch on several infrastructural challenges Longyearbyen faces in times of change, including the end of the coal mining era, the rapid growth in tourism, the envisioned green transition in Longyearbyen, the uneasy topic of urban and demographic growth in a town that is not supposed to grow, and climate change adaptation.

***Alexandra Meyer** is a PhD student at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Vienna, Austria, and a project collaborator in the projects Nunataryuk: Permafrost thaw and the changing Arctic coast - Science for socioeconomic adaptation and PCCH Arctic – Polar climate and cultural heritage. Through long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Longyearbyen, Svalbard, in her PhD project she examines how the town is impacted by various environmental and socio-economic changes, and how people live with, experience, perceive, and respond to these changes. She is a board member of the Svalbard Social Science Initiative.*



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Multiple Pressures from Changes in Land Use and Climate on Northern Landscapes

Gunhild Rosqvist, Niila Inga, Chris Fohringer, Jonas Vannar, Carl Österlin

Impacts from areal and linear changes in land use successively accumulated and have resulted in a fragmented landscape with altered ecosystem functions and reduced connectivity in northern Sweden. So far, the cumulative effects from exploitation have mostly been noted on reindeer herding, which is a vital livelihood carried out by the Sámi, Sweden's only recognized Indigenous people. Impacts of increased warming is a major concern among all reindeer herding communities (RHCs) in northern Sweden, partly because adaptation to climate change effects demands an increased RHC flexibility in guiding their reindeer to suitable pastures. Instead, herders find their flexibility is becoming increasingly reduced due to industrial and societal activities. The current rapid increase in demand for critical minerals, raw materials and renewable energy to facilitate the 'green transition' requires access to new land or expansions of existing projects. For sustainable management, and to avoid increasing land use conflicts, decisions on land use priorities need to rely on proper impact assessment procedures. One problem is that effects of climate change on reindeer herding are not incorporated in the impact assessments procedures on which decisions on land use priorities are based.

Gunhild Rosqvist has a professorship in geography at Stockholm University. She leads research in climate and environmental change, supervises and teaches university students, directed an Arctic research station for 16th years, and educates society through frequent outreach opportunities. She specializes on effects of climate change on mountain and polar environments, especially its effects on the cryosphere, and on mountain ecosystem services, especially reindeer herding. Rosqvist was a co-principal investigator of REXSAC developing cross-disciplinary research including traditional Sámi knowledge.



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Beyond Wilderness: InfraNorth and the Anthropology of Arctic Infrastructures

Peter Schweitzer & Olga Povoroznyuk

The presentation will introduce the ERC project “Building Arctic Futures: Transport Infrastructures and Sustainable Northern Communities” (InfraNorth), which focuses on the nexus between transport infrastructures and the well-being of Arctic communities. Our starting point is the observation that public and academic discourses about the Arctic often focus on the fragile natural environments portrayed as “wilderness”. While concerns about northern environments continue to be relevant, our interest is defined by the on-going industrial and infrastructural build-up of the Circumpolar North and its impacts on local communities. Acknowledging that the “built environment” is not an invention of modernity, our interest is nevertheless focused on large-scale infrastructural projects of the twentieth century, which marks a watershed of industrial and infrastructural development in the North. Our talk will feature the guiding assumptions, research design, and first results of InfraNorth, in order to explore the relevance of infrastructural legacies for Arctic futures.

Peter Schweitzer is currently Professor of Anthropology at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Vienna. He is a founding member of the Austrian Polar Research Institute and served as its director from 2016-2020. He is one of two Austrian representatives to the Social and Human Working Group (SHWG) of the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) and was the first chair of the SHWG from 2011 to 2015. Schweitzer served as president of the International Arctic Social Science Association (IASSA) from 2001 to 2005 and is Professor Emeritus at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Olga Povoroznyuk is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at the Department for Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna. Her research interests include the issues of infrastructure and development, identity, ethnicity and indigeneity, postsocialism and postcolonialism in the Circumpolar North. Currently, Olga Povoroznyuk is a research coordinator of the ERC project “InfraNorth”, a representative to the Social Sciences and Humanities Working Group of the International Arctic Science Committee from Austria and a member of the Austrian Polar Research Institute.



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Moving Kiruna: Relocating Infrastructures in a Contested Arctic Landscape

Jennie Sjöholm

The mining town Kiruna is currently undergoing an urban transformation, to enable continued mining. The iron ore deposit stretches beneath the town, and as the mining causes subsidence, this affects the built environment. A new town centre and new neighbourhoods are under construction, whilst the areas closest to the mine is gradually being demolished. Also, major infrastructure systems are affected, and have been rebuilt. This includes new electricity supply system and wastewater system taken in use 2009. A new railway route was inaugurated 2012, with a temporary train station. A location of a new train station adjacent to the new town centre has been decided. In 2020, a new route of the main road E10 was taken in use. Planning of relocation of these infrastructures are complex, as there multiple actors and stakeholders involved, and competing interests how to use the land.

Jennie Sjöholm is a built environments conservation specialist and has a PhD in Architecture. She holds a position as senior lecturer in urban design & conservation at Luleå University of Technology. She is also guest lecturer in conservation at University of Gothenburg. Sjöholm is board member in TICIH Sweden and editorial board member of Nordic Journal of Settlement History and Built Heritage.

Cracking Open the North? Contesting Access on Alaska's Dalton Highway.

Philip Wight

Access—and lack of access—define Alaska. New roads in Alaska have evolved from symbols of progress, modernity, and connection in the early 20th Century to exemplars of exploitation, extraction, and unwelcomed intervention, for many, in the second half of the 20th Century. As Alaskan Governor Jay Hammond explained in 1975, “Alaskans no longer are in full accord that roads should be built to tie us all together.” The expansion of road systems in Alaska have had outsized impacts on rural, isolated, and indigenous communities. These communities historically had limited opportunities to shape rural road construction and access policies, and therefore opposed new road construction which they viewed as threats to sovereignty, subsistence activities, and traditional lifeways.



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This paper explores the historical example of the Dalton Highway—known locally as the “Haul Road”—built between 1969 and 1974 to facilitate the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System and the operation of Alaska’s North Slope oil fields. The Dalton is the only surface transportation system that connects Arctic Alaska with the rest of the state. This paper investigates the tumultuous inception of the Dalton Highway, its 20-year history as a “private industrial road”, and how lawsuits eventually “cracked open” the road to the public in 1994. Finally, the paper explores the paradoxical legacy of the highway—which has thus far transformed Arctic Alaska far less than most critics feared, but is on the verge of facilitating a major secondary transportation corridor: the highly controversial Ambler Road.

Philip Wight Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of History, and Arctic & Northern Studies at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He is an energy and environmental historian, focusing on infrastructure, mobility, and climate. Dr. Wight is currently finalizing a book manuscript, *Arctic Artery: The Trans-Alaska Pipeline System and the World it Made*, based on his doctoral dissertation.
