



Lead Author e-mail: justiina.dahl@eui.eu

Title: *Living a Laboratory Life at the Age of the Test?*

Justiina Dahl¹

¹*European University Institute*

In this paper, I look at the similarity and difference relationships embedded in the terminology used in some social and political scientific research on the current status of the Arctic in global politics. My claim is that the way some authors use the metaphors of “laboratory” and “microcosm” in relation to the Arctic reconstructs, at least to an extent, the assumption that the borders between social, technical and scientific are pre-given and static. I highlight through examples in current literature, and political discourse, how this assumption constitutes utopian discourses, understood as the expressions of social, technical and material desires for the unknown periphery, in regards to the Arctic in the popular media. As a consequence, I argue that there is a need to focus more on the interplay between science and technology with politics in the creation of horizons of expectation of what is perceived as possible and feasible in the Arctic in the future, and why. I am thus not interested in the organization of governance or conflicting border claims in the region as much as I seek to understand and explain how the governing elite’s perception of the North have changed from a place of gloom and doom to one of treasure and utility. In other words, how the horizons of expectations on what is perceived possible and what unimaginable have shifted within the contemporary Arctic states.