THE RUSSIAN NORTH IN CIRCUMPOLAR CONTEXT

Susan Crate
Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy,
George Mason University, 4400 University Drive, MSN 5F2,
Fairfax, Virginia 22030-4444

Mark Nuttall
Department of Anthropology, University of Alberta,
13-15 Tory Building, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2H4 Canada

Abstract: Russia is the world's largest Arctic country and since the break up of the Soviet Union has become an even more decidedly northern country, with almost all of its territories lying to the latitudes north of the conterminous United States. Although Russia shares similar concerns with its Arctic neighbors related to environmental change and sustainable development, the country is undergoing a geopolitical transition and is having to deal with environmental challenges not experienced elsewhere in the Arctic. Civil society is facing a traumatic transformation and the living conditions and rights of indigenous peoples in the Russian North and Far East are nowhere near the levels achieved in other Arctic nations. This article provides an introduction to the place of the Russian North within the context of the Circumpolar North, and sets the scene for the papers that follow in this special issue of *Polar Geography*.

INTERNATIONAL CIRCUMPOLAR COOPERATION AND RUSSIA

The early 21st century inhabitants, scientists, and researchers of the Circumpolar North[1] share a deep concern about the future viability of northern ecosystems and northern communities. Human impact in the Circumpolar North, until recently, has been both local and minimal. For millennia, northern cultures have thrived in their homelands, evolving rich cultural heritages and knowledge systems and depending on wild resources for their survival by hunting caribou and herding reindeer, hunting marine and terrestrial mammals, fishing the cold coastal Arctic waters, and gathering other resources from the land. Until recently, the developed industrialized societies have relied on temperate regions of the earth for resource exploitation. However, today there is growing pressure on northern natural resources, including gas, oil, diamonds, and fisheries for use in the south.

Exploitation of northern resources has resulted in environmental degradation of fragile northern ecosystems, loss of habitat for and biodiversity of plants and animals, and impacts on human cultures, including the loss of indigenous lifeways due to infringements on indigenous lands, subsistence resources, and knowledge systems and a compromised health and well-being. Similarly, global environmental issues, including climate change, transboundary pollutants, and ozone depletion are most

[1]The term Circumpolar North includes the arctic and subarctic areas (Nuttall, 1998, pp. 21-22).

Polar Geography, 2003, **27**, No. 2, pp. 85-96.
Copyright © 2003 by V. H. Winston & Son, Inc. All rights reserved.

poignantly affecting northern inhabitants and their environment. For the peoples who live there, the Arctic is increasingly perceived as both an environment at risk and an environment of risk (Nuttall, 1998, p. 170).

Although cooperation between the eight circumpolar countries—Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Denmark/Greenland, Russia, Canada, and the United States—had been evolving since the mid-20th century, many credit Mikhail Gorbachev's 1987 Murmansk speech, when he declared the North a "Zone of Peace," to have been the critical moment that brought circumpolar cooperation into full force. Since the late 1980s, the Arctic 8 have entered into cooperation on many levels to address their common problems, concerns, and challenges, most notably through the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (established in 1991) and Arctic Council (inaugurated in 1996), including issues related to: globalization and increasing pressure on northern resources; environmental impacts on the sensitive arctic ecosystem and global change; indigenous rights to lands, resources, and a healthy environment; and building locally sustainable economies (Nuttall and Callaghan, 2000). The Arctic Council allows for dialogue and collaboration between government officials, scientists, policy planners, and, crucially, Arctic residents. Six Arctic indigenous peoples' organizations have Permanent Participant status in the Council. Out of this dialogue, and out of the Circumpolar North, possibilities are emerging for a critical rethinking and reassessment of the concept of sustainability and the development of new approaches to biodiversity conservation and environmental protection. In the context of its northern counterparts, contemporary Russia faces some unique challenges due to its Soviet and post-Soviet legacy.

TRANSITION AND TRANSFORMATION OF A NORTHERN NATION

The fall of the Soviet Union resulted in an upheaval of what was meant by Russian homeland, a concept that went from encompassing the whole of the USSR or the *Sovetskaya rodina* to the albeit still expansive borders of the RSFSR. Demographically this redefinition was complicated by the fact that on the eve of the fall, one in seven ethnic Russians resided in the borderland (14 former Soviet) republics. Internally, Russia was a multi-ethnic homeland with one out of five inhabitants non-Russians (Smith, 1999, pp. 48-49). Simultaneously Russia faced both an identity crisis and a crisis of homeland. Post-Soviet policies from early on reflected the administration's commitment not to forget the 25 million compatriots in the borderlands by encouraging the "protection" of ethnic Russians in those states and earmarking funds for their humanitarian aid, as needed. At the same time, Moscow discouraged the "return migration" of ethnic Russians inhabiting the borderland republics, in an effort to avoid further economic decline within the Russian homeland itself.

Post-Soviet Russia has continued to be a multi-ethnic homeland as before. But what has transpired with Russians internally who, during the Soviet period, were assigned to work in outlying areas across Eurasia, and for our interests, in the Russian North, as experts, technicians, and administrators?

Russia, the largest country of the Arctic 8 and on the earth, spans eleven times zones across the circumpolar world. With the fall of the Soviet Union the North now occupies 69% of the Russian Federation (e.g., see Heleniak, 1999a, Table 1) as compared to 49% of the USSR. Today Russia is a decidedly northern country, with

almost all of its territories lying at latitudes north of the conterminous United States. Until the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian North accounted for an overwhelming share of the total population of the entire Circumpolar North—some 85% of the world's Arctic residents lived there, and Russia also accounted for a similar percentage of the Circumpolar North's non-indigenous residents (Knapp, 2000). In this same time period, the highest population density in the Arctic occurred in the Murmansk region, with 8 persons per square kilometer (Knapp, 2000).

The relatively dense population of the Soviet North attests to the prevalent development policies of the time that contrasted sharply with both those employed by other circumpolar countries and those amenable to a market economy. Characteristic of the USSR's northern development strategy was the establishment of massive urban centers with extensive supply networks to support in-migrating populations. Most newcomers were transient Slavophiles and their families, willing to stay just long enough to accumulate their "Northern" benefits, which were generous and included incentives for moving to, living in, and returning from the North.

With the shift from a centralized command to a decentralized market economy, the cost of such incentives were passed along to enterprises and local governments who, unable to pay them, either cancelled the benefits or left them unpaid. While some northern industrial pursuits were rendered unprofitable in the new market environment, many, especially those producing mineral resources competitive in world markets, have flourished with the opening of Russia to foreign trade. However, despite the economic success of these enterprises, most do not pay incentives mirroring the Soviet period "northern" benefits schema. This does not, however, deter most employees in the post-Soviet economic conditions who are, in most instances, grateful to be employed.

The aspect of this change from a Soviet-style northern development strategy to post-Soviet market-determined development that is of critical interest for our discussion is that, according to recent research and the results of the 2002 Russian census, since the last census in 1989, Russia's northern periphery has undergone a massive outmigration, averaging more than 14% of its Soviet period population, with half of all northern regions experiencing a 20% or greater drop (Hill and Gaddy, 2003, p. 119). Most significantly, two northern areas, Magadan and Chukotka, have lost over half of their Soviet-period inhabitants, 53 and 67 percent, respectively (Heleniak, 1999b, p. 3; 2002). This substantial outmigration trend is in part due to the Soviet-period northern development strategy that underpinned the economies of most northern regions being rendered unsustainable in the new market conditions, precipitated by Yel'tsin's "shock therapy" structural adjustment policies that liberalized prices, discontinued state subsidies and transfer payments, and, for northern inhabitants, meant the loss of northern benefits. Most who left were relatively younger, educated people who had the resources and initiative to leave. In their wake have remained many elders and those with less ability to go but who struggle to survive daily in a former land of bounty. Some specialists argue that the massive depopulation of the Russian North during economic transition is a positive trend that will move the area to a more sustainable population resembling its circumpolar counterparts (Lewis, 1999).

Although Russia shares similar concerns with its Arctic neighbors, it is undergoing a geopolitical transition not experienced elsewhere in the Arctic, and civil society is facing a traumatic transformation. In many ways Russia is left decidedly behind

in the circumpolar realm. Russia is the only post-Soviet country of the Arctic eight and bears a complex legacy related to the environmental and social impacts of both Sovietization (intensive collectivization and industrialization) and de-Sovietization (privatization and decentralization), generating issues further exacerbated in a contemporary context of prolonged economic decline and lack of an effective legal apparatus to enforce laws pertaining to environmental and human rights. Many citizen-led environmental movements pressing for even modest environmental controls to protect local environments, which gained momentum in the early post-Soviet period, were undermined in the late 1990s and early 2000s due to the continued lack of legal infrastructure that supports civilian suits and enforces existing environmental regulations. In some cases, citizen environmental movements were clearly co-opted by an elite interest group (Crate, 2002). Within this context of instability, uncertainty, and failing human and environmental rights, the Russian North assumes significance for the future of Russia, as one of its leading hard currency-earning regions and producer of some 20% of the country's gross domestic product.

Russia's complex legacy also has profound reverberations for the global ecosystem and its inhabitants. Northern ecosystems are inextricably linked through global weather patterns and movements of oceanic waters, predisposing all circumpolar countries and especially those adjacent to Russia to transboundary air and water pollution, underscoring Russia's environmental legacy as an urgent concern for its northern neighbors (e.g., Hønneland, 2003). International attention is focusing increasingly on the use of the Northern Sea Route, especially in the context of projected climate change, for international trade and commerce. The opening of the Northern Sea Route to international shipping (and so providing a shortcut between the Pacific and Atlantic) will be one of the most far-reaching developments for the global economy in the 21st century, with obvious economic advantages not only to Russia, but for many other countries. The Russian maritime Arctic will be firmly linked to the wider global economy and the development of its potential oil and gas reserves, especially along the Siberian coast, will attract tremendous international interest. As with the projected opening of Canada's Northwest Passage, a Northern Sea Route that is ice-free for a large part of the year will no doubt act as a catalyst for far-reaching change in the Arctic and sub-Arctic (Chaturvedi, 1996), although questions over the potential environmental, social and economic impacts of increased use by international shipping have not been addressed.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

In Russia, indigenous rights lag far behind the other seven Arctic countries' advances. Indigenous peoples of Russia continue to struggle with resource infringement and second class status, and with the fallout from both pre-and post-Soviet policies. During the Soviet period relocation policies removed indigenous peoples from their traditional livelihoods and homelands and collectivization radically changed customary land tenure (Fondahl, 1997). The coercive resettlement of indigenous peoples signaled the beginning of the erosion and undermining of the social and ecological relationships that characterized the subsistence lifestyles and cultures of indigenous peoples across the Russian North, from the Kola Peninsula to the Far East. The Soviet authorities effectively industrialized reindeer herding in some areas as a

way of facilitating the development of the North, and new settlements and industries in Siberia came to depend on reindeer herders to supply them with meat, yet the collapse of the Soviet Union effectively ended a largely subsidized market for reindeer meat (Gray, 2004). Although indigenous minorities of the Russian North were given certain rights and privileges under the Soviets, these rights have not always been recognized. Today, compared with the successful assertion of rights and the achievement of forms of self-government, land claims, and decision-making processes in Greenland, Canada, and Alaska, the most complex and unresolved issues relating to the autonomy and self-determination of the Arctic's indigenous peoples are to be found in Russia. Many indigenous groups in the Russian North maintain traditional practices such as reindeer herding, hunting, and fishing that involve the use of land and inland and coastal waters.

Gorbachev's policies of *perestroyka* and *glasnost'* ushered in a new era of possibilities for seeking political freedom and cultural revival for Russia's northern minorities after 1985. Concerned with the threats posed to both the cultural survival of indigenous peoples in the Russian North and to the natural environment, many indigenous groups played an active role in the formation of the Association of the Small Peoples of the North (now called the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, or RAIPON), an organization established to represent the rights and interests of Russia's indigenous peoples. Yet, the collapse of the Soviet Union has left the indigenous peoples of the Russian North in a vulnerable position and they face challenges to cultural and economic survival as great as when they experienced decades of repression under the Soviets. For reindeer herders, for example, the immediate post-Soviet period was characterized by confusion in deciding on herd ownership, land title, and migration routes, while the encroachment of industrial development has pushed reindeer herders onto smaller tracts of land and severely restricted migration routes. The difficult period of transition to a market economy in post-Soviet Russia has brought sharp changes to the social and economic conditions of Russia's Northern indigenous peoples. The collapse of the Soviet Union created opportunities for governments in some northern regions to assert control over a number of areas of public and economic concern, although recent trends indicate that the central government is attempting to reassert its power and authority over the Russian North.

Some of the most extensive and spectacular resource development in the Arctic is taking place in Russia, prompting international concern for the environment and for the future of Russian's northern peoples. Oil and gas are increasingly important exports for Russia, with the northern regions of the country producing something like 92% of Russia's oil and some 75% of its gas; the country has about 40% of the world's coniferous forests, with about 20% of the world's forested areas overall; western Siberia is a major region for Russia's chemical industry, for coal and iron ore mining, metallurgy and machine construction; and Russia extracts the largest quantities of minerals in the Arctic, such as nickel, copper, apatite, tin, diamonds, gold and platinum, mainly in the Kola region and Siberia (Nuttall, 1998).

Despite some recent and promising strides that have been taken toward environmental protection and habitat conservation, there is concern that resource development in Russia will override plans for habitat protection and further erode the hunting, herding, fishing, and gathering lifestyles of northern minorities. Environmental problems such as pollution and large-scale resource development place great strain on

the lands, resources, and societies of the Russian North. For example, vast areas of the Kola Peninsula have been damaged by sulfur dioxide discharges from the metal and mining industries in towns such as Monchegorsk and Zapolyarnyy, as well as possibly contributing to the destruction of Norwegian and Finnish forests, while nuclear reactors from decommissioned submarines waiting to be dismantled have attracted concern from the International Atomic Energy Agency. Elsewhere, reindeer pasture is under threat from deforestation, industrial pollution, and overgrazing (Vlassova, 2002). Lakes, rivers, and streams are polluted, land is expropriated by oil and gas companies, local economies have collapsed, and indigenous communities are afflicted by a disturbing range of health problems.

RUSSIA AND THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

Hope comes in the potential outcomes of Russian government action, cooperation among northern countries, and the building of strategic partnerships for sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic between Russia and its circumpolar neighbors, especially through the work of the Arctic Council and other regional initiatives (as well as NGOs and private foundations that have taken an active role in assisting Russia).[2]

Resolution No. 564 of the Government of the Russian Federation (27 July, 2001) established the Federal Target Program on the Economic and Social Development of the Small Indigenous Peoples of the North up to the Year 2011. The program aims to cover a number of issues, including restoration of the traditional economic lifestyles of the indigenous peoples of the North and the comprehensive development of economic activities on indigenous lands, while at the same time ensuring environmental preservation; promoting social rehabilitation and development of cultural heritage and enhancing indigenous participation in economic and social development; improving the quality of life of indigenous peoples and to encouraging investments and entrepreneurship and improving regional infrastructures and markets.

The European Commission's Second Northern Dimension Action Plan (SNDAP) emphasizes the need to pay particular attention to Russia, and the future of the Russian North is a key focus of the Northern Dimension of Canada's foreign policy, which asserts that a prosperous Russia is vital to the stability of the international system, and a sustainable and prosperous Russian North is vital to the stability of Russia. The Arctic Council Action Plan to Eliminate Pollution in the Arctic (ACAP), established as a follow-up to the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) to address identified sources of pollution, is sponsoring several projects directed toward Russia.

As a starting point for the research that will hopefully follow-on from the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), all ACIA chapter authors have identified research priorities that need to be addressed in the context of climate change in order to answer some of the compelling questions surrounding the uncertainties of climate variability and change. They have also identified large gaps in knowledge about the

---

[2]One of the best examples of this is the Bellona Foundation (www.bellona.no), which states one of the most important aspects of their work today is abating the nuclear waste threat in Norwegian waters. As their websites states, "The threat constituted by Russian nuclear waste deposits and discarded nuclear reactors is enormous. Bellona put the nuclear threat on the international agenda, and now we work with determination to get rid of it."

impacts of climate change in the Russian North, especially within the context of rapid social, cultural, and economic change. Issues dealing with the lives and livelihoods of Arctic residents are high on the Arctic Council's agenda, in contrast to the overt emphasis on the environment and wildlife conservation in the early days of Arctic cooperation in the 1990s. The Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR) has been identified as one effort offering possibilities for further cooperation. Together with ACIA, the AHDR is illustrative of the kinds of Arctic Council projects that are establishing baselines for the knowledge needed for the purposes of defining more specific projects in social and economic development.

As Russia prepares to assume the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council for two years from November 2004, the country has an unprecedented opportunity to build on Gorbachev's legacy and emerge as a leader in circumpolar cooperation. Russia should be prepared to move the circumpolar cooperation agenda to new levels that deal constructively with the increased pressures, challenges, and opportunities related to globalization, economic development, and environmental change throughout the Circumpolar North, especially by promoting the need for the Arctic states to formulate coherent policy strategies in response to Arctic Council projects that will strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Arctic Council as a high-level intergovernmental forum. Russia's lead in formulating the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP), under the auspices of the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG), presents real opportunities for decisive implementation of concrete sustainable development initiatives that will greatly improve the living conditions and economies of people throughout the Arctic. Expectations are high that the Arctic Council will act seriously on the policy recommendations resulting from the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, while other significant initiatives with important development policy implications, such as an assessment of potential impacts of oil and gas activities in the Arctic (a report that will build on and expand the AMAP assessment completed in 1997), will be developed during Russia's Chairmanship.

The Arctic Council has a significant opportunity to make a substantial contribution to the forthcoming fourth International Polar Year (IPY4) in 2007/08, and Russia's leadership will be crucial to how this contribution can be defined and implemented. The cultural diversity of the Arctic is at risk for a number of reasons, but largely from rapid societal and economic changes faced by Arctic residents that have profound implications for every aspect of their lives. Detailed empirical documentation of globalization trends and processes is severely lacking in the Arctic and understanding local-global connections would be a critically significant area for IPY activities. What are the consequences for the circumpolar North, for example, of the multiplicity of linkages and interconnections between the states, societies, and economies making up the modern world system? It would be particularly important for Russia to promote the human dimensions of IPY activities and to provide the means for the indigenous peoples and other residents of the Russian North to have an active involvement in both Russian and international Northern policy-making processes.

PEOPLES, ENVIRONMENTS, POLICIES

In an effort to investigate Russia's cultural, environmental, socio-economic, and political position within the eight circumpolar countries, from November 6–8, 2003,

we held a working conference entitled Russia in Global Context: Peoples, Environments, Policies at Miami University, Ohio.[3] The conference focused on three main lines of inquiry:

- What are the contemporary conditions and challenges for Russia's northern indigenous peoples and what generalizations can be made about those conditions and challenges in comparison with the same parameters across the circumpolar North?

- What are the contemporary policies for Russia's northern indigenous peoples, environmental degradation, and economic stabilization and what generalizations can be made about those policies in comparison with the same parameters across the circumpolar North?

- What role has Russia played in the last two decades of circumpolar cooperation, what has circumpolar cooperation meant for Russia's indigenous peoples and environmental issues, and in what ways and by what means can Russia's circumpolar cooperation be improved?

We invited papers from a wide range of disciplines (geography, anthropology, international studies, environmental science, sociology, economics, history, political science, etc.) that focused on Russia and/or other circumpolar countries. Eight young researchers came from Russia, Estonia, Canada, the UK and the United States to present their papers. Papers ranged in scope from local case studies (see Fig. 1 for locations) to regional analyses to international comparisons and covered a wide range of disciplinary and issue-related themes. Topics included the contested identities of northern "whites," metis populations, and Gulag survivors, local self-governance, international development schemes, the contemporary spaces and places of Evenk reindeer herders, and the plight of Russia's young science community This special issue of *Polar Geography* is dedicated to a selection of papers from the conference. Collectively, these papers offer ethnographic and theoretical insight into, and provide critical perspectives on, contemporary local conditions in Russia's vast northern and far eastern regions.

The papers by Craig Campbell and Aimar Ventsel give us rare insight into the local experiences of the post-Soviet Evenk of eastern Siberia. Both papers deal with a central element of post-Soviet Evenki life—for Campbell it is the transport system, for Ventsel it is the *obshchina*—both part of Evenki daily life and both rendered inadequate due to the structural reforms of the post-Soviet period.

Campbell illuminates how the post-Soviet landscape is dysfunctional, due to both an inoperative Soviet-period transport infrastructure and the reorganization of indigenous communities into centralized settlements. Campbell explores the contemporary resilience of Soviet Siberian landscapes with a focus on the experiences of both indigenous northerners and newcomers with mobility (both the ability and the inability to travel). Through his careful chronicling of the development and later demise of the

[3]Under the auspices of the Havighurst Third Annual Young Researchers' Conference, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.

Fig. 1. Russia and the Circumpolar North, including locations of case studies in this issue.

Evenki system of paths, Campbell reveals how the post-Soviet isolation and demobilization of indigenous communities is not due to a local peoples' inability to alter their situation or even to a local government's ability to effectively make change but rather to the remnants of Soviet-era settlements and their requisite infrastructures, "poorly suited to provide for the needs of remotely located rural peoples in the post-Soviet era." Although Campbell's research is specific to the Evenki Autonomous District in central Siberia, he draws on examples from other rural areas of the Russian North and the circumpolar Arctic which suffer not only from being geographically marginal, but which also tend to be areas that are theoretically marginalized in mainstream discourses on globalization.

Ventsel's paper dicusses how diverse views of "tradition" inform contemporary debates about how the revival of indigenous cultures could and should proceed in modern Russia. By focusing on local-level coping processes, Ventsel draws our attention to the diversity of ways that Evenki of northwestern Sakha are organizing their production activities in the post-Soviet context. Here we get a glimpse of the struggles and successes of local actors negotiating between remnant structures of the state farm and new emergent form of *obshchina* (clan-based communities), small enterprise systems, and family-based operations. Most notably Ventsel shows how the

obshchina, theoretically based on Evenki pre-Soviet clan-based organization, has lost a foothold in the contemporary market context.

Niobe Thompson reminds us of the impacts the collapse of the Soviet Union had on the non-indigenous population of the Russian Arctic and how they seek to make lives for themselves in places they call home and wish to continue living in. Framing his case study in the context of the post-Soviet development of indigenous claim to territory and resource rights, and during the first period of the elected "oligarch" Roman Abramovich's tenure as governor of Chukotka, Thompson argues that the abandoned colonial diaspora of Russia's Far North holds legitimate claims to local identities based on a strong sense of place and locality as every bit distinctive as the identities of indigenous people living in the same area. As settlers express more strongly localist discourses of belonging as a form of resistance to outsider-led change, they are moving into the rhetorical space indigenous peoples in Chukotka have traditionally inhabited. In this context Thompson describes the unrecognized non-indigenous northern inhabitants' sense of place, exploring the concepts of "migrancy" and "indigeneity" and the possibility of non-native settlers legitimating claims of nativeness. Thompson's paper also offers a description of the objectives and methods of Abramovich's reforms, the character of emerging patterns of settlement and economic activity resulting from Abramovich's project, and the ways in which local settlers understand these changes and their own role in the "new Chukotka."

Nelson Hancock explores the history of ethnic and cultural classification in Kamchatka through three examples of taxonomy, focusing on how different markers and signs of affiliation have been recorded and interpreted. In particular he considers the consequences of ethnic classification that have resulted, largely, from a 1991 decision to recognize the presence of Kamchadals as an ethnic group in Kamchatka Oblast and to allow them access to the benefits afforded to other northern indigenous peoples. Having spent virtually the entire Soviet period classified as "Russians," and therefore living outside the state structures that managed nationalities policies and distributed benefits to indigenous minority populations, Kamchadals were suddenly officially classified as "indigenous." One consequence of such an overwhelming change in ethnic classification was a new political problem for Kamchadals, namely: how to project an indigenous heritage based on the idea of a frontier creole community? How can Kamchadals possibly appear credible, asks Hancock, according to the norms of national identity, as a "mixed" group? Beyond Kamchatcka, Hancock's case study has relevance for understanding the implications that such regimes of classification have for both indigenous and mixed populations throughout the Russian North.

Reflecting on two case studies of civil society development in the Russian North, in Yakutia and Evenkia, Jonathan Murphy explores the theoretical foundations of the concepts of civil society and social capital, and examines how these concepts have been used in developing Western-funded democratization projects in Russia. Murphy argues that, while the nature and role of civil society and social capital in post-socialist states remains under-theorized, strategies to build civil society and expand social capital have assumed a dominant position in the democracy and governance strategies of Russia's major development aid partners, with considerable resources allocated to support civil society in Russia and the other former Soviet Union republics. Through an analysis of both empirical and theoretical material, Murphy argues that a model of civil society in the Russian North is emerging that places social capital within a

context of unequal power relations, a context that lacks the contemporary practices and structures that permit the discussion and resolution of conflicts over political and economic power. Murphy's central argument is that while theories of social capital are useful in understanding the problems of democratic transition in Russia, their applicability as models for democratization projects remains nonetheless limited unless they are incorporated within a robust theory and practice of democratic politics.

Despite the major hurdles that Russia faces in contrast to its circumpolar neighbors, there are grounds for optimism. The local studies in this volume and elsewhere show that indigenous inhabitants of northern Russia have adapted creatively to the conditions of the transition. Their biggest threats today are increasing infringement on and deterioration of local lands and resources by development interests. On some levels this challenge is being met. With the post-Soviet opening up to interaction with and information from the West and especially other circumpolar countries, many northern Russia indigenous groups are making some initial moves to secure property rights and institute self-determination. Many researchers working with Russia's indigenous peoples resolutely contend that it is only a matter of time before Russia's northern inhabitants realize similar levels of property rights, material compensation, and self-determination arrangements, as witnessed for example in Greenland and Nunavut. Key to this is involvement with the international community of indigenous groups, research initiatives, and governmental bodies elsewhere in the Circumpolar North who can facilitate the flow of ideas, experiences, and examples of native rights movements across international boundaries. The contributors of this volume, ourselves included, dedicate this special issue of *Polar Geography* to the larger effort in international cooperation and exchange of ideas, from the local to the global.

REFERENCES

Chaturvedi, Sanjay. *The Polar Regions: A Political Geography.* Chichester, UK: John Wiley and Sons, 1996.

Crate, Susan. "Co-option in Siberia: The case of diamonds and the Vilyuy Sakha," *Polar Geography*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 2002, pp. 289-307.

Fondahl, Gail. "Environmental degradation and indigenous land claims in Russia's North," in: Eric Alden Smith and Joan McCarter, eds., *Contested Arctic: Indigenous Peoples, Industrial States, and the Circumpolar Environment*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997, pp. 68-87.

Gray, Patty. "Chukotkan reindeer husbandry in the twentieth century: In the image of the Soviet economy," in: David G. Anderson and Mark Nuttall, eds., *Cultivating Arctic Landscapes: Knowing and Managing Animals in the Circumpolar North*. Oxford, UK: Berghahn, 2004, pp. 136-153.

Heleniak, Timothy. "Out-Migration and depopulation of the Russian North during the 1990s," *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 1999a, pp. 155-205.

Heleniak, Timothy. *Migration from The Russian North During the Transition Period*. Washington, DC: The World Bank, Social Protection Discussion Paper No. 9925, September 1999b.

Heleniak, Timothy. "The 2002 census in Russia: Preliminary results," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Vol. 44, No. 6, 2002, pp. 430-442.

Hill, Fiona and Clifford Gaddy. *The Siberian Curse: How Communist Planners Left Russia Out in the Cold.* Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003.

Hønneland, Geir. *Russia and the West: Environmental Co-operation and Conflict*. London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 2003.

Knapp, Gunnar. "The population of the circumpolar North," in: Mark Nuttall and Terry V. Callaghan, eds., *The Arctic: Environment, People, Policy.* New York, NY: Taylor and Francis, 2000, pp. 459-483.

Lewis, Maureen. 1999. "Foreword," in: Timothy Heleniak, *Migration from The Russian North during the Transition Period*. Washington, DC: The World Bank, Social Protection Discussion Paper No. 9925, September 1999.

Nuttall, Mark. *Protecting the Arctic: Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Survival*. New York, NY: Routledge-Harwood, 1998.

Nuttall, Mark and Terry V. Callaghan, eds. *The Arctic: Environment, People, Policy.* New York, NY: Taylor and Francis, 2000.

Smith, Graham. *The Post-Soviet States: Mapping the Politics of Transition*. London, UK: Arnold, 1999.

Vlassova, Tatiana K. "Human impacts on the tundra–taiga zone dynamics: The case of the Russian lesotundra," *Ambio*, Special Report 11, 2002, pp. 30-36.