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11 TAKING A KALEIDOSCOPIC VIEW: REORIENTING AMIDST SHIFTING REALITIES

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Голь на выдумку хитра. (*Gol' na vydumku khitra*).
Literal translation: Extreme poverty inspires invention.
Meaning: Necessity is the mother of invention.
Russian proverb, no date

Introduction

Perspective is everything in scholarship. Starting with the earliest moments in our academic trajectories – choosing an academic concentration, becoming accustomed to expressing ourselves as humanists, social scientists, natural scientists, or interdisciplinarians, and distinguishing ourselves as regional studies experts – we become indoctrinated into how to represent the subject matter in our academic orbits. How we view people, places, and phenomena directly influences our connections with colleagues in the field and our (inter)disciplines, the conclusions we draw, and the policies we recommend. One of the most challenging, ongoing encounters that scholars face is maintaining freshness in the representation of sites and situations, especially amidst upheaval. Our emotions, cultural biases, and the academic frameworks we rely on to explain people, places, and phenomena can become "tunnel-visioned" over time and experience.

Being "stuck in our own heads" is often overlooked but crucial to address. When we fail to break out of these mental patterns, we risk misunderstanding the complexities of human experiences, natural environments, and social dynamics. The gap between what we think we know and what exists in the field creates a barrier to accurate understanding. In regional studies of the Eurasian Arctic, attention to people, place, and phenomena is central to ongoing knowledge production. The lack of access to the region creates an existential crisis for scholars, mainly due to the fear of losing our understanding of what people from the region are thinking and experiencing and how that may shape their future worlds. In a worst-case scenario, gaps in our ability to understand people, places, and phenomena in the Eurasian Arctic can lead to faulty interpretations and misguided conclusions in studies where cultural and environmental nuances are critical. In a better-case scenario, we may find ourselves only temporarily limited from connecting with communities and places. Because we

do not know what the future will hold, acknowledging the limitations that we currently have regarding the possibilities for research in/on our field and finding ways to overcome them are necessary. We will need to embrace creative and flexible research approaches to continue to gain new and deeper insights.

This chapter explores "kaleidoscopic thinking" to consider how we may reorient our scholarly perspectives. A kaleidoscope is a simple optical device constructed with mirrors and objects enclosed in a tube. Light is reflected through the mirrors as the tube rotates, creating shifting patterns and shapes. The objects inside do not change, but the perspective through which they are viewed does. A slight turn of the tube produces an entirely new pattern from the same elements. This device is a powerful metaphor for scholarly thinking: just as the kaleidoscope reveals new patterns through slight adjustments, scholars can uncover new insights by shifting intellectual perspectives. The elements of knowledge remain the same, but how we arrange and interpret them can yield new ways of understanding the world. Imagining the shifted perspectives gained when looking through a kaleidoscope helps scholars remember the importance of reflection, vision, and interpretation – elements essential to both the physical operation of the kaleidoscope and the intellectual operation of scholarly work.

The necessity of creative adaptation in post-invasion studies of Eurasia

Across Eurasia and including the Russian Arctic, the current era is one of fracture – geopolitically, socially, and environmentally. Political instability, shifting socio-economic landscapes, and climate change have created a world in which prior modes of understanding are often insufficient. Just as scholars, including myself, have written volumes on how Arctic peoples and places must necessarily adapt to changing socio-ecological circumstances, now scholars must also apply the concept of adaption – this time not to the object of our research, the Eurasian Arctic, but to our modes of studying it. Scholars must adopt new modes of thinking to function amidst changes in form. In this context, kaleidoscopic thinking becomes especially relevant. The ability to embrace fracture and adapt to the complexity it creates will aid us in shifting our perspectives to gain future understanding of sites and situations. It is essential for navigating a world no longer defined by stability or predictability.

The need for creative adaptation to new visions of how we conduct scholarly inquiry is particularly urgent with the cessation of most research travel to the Eurasian Arctic since the invasion of Ukraine. Historically, ethnographic and other grounded fieldwork approaches have been the cornerstone of research in Russia and the Arctic. The current political climate and the inaccessibility of Russia for most researchers today necessitate a fundamental shift in how we approach such research. With physical presence in the field now severely limited, scholars must explore alternative

methodologies that do not rely on geographic proximity. Remote research, digital data collection, and virtual collaboration are just a few methodological avenues that may continue to provide vital research while recognizing the ethical and logistical constraints imposed by the conflict. By exploring how we might change, at least in the current era, researchers can still provide valuable insights into regional dynamics without compromising rigor.

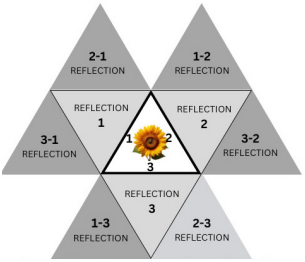
How do we adapt our research approaches? In *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault provides a way to consider how not to remain singularly focused on one way of knowing or conducting research through discursive formation. For example, when Arctic scholars steeped in field research define our object of study as "the ethnography of the North," intellectually, we can imagine being pulled towards two modes of approaching the subject matter: the transcendent and the empirical. In the transcendent approach, the methodology of ethnography is conceptually framed as its institutions, accumulated knowledge and practices, and methodological change over time. In the empirical approach, the North is a set of facts about the region's people, places, and phenomena that were recorded or believed by specific scribes in specific times and places. In a Foucauldian critique, we can see that the transcendent approach understands mostly only the benefits of ethnography (but recognizes its limits in different incarnations). In contrast, the empirical approach is potentially blind to how empiricism must always contain more than just a factual record in our interpretations for it to become something in the understanding of people, places, and phenomena.

Practicing discursive formation is a way to adapt to the rupture from normalized-scholarly inquiry into the Eurasian North that many scholars are currently experiencing. It is a way to ensure that our scholarly literature remains a lesson and a critique that heartens us and allows us to see both a picture and a mirror of our practices in the world. Considering how images are reflected and altered in a turning kaleidoscope provides a visualization of how discursive formation may assist scholars of the Eurasian Arctic in this moment of disruption (Fig. 1). This chapter underscores the importance of intellectual resilience and methodological innovation in facing such challenges.

Challenges of perspective in Eurasian arctic studies

Seeking patterns and familiarity is a survival mechanism that helps make sense of a chaotic world. In academic research, seeking familiarity or staying in a known zone of methodological inquiry may become a cognitive barrier when applied to transforming times and realities. Traditionally, in fields like anthropology, human geography, and environmental or regional studies, being physically present in a community or ecosystem is essential for developing a deep understanding of people,

places, and phenomena. There is an assumption that proximity yields authenticity and that immersion in local environments provides scholars with a richer, more nuanced understanding of the subject matter.



A. Diagram indicating an object's reflections in a 3-mirror kaleidoscope

B. Initial view in a kaleidoscope

C. View with 45-degree counterclockwise rotation.

D. View with 45-degree clockwise rotation.

Fig. 1 Illustration of how kaleidoscopic vision helps reorient perspectives. (A) Diagram illustrating how a three-mirror kaleidoscope reflects an object (here, a sunflower), (B) The object, when viewed through the kaleidoscope, appears as multiple reflections, offering new perspectives, (C) Rotating the kaleidoscope counterclockwise, and (D) Clockwise further transforms the image, demonstrating additional ways to reimagine the object.

The inability to access specific research sites – whether due to public health crises, geopolitical restrictions, or funding restrictions – leads to increased reliance on secondary knowledge sources, remote data collection methods, and creative ways of knowing an elusive subject. Scholars may rely more heavily on historical accounts, trust of existing collegial networks, or the testimony of others to inform understandings of the Eurasian Arctic. While these methods are valuable, they can also introduce a layer of abstraction that distances the researcher from the reality on the ground.

Reliance on secondary data can unintentionally perpetuate stereotypes or preconceived notions about particular places, particularly remote or marginalized regions like the Eurasian Arctic. Without direct, on-the-ground engagement, scholars may inadvertently project cultural or intellectual biases onto research, creating a gap

between findings and the lived experiences of the people and environments in a study. In the case of Russia, this distance can result in incomplete or skewed interpretations of the region's social, political, and environmental dynamics. While these approaches allow research to continue, they can introduce a degree of separation that makes it challenging to thoroughly capture the complex realities of the region.

This brief perusal of the cognitive and physical barriers to research in the Eurasian Arctic raises essential questions about how we conduct research. For cognitive barriers, how do scholars understand and interpret places and people when they have or develop ways of knowing and operating in a particular place where they cannot adapt to new circumstances? How can knowledge, free of bias or misinterpretation, continue to be shared amidst shifting circumstances? For physical barriers, how do scholars understand and interpret places and people when they cannot be there in person? Is physical presence always necessary, or can new methodologies compensate for this absence? We can start asking these questions to innovate in our changed region and field of study.

Applying new perspectives

As a career-long scholar of the post-Soviet Eurasian arctic and subarctic regions, I must now ask myself: how do I re-present the region and its peoples without the ability to be present? How does discursive formation assist me? How can I unfocus my view long enough to turn the kaleidoscope's tube to find new visions that help me see how to engage differently? Below, I share examples of how I have sought new perspectives as a journal editor, professor, and researcher. In all roles, I attempt to apply multiple perspectives in considering the Eurasian Arctic while maintaining ties with scholars from the region and in diaspora when crafting manuscripts, teaching students, and continuing my research.

As editor of a Polar Studies journal

As editor-in-chief for the *Polar Geography* journal, a venue for peer-reviewed scholarly literature about the polar regions, I work with my editorial board and potential authors to publish manuscripts that offer diverse perspectives on arctic and antarctic issues. While the journal claims a disciplinary leaning in its title, I interpret the scope and mission of the journal to include studies that are regional or comparative in focus, and that may use a broader range of conceptual frameworks to explain geographic phenomena, including but not limited to those from the discipline of geography and related fields, such as anthropology, Indigenous studies, climate and environmental studies, education studies, and some spatial sciences such as GIScience and remote sensing where the regional focus is clear alongside the technical focus. The regions that I consider to be "polar" include the Arctic and the Antarctic, and there are good

arguments to include other places related to these traditional polar places, such as the Subarctic, the Subantarctic, and the "third pole," the Himalayan region. An inclusive approach to considering what comprises polar geographies provides a broad vision for polar studies broadly and for this journal more specifically. In this approach, I encourage contributors to the journal to think outside their conceptual frameworks to see how their research fits into the larger mosaic of Arctic scholarship.

At the journal's inception in 1977, made possible with funding from the US National Science Foundation and the American Geographical Society, its mission was "to make important Soviet, Japanese, and West European research on the polar regions available in English" (Shabad 1977: 1). By the early 1990s, the mission and scope necessarily changed, as did the kinds of submissions rolling in. After a few rocky years in the post-Soviet period, the journal experienced a revival. It slowly regained footing as a venue for a respectable peer-reviewed regional scholarship, especially on the Arctic. When I began editorial work in 2015, I continued working with scholars writing from Russia to maintain continuity with the journal's history, ensuring that multiple voices were included in an Anglophone scholarly venue. It did not occur to me, then, that maintaining this authorship and readership would become vital to the continued inclusion of Russian perspectives on polar studies. Now, writing in 2025, I consider that providing these perspectives in an Anglophone, western peer-reviewed journal is critically important to maintain alongside others as we aim to keep any avenues of scholarly contact open.

Specifically, ensuring the multivocality of the journal is a goal that became important after March 2022 upon learning that some scholarly journals were turning Russia-based authors away from publishing simply because of their geographic location and affiliation with Russian institutions. I did not campaign openly to inform Russia-based scholars that *Polar Geography* could be a receptive venue. However, it has become known that this journal remains open to authors from Russia through my network of contacts. Taylor and Francis, the publishing house for the journal, seems supportive of my desire for inclusive authorship and, generally, is pleased with the continued growth and increased readership of the journal over time.

Overall, manuscript submissions have maintained the journal's usual broad regional and topical coverage, including research reports on tourism, indigeneity, policy, governance, sustainability, and rural and urban foci. However, two trends since 2022 stand out. First, the number of geopolitics and military security submissions has increased. An increased number of submissions attempt to discuss how Ukraine's war on Russia affects international relations among arctic countries and the broader international arena. Other geopolitical submissions focus on how a rising China may affect the Arctic, especially as Russia is not welcome as an arctic partner in the West. At the same time, the Northern Sea Route continues to develop. Still others are interested in predicting geopolitical futures, especially the military security of the American and European Arctics.

Second, the number of submissions from authors with Russian institutional affiliations has risen. These authors include returning and first-time authors (e.g., those not previously published in *Polar Geography).* Returning authors include Russia-based scholars who have participated in special issues with international colleagues and have learned about the journal as a potentially receptive publication venue. Some returning authors' institutional affiliations have changed from Russian to non-Russian institutions. First-time authors from Russia are increasingly connected to the same institutions as other researchers who have successfully published manuscripts in the journal. This suggests a growing internal network within these institutions, leading to greater awareness of the journal's openness to publications from Russia.

Increasing submissions do not correlate with increasing numbers of publications on geopolitics and military security or by authors with Russian institutional affiliations. There are distinct barriers to publication within each of these categories. For geopolitics and military security submissions, the editorial and double-blind peer review process has found that many incoming geopolitical and military security manuscripts from authors from multiple global locations are not based on scientific conceptual frameworks or in empirically grounded research. Instead, editors and reviewers understand these submissions as commentary and opinion and thus not suitable for publication in this venue because *Polar Geography* only publishes research articles, not commentary or review articles. This creates a barrier to authors from any locale hoping to publish commentary on the state of the Arctic after March 2022, and it may mean that data-rich, grounded studies of the effects of the war on the Arctic may take longer in preparation and publication than some think they should.

For authors with Russian institutional affiliation, the barriers to publication are different, yet some similarities exist. Again, due to the research orientation of the journal, many commentary and opinion-laden submissions from this locale have been halted during the peer review process. As a scholar who has actively worked in Russia and with Russian science documents for the past three decades, I understand that there are significant differences in how science is conducted, performed, and written in the Anglophone and Russophone traditions. Studies of Russian science culture in the post-Soviet period (Graham and Dezhina 2008), which are based on Soviet science traditions, suggest that a few factors are at play that affect writing styles and norms. For example, publishing updates to one's life work as one continued to conduct research was normalized, meaning that some publications by influential scientists may seem overall incomplete (to a Western-trained scientist expecting a fully developed research article), conceptually underdeveloped (when an operating framework is not re-explained), or opinionated (due to a lack of references or referencing expected in an Anglophone academic-journalistic style).

Additionally, a scientist's reputation or existing stature in an institution or the Russian Academy of Science may supersede the importance of the written content of some published works (Graham 1990) because the importance of reading a par-

ticular scholar's thoughts on anything is considered necessary while taking part in that intellectual community. Realistically, this means that manuscripts submitted by Russia-based authors often require intentional and intensive work by the editor and the associate editors for manuscripts to conform to science reporting standards in the Anglophone tradition. Editing of this nature takes a long time but slowly builds a transnational community of scholars working together, even if often anonymously, to create greater understanding of the multifaceted polar regions among different cultures and science traditions.

In these ways, editorial work becomes a curatorial process, where the goal is not just to present individual articles but to create a more extensive dialogue among multiple scholars about different ways of understanding the Arctic. With the assistance of a dedicated editorial board, the aim is to build a broad knowledge base about polar geographies as inclusively as possible while maintaining the scholarly standards of the journal. This goal aligns with a kaleidoscopic mode of thinking: to include many perspectives to reveal new modes of understanding. As readers engage with the journal's overall content – through the multiple conceptual frameworks, methodological approaches, research sites, and locations of authors – the kaleidoscopic way of knowing is visible and, in my view, essential for scholars to consider as we engage across multicultural and continually transforming polar regions.

As an educator of the Arctic, Russia, and Eurasia

I teach undergraduate students in a program focused on interdisciplinary study of the Russian language and Russian and Eurasian cultures at a four-year liberal arts university in the United States. First and foremost, my students have chosen to engage in the liberal arts mode of learning, which emphasizes maintaining breadth across disciplinary learning alongside gaining depth in one or two specific concentrations of knowledge. Secondary in this experience, chronologically, is the selection of a major concentration, such as in my Russian and Eurasian Studies Program. For a few common examples, many of my students majoring in Russian and Eurasian Studies also pursue majors in Political Science, International Relations, Psychology, Computer Science, or Art and Art History. I engage with students with multiple interests in small courses and well-attended extracurricular activities. I may encounter students in multiple courses or only once if they choose to take my course as an elective. To build interest in post-Soviet nations, a region of study whose departments and programs have experienced dramatic hollowing out across the US since 1991, I teach classes such as "Arctic Transformations" and "Human Rights in Russia and Eurasia" as if I have only three months to capture student attention regarding pressing issues for cultures, politics, and environments in Russia and Eurasia.

Kaleidoscopic thinking is integral to my pedagogy in this national and institutional setting. As a geographer with deep interdisciplinary experience and with stu-

dents who come to my courses with conceptual frameworks, theories, and methods learned in multiple disciplines, I encourage students to challenge the dominant narratives they have learned and explore alternative perspectives. This means different things to students from natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. For example, I ask political science and international relations majors focused on political theory and American security to consider how thick description of the region may challenge US myths about the Russian state. I ask history majors focused on authoritarian leadership trends over time to consider how a place-based approach may augment their understanding of how communities have interacted with historical figures and what that means for communities and places today. I ask an environmental studies major to question how governance systems (democratic, socialist, authoritarian) matter when implementing sustainability measures. These are only three examples, but this approach has proven particularly valuable in courses on the Arctic, Russia, and Eurasia, where cultural, political, and environmental issues may have been learned or understood in oversimplified ways or where regional specialists have not provided an initial knowledge base. Students leave these engagements with a greater understanding of the multifaceted nature of inquiry that regional study necessitates.

In another example, my approach to teaching human rights in Russian and Eurasian contexts is inherently interdisciplinary and cross-regional. Understanding human rights requires multiple perspectives and engagement with various issues for peoples and places across wildly varying historical and geographic settings. For example, students grapple with the development of human rights concepts and policies in the Soviet Union, which requires examining Tsarist and early Soviet development trajectories and policies, leading to legal and ethical studies on the treatment of different cultural and ethnic groups. From this history, students learn that ethnicity and nationality remain critical to ongoing issues, including land ownership, labor, gender rights, and many more. Providing undergraduate students with the conceptual tools to explore how human rights concerns are multiple and intersectional requires my awareness of how I might direct their multiple disciplinary knowledge bases as they arrive in my course from across campus. To my delight, I also learn a great deal from them as they explore a new region with ideas they bring from other disciplines.

By fostering intellectual agility in my students and asking them to remain open to multiple ways of knowing, I aim to prepare young minds to engage critically with complex regional and global issues. I encourage thinking about the what, *how*, and *why* of the research they encounter as we work towards intersectional, interdisciplinary, and cross-regional knowledge construction together. This operational mode helps get students with different knowledge backgrounds on the same (inter)disciplinary page. It leads to thoughtful class discussions, innovative research projects, and a deeper engagement with the subject matter – in addition to a more profound interest in and knowledge about Russia and Eurasia by students majoring in this topic and those engaging only briefly with it.

I admit to being frustrated when teaching my human rights and Arctic courses after March 2022. Emotionally, I remain upset about Russia's invasion of Ukraine and about my inability to access friends, colleagues, and places in Russia safely. I am heartbroken for individuals and communities across Ukraine and Russia. I am concerned about losing permanent access to places I have known intimately and fear losing the potential to know them further. In both courses, the year after the invasion, I noticed that I was delaying addressing Russia in lectures and discussions. I crafted syllabi that put deep engagement with Russia at the end of the courses – as if somehow that would give the current situation time to resolve itself, cool off, or return to "normal." In a conversation with another professor struggling to teach about Ukraine, we checked our emotions about Eurasian places together. We realized that our first emotions were sadness, anger, and impatience – at the invasion and its effect on Ukrainian people, at Putinist Russia, at the lack of news articles on anything but wartime atrocities and geopolitical speculation, at the lack of scholarship that points the way forward to new ways of engaging with either country or post-invasion sites situations. Together, we realized that we are trying to teach students who are fully aware of the current moment without scholarly literature that helps us understand how to engage intellectually in this exact moment.

As I became more conscious of my decisions to structure knowledge in particular ways and openly realized my emotional state about my chosen region of study, I was better able to think through what is required of intellectual engagement now, how to talk honestly about Russia, Ukraine, and other Eurasian places with students, and to provide them with better reasons for why we should maintain or increase their knowledge about them. Students not already studying the Russian language and the arts, cultures, histories, and politics of Russia and Eurasia are drawn to my program's courses because of their desire to be world citizens who have some knowledge of what is going on in the world around them, often with concern for the current moment. I see it as my duty to help them understand Russia and Eurasia in the 21st century, even when I may not like some actors' geopolitical and military actions in these places.

Moving forward with my teaching about Russia and Eurasia in the ongoing post-invasion context, I plan to be more aware of how my feelings affect how I choose my materials for a course and how I structure the introduction of knowledge about Russia. I will continue to ask myself if I am addressing Russia's engagement with other ethnicities and nations in ways that help explain historical legacies and current trajectories rather than providing commentary on the validity of ideas from Russia or any other sovereign group or nation in the Arctic or Eurasian contexts. The growing body of literature about decolonization in the post-Soviet context will be essential, especially using voices from within Russia that advocate *nichego o nas bez nas* (nothing about us without us) (e.g., Byford et al., 2024, Indigenous Russia n. d.). I aim to continue to help students understand that scholars in and of regions hold the keys to knowing places and peoples from within and that how we have accomplished this is

constantly changing but that the need for ongoing engagement across physical places and intellectual spheres is crucial in a newly complicated global order. Emphasizing the need to reimagine methodological engagements, at least in the short term, will be crucial since getting to the field is not advisable. Thinking like change-makers will likely produce exciting discussions about knowing places remotely, which could lead to new ways of incorporating more interdisciplinary and mixed methodological approaches into regional studies.

As a researcher of Russia and the North

My tenure as a student and scholar of Russia and Eurasia has been entirely within the post-Soviet period. I began to learn the Russian language and the literature, cultures, history, and geography of the Soviet Union in September 1991, which quickly morphed into studying the former Soviet Union by January 1992. My entire experience learning about and knowing Russia and Eurasia occurred during the post-Soviet period of relative openness from 1991-2022. In this luxuriously open period of access, I traveled personally and professionally on my own – without guides, academic assistance, or political oversight – to places that prior generations could not have accessed across Russia, into formerly closed urban and rural centers and peripheries, and local and regional centers of governance and economics. My language skills and knowledge of how to operate in this space as a foreigner increased. I met people from multiple walks of life in places where foreigners had not typically ventured. I encountered openness, hostility, curiosity, resentment, inclusion, and exclusion everywhere I visited Russia and Eurasia. As I moved from being a student through the 1990s and half of the 2000s into my current role as a professor and researcher of energy and urban systems and socio-ecological sustainability, particularly related to development in the Russian Far East and North, opportunities to work with local scholars in Russia and other locations continued to expand. My growing networks in Russia, with scholars in diaspora, and with regionally oriented scholars located across the world facilitated this.

While not unique in developing skills and research projects, my career trajectory suggests a path into Russia that may not exist for early career researchers now or into the near future. The privilege I had to navigate people, places, and phenomena in these first decades of the post-Soviet period ended in the post-invasion period. I face the reality that my path will now be considered one traveled by an older generation of scholars that no longer exists for the next generation. I could wallow in that, but I prefer a more proactive approach, instead asking what comes next for me, my research connections, and the students I train to examine the region.

Accessing the region is a viable option for only a few individuals who are able and determined to travel to Russia for research. Thinking pragmatically about how to adapt to changed research possibilities provides multiple paths forward. While I

lament the inaccessibility of Russian places, I am reconciled to the fact that traditional ethnographic or interview-based approaches are not viable. However, other ways of knowing and doing are possible, and it is up to our imagination and determination as scholars to determine what comes next in research.

I think we may come to understand that multiple methodological approaches can provide new kinds of insight and benefit us as we work to understand the Eurasian Arctic in this new era. Below, I consider three options for reimagining ways of knowing and performing research about the region related to reconfiguring our conceptual frameworks, empirical methods, and interdisciplinary inquiry.

Disrupted access to fieldwork has provided an opportunity rare in scholarship: the chance to reflect deeply on how we will continue to engage with our region of study. What have our responses to disruption been in personal and scholarly realms? How are they shaping the kinds of research that we consider pursuing? Should our responses stay the same or change as Russia's war on Ukraine continues? Should we continue to accept the reduced scholarly cooperation with and funding for the study of Russia that many nations uphold right now? If not, what could cooperation look like? What will scholars need to do in national and international venues for cooperation to re-emerge? Taking the opportunity to consider how these questions affect the short and long-term vitality of regional research is crucial right now, both to understand what effects the war is having on people and places in the region and to consider what disruption may mean for scholarship in the longer term.

Reframing our studies to consider how we might engage with new modes of knowing and caring for people in inaccessible places of ongoing transition may provide new methodological avenues for individual, team-based, and interdisciplinary research. We are not alone: other fields of inquiry also grapple with how to address the inaccessibility of field sites or introduce new research methods, and we should learn from and with them. For example, a gap analysis would provide insight into what, where, and how we have collectively studied the Eurasian Arctic and indicate what information we have yet to collect about peoples and places across the region. Data thus mined in such a reconnaissance-style gap analysis could then be analyzed for the feasibility of study and workshopped with scholars who specialize, for example, in remote data collection, digital ethnography, or virtual collaboration. Retooling our conceptual frameworks and research methods requires time, openness to exploring new ways of knowing and doing, and the humility to continue learning from other experts in cognate fields or from regional experts from other scholarly traditions.

One powerful way to retool what we do as scholars is to engage with mixed methods. The central tenet of the mixed methodological approach is that combining quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a fuller understanding of research concerns and complex situations or phenomena than either approach alone (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007). For proponents of this way of knowing (for example, see Mertens 2016), additional benefits of mixed methods research include the creation of a

holistic understanding by integrating different data types, triangulation to strengthen the validity of findings across methodological approaches, and addressing complex issues where one method may not capture all facets of a phenomenon. Diversifying our field of inquiry with mixed methods approaches and incorporating a more expansive range of ways to know the region may provide broader generalizability and contextualization for understanding its ongoing transitions.

Another powerful retooling asks scholars to consider how we might adjust to addressing critical issues in the region rather than focusing on the region itself as the object of study. Addressing critical concerns such as climate change, energy transitions, migration and diaspora, community health, or human security requires interdisciplinary teams of researchers who combine their multiple ways of knowing and doing to work towards solutions to problems. Many scholars of the Eurasian Arctic are either already interested in these concerns or working in teams to address them. By continuing to double down on this approach to research and figuring out how to make our teams truly interdisciplinary to include humanistic, social science, and natural science inquiry, then scholars of this region will be at the forefront of cutting-edge research that addresses critical issues in troubled times and places.

In my future research projects, I plan to ask: how can I employ interdisciplinary and mixed methods research to develop new strategies for engaging with people, places, and phenomena in the Eurasian Arctic that are only accessible remotely? What kinds of mixed methods designs will support me in conducting research that matters for the region and its peoples? What precautions can I take to ensure that any new research is constructive for people and places and does not introduce harm to them in this new era of regional engagement? How can I, from within Arctic, Russian, and Eurasian studies, help construct new theoretical and empirical modes of inquiry to reinforce and further the calls for New and Critical Area Studies (Houben 2017, Koch 2016, respectively)?

Kaleidoscopic thinking for reflection, vision, and interpretation

My work as an editor, educator, and researcher challenges me to maintain kaleidoscopic thinking and keep my approaches open to knowing about the Arctic, Russia, and Eurasia. The kaleidoscope metaphor highlights the importance of reflection, light, and vision in the physical operation of the kaleidoscope and the intellectual operation of scholarly work. The elements of knowledge about the Eurasian Arctic may remain constant, but the context through which we view them and how we combine them to understand them has changed since 2022. As an editor, professor, and researcher, I aim to generate informed, empathetic, and multifaceted understandings of the region's complexities. During this time, when access to traditional ways of doing is limited, fostering innovative thinking and flexible approaches becomes crucial for continued

insight, ensuring that multiple scholarly voices are known and leaving space for new interests to develop in this region. We will require time, institutional support, and new modes of inquiry for the continued success of Eurasian Arctic studies.

When confronted with new information or challenging situations, people often move through a series of emotional and intellectual stages. In the context of Russia's war on Ukraine, this process can begin with a shock from the immediate surprise or discomfort of encountering such a significant and disruptive event that challenges existing geopolitical norms and regional relations. This shock has continued to make it difficult to access reliable information as the conflict evolves. In my professional communities, I am watching a period of lament and anger follow the initial stage of shock as scholars mourn the loss of how to know a region and are upset by the needless pain and complexity of the post-invasion situation. Thinking kaleidoscopically about what we are experiencing can help us see our reactions as patterns. Just as patterns shift with the movement of the kaleidoscope, our patterns of thought change as the conflict continues. Our existing, static conceptual visions fracture, causing a reevaluation of established understandings and creating space for innovating new ones.

We must accept the fact that when Russia's invasion of Ukraine ends and the possibility of resuming closer engagement with people in our regions of study returns, we will likely not be returning to a Eurasia we have previously known in our personal lives or our research desires (see Sulyandziga 2024 – *eds.*). Post-invasion, Eurasia has already changed, with or without our scholarly involvement, and will continue to do so. Recognizing and accepting this is vital for individual scholarly trajectories and within our scholarly communities as we consider how to practice a new research paradigm in a shifted Eurasia. We must learn to embrace a diverse range of problems, concepts, and theories beyond the realm of our mainstream conceptual and methodological choices. We must engage with Foucault's ideas about discursive formation to see our object of study anew and develop new ways of engaging with people and places. In doing so, it is also imperative that we consider how to go about this with attention to the needs of communities and concerns in place to do as little harm as possible as local worlds continue to restructure after having been fractured, disrupted, and reconstituted. Truly cooperative engagement feels impossible right now, but if we do not plan for it and consider what it might be once it has arrived, we will not have thought deeply about what our changed world of engagements means for scholars, communities, or new socio-environmental realities.

Scholars of the Eurasian Arctic have needed to develop the ability to shift perspectives and adapt to new information quickly. By adapting to changed circumstances and ways of knowing, we can continue to produce relevant work. For scholars, adopting a kaleidoscopic approach can foster a more collaborative and dynamic research environment where diverse perspectives are valued and explored. In communities, particularly those affected by or involved in conflicts like the war in Ukraine, this

approach ensures that scholarly work reflects the lived realities of the people and places being studied. It may promote more responsive research grounded in a genuine understanding of local contexts and the broader geopolitical landscape instead of reflecting our preoccupation with our disciplinary theories and methods.

As an educator, this approach encourages our students to question dominant narratives and develop the intellectual agility needed to navigate an increasingly complex Eurasian region. The war on Ukraine exemplifies the need for students to become more flexible researchers and engaged and informed citizens who understand the multifaceted nature of regional-global conflicts.

The war on Ukraine necessitates a reexamination of geopolitical dynamics regionally and globally and requires new lenses to understand shifting social, economic, and cultural patterns in the region. If we reflect on our reactions and emotions, we can begin to see, with a new vision, the new perspectives before us. With a new vision, we may reshape our scholarly engagements and develop more nuanced interpretations of what is in front of us. As we innovate, we can actively create new knowledge with new perspectives for a new suite of realities. Kaleidoscopic thinking facilitates this process, encouraging scholars to embrace the discomfort of seeing new perspectives and engaging with new realities. Changing our view can catalyze intellectual growth and adaptation to the evolving situation.

Concluding thoughts

This chapter explores the importance of perspective in scholarly work, emphasizing the need to break free from cognitive biases and embrace intellectual flexibility. For example, in Eurasian Arctic studies, many scholars have long used ethnographic and community-based research methods, creating deep and long-term personal relationships in research sites as they work with and for communities to gather, share, and collaboratively produce nuanced data. However, the current inaccessibility of Russia for many researchers has highlighted the need to explore beyond normalized, established conceptual frameworks and research methodologies. Relying solely on traditional frameworks where direct fieldwork and open collaboration are the mainstay cannot work when circumstances no longer allow this interaction. By recognizing the limitations imposed by the current geopolitical situation and our cognitive biases for certain kinds of engagement with people and places, we can continue to innovate and generate valuable insights despite current barriers. The war underscores the importance of researchers' patience, flexibility, and willingness to explore new perspectives that do not rely solely on physical presence in the Eurasian North.

Being reflexive about our research is challenging. Nevertheless, we owe it to the communities that we work with to try, as the disruptions related to Russia's war on Ukraine are most poignant for them. Geopolitical and environmental factors are

rapidly changing Arctic, Russian, and Eurasian studies. As scholars, we must adapt our methodologies and perspectives to keep pace with these changes. Kaleidoscopic thinking offers a framework for reimagining scholarship in these fields, encouraging us to embrace reflexivity, interdisciplinarity, and potentially new collegial outreach to design new approaches to studying an object of study that is inaccessible and, in some ways, does not want or cannot afford our attention. By rethinking traditional research models and adopting more flexible, adaptive approaches, we can produce scholarship more responsive to the challenges of our study regions. We must ensure that our work reflects the realities of the people and environments we seek to understand to ensure intellectual rigor and ethical responsibility.

Future scholarly activity will require even greater intellectual flexibility as scholars grapple with long-term change for people and places in the Eurasian Arctic. Kaleidoscopic thinking offers a trope for navigating this complexity, reminding us that by integrating multiple perspectives, we can produce innovative work relevant to Eurasian challenges in a post-2022 world. After all, the need for new approaches to scholarship about our region is evident. As access to our sites of study changes, so do our ways of understanding it. Kaleidoscopic thinking is a metaphor for reorienting our intellectual lens, allowing us and reminding us to imagine new patterns and possibilities in the evolving landscape of research and human experience.

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Figure

1 Illustration of how kaleidoscopic vision helps reorient perspective. Kaleidoscope images created by the author using kaleidoscope24.com.