

LOVE AND CARE FOR PLACE IN AN ARCTIC COMMUNITY: Place development in Vardø, Norway

Larsen, Janike Kampevold (2023.0)

ABSTRACT ORIGINAL

Historically the richest fishing town in the Norwegian north, the now post-Arctic city of Vardø has lost half its population due to the 1980s crises in the fishing industry and later, a failed policy on fishing quotas. The city's on-land fishing infrastructure has fallen into ruin, and the city has become emblematic of a shrinking postindustrial community in Norway. Cultural entrepreneurs have been working intensely to save the city, starting with its architectural heritage as a material condition for development. While the Norwegian north is subject to national policies that favor petroleum extraction, the Northern Sea Route and tourism as strategies for development, the population in Vardø insists on basing its development on local resources such as fish, birding tourism and architectural heritage. Bottom-up efforts and collective initiatives aim to build a robust local economy, one that is not dependent on external funding. This article argues that people in Vardø demonstrate place development based in love and performed as care. A new greenhouse is the result of a two-year collaborative building process, initially between local entrepreneurs and the Oslo School of Architecture and Design but ultimately by a dedicated group of locals who exercise care work at a profound level. By an adaptation of feminist care theory to a unique civic place work, the article argues that a practice of care may alleviate or even substitute a policy that is human-centered and profit-motivated. People in Vardø offer attention to things that cannot take care of themselves. They sacrifice free time and sleep to political activism, to build, to entertain and educate politicians from the south and to exercise a care ethics that can be read as ethical obligations that are recreated through everyday doings. The article builds upon several years of research and collaboration with local entrepreneurs in Vardø under the auspices of the research project Future North, 2012–2018. For the past three years, work has unfolded through a collaboration between Tine Hegli, circular architecture specialist AHO, and the author, who is a landscape researcher at AHO and their respective teams, under the auspices of a new project: Common Resources. Strategies for a circular, balanced and shared management of areas under pressure (2020–). © 2024 selection and editorial matter, Leena Cho and Matthew Jull; individual chapters, the contributors. All rights reserved.