

Summary

The seminar “**Political Aspects of Indigenous Research and Activity in Russia**” was held in Moscow in April 18, 2008 (see **Introduction**). It had been attended by 40 persons, among them were representatives of the indigenous peoples and their organizations, scientists and specialists of the federal, regional and local governmental bodies (see **List of Participants**). According to the **Program** (see in **Russian** or **English**) the seminar started with the invited lecture «Problems of National Policy in Russia» delivered by well-known Russian anthropologist and expert on national issues Prof. Sergey Arutyunov. Speaker primarily introduced the concept of national policy as it is perceived in the contemporary Russian society and politics. He mentioned a new draft of the “Concept of National Policy” that is considered as a fundamental document for relevant activities, at the same time critically assessing the developments of the state in this field and a certain elitist approach to concept elaboration and discussion. His opinion on the draft Concept is very critical but at the same time Prof. Arutyunov tries to build up his evaluation from the position of the ‘constructive opposition’ that means proposing specific solutions of the existing problems and seeking the ways out of the conflicts permeated by cultural, ethnic and religious cleavages. In relation to indigenous peoples and their political organizations in Russia he described the Ainu movement in Japan as a model for progressive public education and self-development.

In his ably responses to the questions from the audience, Prof. Arutyunov acknowledged that the state of art of national policy-making in Russia remains highly deficient and there is a lack of comprehensive actions and visioning in this area. He described several regional conflicts, in particular in the Caucasus, all of them resulting in dramatic political inequality and poverty for indigenous minorities and local population.

Prof. Arutyunov proposed the following measures for improving national relations in the Russian regions – development of the horizontal regional ties and more extensive networking, retaining configuration of the ethnic and national regions and districts, capacity building for indigenous organizations and local administration, strengthening of the self-government, wider involvement of the indigenous peoples into the cultural and educational programs and studying successful models of indigenous governance and support in the Nordic countries, New Zealand and Canada (for full text of his lecture and seminar proceedings see **Transcript**).

These mentioned problems of the national and indigenous policy and various facts have been well reflected in the remarks and introductions of the indigenous representatives during the seminar – Mr. Fedor Habycha from Yamal-Nenets region, Mr. Chimit-Dorzhu Ondar from Tyva republic, Mr. Bair Baldanov from Buryatia republic, Dr. Rodion Sulyandziga from Primorsky kray and others.

In the second part of the seminar researchers from academic institutions (see **Program** in **Russian** or **English**) continued topical presentations. Prof. Yury Plyusnin from Higher School of Economics addressed inequalities in socio-economic development of the regions from the point of view of ethnosociology (see **Transcript**). He spoke about territorial polarization in Russia and the relevant consequences of this phenomenon for governance and administration. The presentation was based on the relevant case study in the Altai-Sayan region in 2001 and later research in Kemerovo, Chita, Krasnoyarsk, Perm and Primorsky regions that had generated 4 main outcomes. The first one relates to the significant divergence (polarization) of the population according to the ethnic origin in the majority of Russian regions. The second outcome presents a consequence of this process – the economic and political isolation primarily of the indigenous peoples and some aboriginal groups in the specific administrative region. Based on this outcome, progressive governmental and state policy shall be adopted to mitigate this isolation and to support local self-government. Finally, a set of interrelated tasks of the municipal, regional and federal administrations shall be different and specific for each of these levels, adequately responding to a real situation.

Yury Plyusnin is one of the supporters for theory of polarization that has been developed by Prof. Boris Rodoman in the Soviet geography. Rodoman’s paper titled “Russian Landscape as a Global Asset” (see **Papers and Presentations**) deals with the project of changing and expanding Russia’s political profile to serve as a supplier of natural resources and conditions needed for the survival of the human civilization. He argues that the main riches of Russia are not individual mineral ore

deposits or specific wild animal and plant resources but the entire natural landscape or, better, whole set of natural components of the national cultural landscape. The state economy should be aimed primarily at the sustaining this landscape as a most important fragment of the biosphere, and its non-destructive and regulated consumption should service the global spiritual, informational and material needs. This paper by leading Russian scholar, put at the borderline between a public debate and a science fiction, is a sample of modeling in the sphere of spatial planning and global research.

It is necessary to mention that theoretical constructions and explanations of this type are yet to be perceived or accepted by the public. This has been vividly demonstrated by the seminar discussion that followed the Prof. Plusnin's presentation – many indigenous representatives strongly opposed the idea of increased self-reliance and autonomy from the state in the remote local municipalities.

In the paper by Dr. Vera Smorchkova from Russian Academy of Governmental Service under RF President (see **Papers and Presentations**) the eight-year experience of education of governmental staff for northern regions in Russia revealed still very low involvement of indigenous persons into the management and administration staff. This legacy is to be eliminated by joint efforts of the state and non-state actors, introduction of new educational methods for establishing common international educational policy in the Circumpolar North. This policy should be aimed at good governance, solution of social, ecological and ethno-confessional problems and cooperation in the field of sustainable economic development. The resourceful partner for attaining this objective is an integrated regional initiative in the form of new institutions – intergovernmental Arctic Council, Euro-Arctic Barents Council, interregional organization of the Northern Forum. Dr. Smorchkova's paper describes the specific educational program, its goal, objectives and methods of instruction.

Presentation by Dr. Natalya Novikova from Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology under the Russian Academy of Sciences (see **Transcript**) contains another – legal – approach to the research on interrelations between the power and aboriginal population. Her critique of the governmental policy towards indigenous communities is based on the multi-year studies in the Khanty-Mansi autonomous region in Siberia. In this region over 500 indigenous communities got legal agreements with the oil extracting companies, and majority of them have negotiated with the Lukoil company. The regional authorities are most active in Russia in supporting native communities by regional laws and regulations for economic incentives and compensations. At the same time, these agreements still are to be improved because they do not take into consideration the level of environmental safety that is critical for natural resources reproduction and the subsistence economy. The problem of traditional land use transcends from the legal to the ethical sphere due to the fact that indigenous peoples are the sole guardians of the territories that have the global resource significance. Another important deficiency exists in the corporate law – in addition to the written rules there exist customary laws that are not verbalized but should be operationalized for peaceful co-existence of company workers and aborigines in the field. International cooperation in this area is very helpful, for example, Lukoil have signed the agreement with the world professional union of oil workers to apply international standards of operation in the field in case of lack or inadequate local or national legislation.

These issues of international and Russian standards and requirements and impact of the project development upon local communities have been further discussed in the presentation by Dr. Pavel Filin (see **Papers and Presentations**) from the Ecoline Center. This organization and its experts have a vast experience in organizing the environmental and social impact assessment according to the international standards for investment projects in the Russian regions. Dr. Filin spoke about the contemporary legislation in Russia, its application for approval and implementation of the investment projects and their consequences for indigenous peoples. He critically assessed the attempt to introduce the ethnological expertise into the standard procedure of environmental impact assessment (EIA). In his opinion, the evaluation of the project impact and public discussions could be effectively organized both within the national legislation and under the existing international standards. Though legislation in Russia is being recently extensively modified and the EIA is not compulsory procedure anymore there is a challenge to combine different assessment procedures under the united state agency for expertise under the Russian Ministry for Construction (Rosstroy). New regulations rely on a newly established institute for technological assessments and expertise where ethnological aspects in the social impact assessment could be further incorporated. Dr. Filin expressed also the need for

more open process and wider discussion of these new procedures to be introduced. It is in the practice of the international companies to discuss the future projects, first, with the governments and second, with the local population and communities. Without involvement of all stakeholders in the land, the project has much higher risk to fail or raise grave conflicts that are more difficult to settle at later stages of the project implementation. The World Bank standard No.7 “Indigenous population” deals with such formalities, as public consultations, local involvement, compensation, indigenous development plans etc. and its requirements are compulsory for all clients of the Bank. Speaking on the issues of indigenous involvement, Dr. Filin also stressed that his practice revealed high sensitivity of the segregation in local communities between the indigenous and non-indigenous population in case of compensation measures. The latter always provokes social conflict between the locals who have the similar problems in everyday life, but are divided into those who are subject to compensation (indigenous persons) and those who are equally affected but excluded from this process. As a remedy, he proposed to replace the indigenous development plans with more inclusive community development plans.

Dr. Svetlana Dolmatova (see **Papers and Presentations**) from the Academic Institute of World Economy and International Relations had reflected on the profound changes in the international system after the Cold War and emerging new economic and ecological threats – unsustainable development, depletion of natural resources and global warming. Globalization of the international political economy has thus far failed to spread economic growth evenly and incorporate poor societies into the world market as has been projected in early perestroika period. Negative tendencies and conflicts that have appeared suggest new and dangerous social and environmental dynamics in the international system. In Dr. Dolmatova’ opinion, these phenomena are evidences that idea of permanent economic growth as a basis for global development model is not sustainable. She suggests that reversion of the early environmental ideas into political slogans and later, instruments, have had completely transformed their contents and will inevitably mislead in direction to the initial goal. The anti-globalist movement builds up on the serious critique of the neo-liberal economic policy that was accompanied by search for conflict resolution and new models of development. The indigenous peoples might have an important knowledge and voice in conceptualizing such models. In Latin America, for instance, recent political developments in a number of states have demonstrated the role of indigenous identity politics in restructuring states and their economies. The main reason for negative tendencies in the world development is a limited ecological capacity of the planet, so if the mankind would return to the ideas of World conference in Rio-de-Janeiro in 1992, and introduce the then adopted ideology of sustainable development into legal sphere, this would lead to resolution of the conflict between conservation and development, integrate alternative and mainstream development models, and pave the one-way road to the greener future in the world.

Similar arguments have been offered by Dr. Vladimir Lagutov (see **Papers and Presentations**) in his paper “Lifestyle is a Basis for Sustainable Development” where Russian Cossacks living in the Don river basin through self-government are to return to the traditional model of rigid control over the territory and its resources thus implementing the river basin management model and protecting the wild sturgeon species reproduction.

Importance of the traditional cultures and historical and religious connections with the adjacent peoples, including indigenous groups, is the topic of the paper submitted by Dr. Bair Gomboev from Buryatia republic (see **Papers and Presentations**). He presents his ethnological research on the interrelations between the culture and lands in the Baikal lake region. Buryat-mongol tribes and clans escaping to this region from the Chinese territories in medieval time have settled in the areas where indigenous Ket and Samodian peoples lived, the consequences of these outmigrations were exchanges in religious and land use practices, new traditions and rituals, and extremely rich and saturated cults of natural objects. Cult places and sacred sites are abundant in the vicinity of the Sayan mountains. This spiritual heritage deserves meticulous preservation both at the local, regional and federal level through the system of protected areas, established heritage sites and support of the ethnic cultural traditions.

This topic is continued in the paper by Dr. Marina Kuleshova, who provides an overview of the strategies of the sacred sites preservation at the international level. Her paper “Sacred Cultural Landscapes in the context of Seville Strategy for Biosphere Reserves” (see **Papers and Presentations**) reveals a very limited number (only 9 sites) of sacred cultural landscapes that are formally registered as the World Heritage Sites (644 total). Through analysis of the context of brief descriptions in the World Heritage nominations Dr. Kuleshova concludes that the real number of these objects could be much higher (over 60). It is important to note that some of these sacred landscapes are usually presented as ethnographic cultural sites. Seville Strategy for Biosphere reserves and UNESCO/IUCN Working Guidelines for the conservation and management of Sacred Natural Sites are good instruments for establishing new areas with the preservation of sacred cultural landscapes. In Russia the perspectives of the wider network for protection of the sacred sites and cultural landscapes are connected with the establishing traditional land use areas at the territories where indigenous peoples live.

Another analysis relating to indigenous peoples is presented in the paper by Dmitry Tulupov, a student from St. Petersburg University (see **Papers and Presentations**). He examines development of two self-governing entities — Greenland and Faroe islands in four aspects (geopolitical, military, ecological and geological) and concludes that these regions have both the necessary prerequisites for sustainable development and growing ambitions for becoming independent from Denmark. However, political evolution of these territories is hindered by lack of the substantive institutional basis for the effective public administration and resource management.

Seminar continued in the Round Table led by Dr. Rodion Sulyandziga from the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON). He introduced speakers from this non-governmental organization and moderated discussion among the participants.

Dmitry Berezhkov from Kamchatka (see **Transcript**) spoke on the problems of competence and responsibility of the researchers who work in the indigenous communities and consult the investment projects and authorities on the future spatial development in the regions. Another problem in his opinion is that older generation of scientists at present has neither incentives, nor interest to attract younger people, in particular indigenous youth into applied research. The lowering prestige and funding of fundamental scientific studies in the country lead to relocation of the most promising scholars abroad. In addition, Federal Target Program on social and economic development of the small numbered indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East in the Russian Federation, implemented by the Ministry of Regional Development ceases to be funded at the federal level and would be transformed into regional subventions in 2009. In opinion of Mr. Berezhkov, the concept of this program has been elaborated by scientists who neglected the consultancy with the indigenous peoples’ organizations in Russia. Due to this lack of coordination state policy towards indigenous peoples and their communities is seriously degrading.

Olga Murashko from the RAIPON Informational Center in Moscow presented the methodology of the traditional knowledge documentation realized in the project “Establishing Website and Collection of Information on Traditional Land Use in Nenets Autonomous Region” (see **Transcript**). This International Polar Year project has been initiated by the Nenets Manzara Association and funded by the Polar Institute in Norway (Project Leader Dr. Winfried Dahlmann). The most valuable feature of this methodology is that it’s instruction and approbation take only a short time and methodology is easy for demonstration and introduction. The methodology is published by the project in the book in Russian language. By the end of 2008 total 120 interviews are to be recorded and processed. The map compiled on the basis of the interviews incorporates data from 5 indigenous communities, this map could be integrated into the Google Earth global system.

Mikhail Todyshev from Kemerovo region, who serves in one of the committees under the Council of Federation, spoke on juridical collisions relating to the modification of the whole corpus of Russian legislation adopted for legalizing market economy in the country (see **Transcript**). First and foremost he is concerned about recently prohibited free use of the traditional lands – an inalienable right of indigenous peoples in the country during last centuries. Most strikingly, no one deputy in the State

Duma, except the one, originating from the Murmansk region with indigenous Saami population, was voting against this action or raised any concerns about this issue. This is the evidence that indigenous affairs are not yet in the public domain and interest. Another consequence of the legal modifications is the loss of right to allocate quotas for indigenous representation in the high-level power bodies. Only three regions encouraged the introduction of quotas for indigenous deputies – the Yamal-Nenets, Khanty-Mansi and Sakhalin regions. Mr. Todyshev informed that there is no one representative from 41 indigenous northern nations in the State Duma, the highest national decision-making body. He also noted that in Soviet period and in early perestroika (1989 –1995) there were from 5 to 12 indigenous representatives in the relevant highest power organs in each round of elections, but since 1999 none indigenous deputies were elected into the national parliament.

At the finale of the discussion, Tamara Semenova, Doctoral Student from the Helsinki University, made an overview of the two chapters from the newly published book by Lennard Sillanpaa “Indigenous peoples in Siberia: from Marginalization to Self-determination” (see **Transcript**). Her paper in English is also included into the publications of the seminar (see **Papers and Presentations**).

Dr. Sergey Haruchi, the President of the RAIPON in his conclusion remarks (see **Transcript**) expressed strong aspirations for expanding applied research on indigenous issues and, in particular, for enhancing responsibility of the scientists to bring in the outcomes of their field research to the local communities. The latter should benefit from the scientific knowledge and practice, while research results should make a way into practical activities of the authorities, self-government and public organizations.

This joint seminar was one of the first of its kind in joint research and analysis of the state of indigenous affairs in Russia, its main objective was to stimulate academic exchange between Russian scholars and the international project community as well as involve indigenous peoples’ organizations and activists into the dialogue on political aspects of indigenous research and activities in Russia. Besides encouraging a strong regional presence, the seminar was also an opportunity for the participation of younger generation of indigenous researchers.

Invitation to submit papers for publication and check the transcript of the seminar has been disseminated among all participants and also emailed to those scientists that have been invited but due to various reasons were not able to attend the meeting. This network (see **Network List in Russian or English**) is established for further cooperation on the relevant issues and it will be updated on future activities after the INDIPO project finalization.