

Relocation and Finding One's Roots: Ideologies, Ideas and Perceptions of Movement and Emplacement in the Russian Arctic

Florian Stammer

Moving large parts of the human population inside of the country was one among several officially recognised instruments for achieving development goals during the Soviet Union. Throughout the 20th century this has led to the Arctic's largest relocation project ever in geographical terms affecting more than 10 million people. Consequences of this project are addressed as a legacy of the Former Soviet Union by recent development policies for the Arctic as an increasingly important resource frontier of the earth. This presentation looks at the consequences of development caused relocation within the Russian Arctic among indigenous peoples and to/from the Russian Arctic by incomers. Basing on historical research, policy analysis, literature studies and anthropological fieldwork Soviet policies of strategic consolidation and sedentarisation of indigenous minorities and large-scale establishment of resource extraction towns are described. The consequences of the Soviet development induced northern settlement system are analysed as a model of integrated long-term care by a state not for its human rights record but its political and economic development ideology. This system only at first glance seems to contradict recent development initiatives such as strategic downscaling of 'Arctic surplus population' in Russia. Such a diachronic approach lets me to conclude that

- a) post Soviet Russia continues to see population movement as a valid policy instrument to pursue particular agendas for development
- c) relocation projects can lead to viable multicultural communities even in unknown, harsh and hostile environments, in spite of tremendous suffering and millions of victims.
- d) long distance relocated people have 'roots and wings at the same time', leading to 'place polygamy' and multiple place-based identities.