

**A dissertation submitted to the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy of  
Central European University in part fulfillment of the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Articulations of Indigeneity in Two Mining  
Regions of Russia: A Comparative Case Study  
of Karelia and Buriatia**

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**July, 2019**

**Budapest**

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Anna VARFOLOMEEVA

# THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

## **ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION** submitted by:

Anna VARFOLOMEEVA for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and entitled:

*Articulations of Indigeneity in Two Mining Regions of Russia: A Comparative Case Study of Karelia and Buriatia*

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The aim of this dissertation is to analyze the constructions of indigenous identity in relation to resource extraction in two regions of Russia. The research concentrates on two case studies: Veps in Karelia (Northwestern Russia) and Soicts in Buriatia (South-Central Siberia). Both indigenous minorities have historical ties with mining industry including diabase and quartzite in Karelia and graphite and jade in Buriatia. The changes of post-Soviet period such as the closure of state mining enterprises in Karelia and the boost of industrial development, including informal mining, in Buriatia had impact on the articulations of indigeneity in both case studies.

The dissertation's theoretical framework includes Michel Foucault's works on power/knowledge and Tim Ingold's notions of dwelling and lines' entanglement. The research is based on ethnographic fieldwork in Karelia (Prionezhskii district and Petrozavodsk) and Buriatia (Okinskii district and Ulan-Ude) in 2015 - 2018. The main research methods include participant observation and semi-structured interviews with local residents, indigenous activists, administration representatives and mining workers. Besides, the research involves document analysis of local and regional newspapers of Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

The dissertation shows that indigenous status recognition in post-Soviet Karelia and Buriatia is closely connected to having larger control over land and resources. To retain this control, community members need to construct their indigenous identities in the firm terms defined by Russian law. At the same time, local connections to land and resources in Karelia and Buriatia influence the character of indigenous claims and question the established state narratives, e.g. through engagement in informal mining activities. Strong ties of Veps with the stoneworking industry, as well as the sacrality of landscape in Soiot and Oka Buriat culture influence the formation of *resource identities* which are based on local resources and become an additional resource themselves.

The research demonstrates that the relations between indigenous communities and mining may go beyond the established dichotomies of “traditional” versus “industrial” or “indigenous person” versus “mining worker.” The dissertation produces a thorough analysis of the links between the construction of resource and the construction of indigenous subject. It contributes to the general scope of studies focusing on indigenous peoples and extractive businesses in the post-Soviet space. It is envisaged that the research will contribute to the practices of negotiations between indigenous residents and extractive industries in Russia.

**Keywords:** indigeneity, subjectivity, resource symbolism, human – resource relations, stone extraction, rootedness, power, informality, Russia, Veps, Soiets, Karelia, Buriatia

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## **List of Buriat words used in the dissertation with English translations**

*Aimag* - administrative subdivision equal to district

*Datsan* – Buddhist monastery

*Dugan* - Buddhist temple building

*Lama* – Tibetan Buddhism teacher or Buddhist monk

*Niutag* - Motherland

*Oboo* – sacred stone heaps used as altars or shrines

*Somon* – local council

*Tengri* - he names for the primary chief deity

*Toonto* – place of birth, place of origin

*Uliger* – general term given to tales and popular myths of the Mongols and Buriats of north-east Asia.

## List of Veps words used in the dissertation with English translations

*Čuurkivi* – rotted rock which was believed to have healing power

*D'umal (Jumal)* – God

*Ižand* - master

*Jured* - roots

*Kodima* – homeland

*Kodiraindaine* – home shore, homeland

*Maižand* – Earth master

*Mechine* – forest master

*Paginklub* – Speaking club of Veps language

*Randaine* - shore

*Ristkivi* – Cross stone, sacred stone used for worships among Veps in Leningrad region

*Vedehine* – water master/spirit of water

### Notes on Transliteration and Translation

The transliteration of words in Russian follows a simplified Library of Congress transliteration system in most instances. I have made exceptions for the names of the regions commonly used in English under a different spelling such as *Karelia* (instead of *Kareliia*) and *Buriatia* (instead of *Buriatiia*). Another version of the latter, *Buryatia*, is also often used in English-language academic literature. However, I have decided to choose a version which is closer to the Library of Congress system. All translations into English from Russian and Vepsian languages are my own. Throughout the dissertation, I use “B” to refer to the words in Buriat language, “R” for Russian-language words, and “V” for Vepsian-language words.

## Russian Transliteration (Library of Congress system)

<i>Vernacular</i>	<i>Romanization</i>	<i>Vernacular</i>	<i>Romanization</i>
<i>Upper case letters</i>		<i>Lower case letters</i>	
А	A	а	a
Б	B	б	b
В	V	в	v
Г	G	г	g
Д	D	д	d
Е	E	е	e
Ё	Ë	ё	ë
Ж	Zh	ж	zh
З	Z	з	z
И	I	и	i
Й	Ĭ	й	ĭ
К	K	к	k
Л	L	л	l
М	M	м	m
Н	N	н	n
О	O	о	o
П	P	п	p
Р	R	р	r
С	S	с	s
Т	T	т	t
У	U	у	u
Ф	F	ф	f
Х	Kh	х	kh
Ц	ṬṢ	ц	ṭṣ
Ч	Ch	ч	ch
Ш	Sh	ш	sh
Щ	Shch	щ	shch
Ъ	" (hard sign)	ъ	" (hard sign)
Ы	Y	ы	y
Ь	' (soft sign)	ь	' (soft sign)
Э	ĪĒ	э	īē
О	Ë	э	ë

<i>Vernacular</i>	<i>Romanization</i>
<i>Upper case letters</i>	
Ю	IU
Я	IA

<i>Vernacular</i>	<i>Romanization</i>
<i>Lower case letters</i>	
ю	iu
я	ia

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## Introduction

“They may say that the stone for Napoleon’s tomb came from Finland, but this is our, Karelian stone!” Viktor, a former mining worker, said emotionally as we were sitting on the porch of his house in Rybreka village watching Lake Onega, “I would recognize this stone anywhere.” This dissertation analyzes how local connections to decorative stones are formed, promoted or disrupted, and how these connections ultimately influence the articulation of indigenous claims in two Russian regions, Karelia (North-West of Russia) and Buriatia (South-Central Siberia). The research is based on the case studies of two ethnic minorities, Veps in Karelia and Soicts in Buriatia.<sup>1</sup>

Both in Karelia and Buriatia, the establishment of indigenous subjectivities has been a long process which was severely influenced by the changing nature of state policies. In the meantime, there has been the stone. In different time periods, the rare stones extracted in Karelia and Buriatia played a vital role in the formation of local identities. Today, the constant presence of the stone in Prionezhskii district<sup>2</sup> of Karelia and its seeming absence in Okinskii district of Buriatia signify its importance in the lives of local residents. My dissertation focuses on the changing and evolving nature of indigenous claims which are formed under the influence of dominant state narratives, while at the same time questioning these narratives. It demonstrates how the indigenous identities of Veps in Karelia and Soicts in Buriatia were constructed under the influence of mining development and in direct interaction with the stone extracted in their territories.

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<sup>1</sup> There are also alternative spellings of these ethnicities in English-language academic texts: Vepses (Vepsians) and Soyots.

<sup>2</sup> In this dissertation I use “district” as a translation for Russian *raion* (administrative and municipal division of a federal subject in the Russian Federation). I use “region” as a translation for *oblast’* or *krai* and Republic for *respublika* (types of federal subjects in the Russian Federation).

## Problem statement

As Stuart Hall (1990: 225) notes, “Identities come from somewhere, have histories. But far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subjects to the continuous “play” of history, culture and power... Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.” Hall refers to specific circumstances which in their interplay may (or may not) influence the shaping of indigenous identities as articulations (Grossberg, 1986). Drawing on Hall’s articulations theory, Tania Murray Li (2000) argues that indigenous self-identification is neither natural and inevitable nor simply constructed; it is rather “positioning which draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes or repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle.”

The articulations of indigenous identity often reflect the general relations of power in the wider society. Within the dominant narratives on indigeneity, which date back to colonial practices and the Enlightenment’s concept of “noble savage” (Ellingson, 2001; Rowland, 2004), the relations between indigenous peoples and extractive industries are presented through oppositions such as “traditional activities” vs. “mining development” or “indigenous person” vs. “industrial worker”. However, as a number of studies demonstrate, these established dichotomies could be rethought. Indigenous groups may have been involved in resource extraction in the past (Franklin & Badone, 1981; Pringle, 1997; Cameron, 2011; Cooper, 2011). Industrial workers do not simply conquer wild nature but become emotionally attached to it (Bolotova, 2012; Bolotova & Stammeler, 2010; Saxinger, 2015). Reindeer herders may be employed by the oil industry and therefore become industrial workers navigating between the pasture and the oil company (Dudeck, 2008).

Although established power relations are often questioned, indigenous communities, while trying to establish their subjectivities, are still governed by the discourses of the state or extractive businesses (or a combination of both, as Natalia Novikova (2014) demonstrates in her study of *oilism*). In Russia, due to its strong legacy of state's superiority and the vagueness of current legislation, cases of indigenous open resistance against extractive businesses are rare (Stammler, 2011). As Brian Donahoe (2011) notes, Russian indigenous groups in most cases accept the external definitions and categories which are used to construct their social identities. The current position of indigenous minorities in Russia is grounded in Soviet ethnopolitical processes and Soviet ethnographic practices focusing on pronounced progressivism (Slezkine, 1994). Soviet ethnography was a part of the state modernization project and the processes of industrialization and social transformation of the ethnic minorities of the Russian North, Siberia and the Far East (Vladimirova, 2011). As contemporary Russian society is largely defined by its Soviet past (Etkind, 2014), state paternalist visions of ethnic minorities still prevail (Sokolovskiy, 2013). As a result, Russian indigenous minorities incorporate the state's vision of indigeneity and accept the pre-defined notions and concepts related to it. Their protests mostly take silent forms: from changing mobility patterns (Dudeck, 2012) to suicide as an act of ultimate resistance (Stammler, 2011).

However, as this dissertation argues, the emergence of indigenous subjects is not simply constructed by the state or extractive businesses. This process is driven by indigenous historical experiences and the specificities of their landscape. Local interactions with nonhuman actors and traditional occupations, including stoneworking, may act as micro-powers questioning the widespread state narratives. Therefore, articulations of indigeneity in Russia become processes of constant re-negotiation between state institutions and community representatives. This research focuses on the processes of negotiation over indigenous status and local connections to land and resources in two ethnic communities in Russia.

The case studies which are at the focus of my research are different in terms of geographical location (see Figures 1 & 2) and traditional occupations. However, they also have a lot in common. Both reside in territories rich with rare precious minerals (diabase and quartzite in Karelia, graphite and jade in Buriatia). Both Veps and Sojots received indigenous status in the same year – 2000 – after campaigns initiated by indigenous leaders and activists in the 1990s. In both case studies, the stoneworking history of the regions influenced the character of indigenous campaigns. The articulations of indigeneity in Karelia and Buriatia reflected complex local attitudes towards the state which is viewed at the same time as a potentially disruptive force and as a source of stability and protection. While accepting state-promoted notions of indigeneity, the local communities in Prionezhskii district of Karelia and Okinskii district of Buriatia simultaneously question and challenge them. Whereas open confrontations with the state are almost non-existent, local communities find multiple ways to silently question its power: from asserting local historical connections to stoneworking to engaging in informal stone extraction.

This research produces a thorough analysis of the links between the construction of resource and the construction of indigenous subject. The existing research on Russian environmental history often focuses on large-scale “conquering nature” initiatives, and there is a need for more nuanced in-depth studies (Bruno, 2007; Moon and Bekasova, 2017). This research aims to fill this gap and to produce a nuanced study demonstrating the complexity of local relations with extractive businesses. Whereas in the mining industry people are often viewed as conquerors and “tamers” of the resource (Bolotova, 2006), materials also have agency and may influence the miners’ health and well-being or power dispositions inside the community. Working with stone and metals also results in a feeling of attachment towards the material when it is viewed a source of pride or as a marker of indigenous identity. This

analysis contributes to the general scope of studies focusing on indigenous peoples and extractive businesses in the post-Soviet space.

## **Aim and research question**

The aim of the research project is to analyze the process of articulation of indigenous subjectivities through their relations with stoneworking and under the influence of dominant discourses. It will study the process of indigenous people “governing themselves” while also being governed, the production of indigenous spaces and the shaping of indigenous identities in relation to resource extraction in the regions of study - Karelia and Buriatia. By analyzing intertwined state discourses and local perspectives on indigeneity and stone extraction in two Russian regions, the project will focus on the following research question: How do Veps in Karelia and Sojots in Buriatia negotiate the discourses on indigeneity and stoneworking?

The analysis of empirical findings will be based on the notion of power/knowledge and the emergence of governable subjects discussed by Michel Foucault (1990) and the application of Foucault’s theory to indigeneity (Li, 2000; Dohanoe, 2011). When analyzing the relations of local communities with landscape and resources, I base the analysis on Tim Ingold’s concept of dwelling (Ingold, 2000) and lines’ entanglement (Ingold, 2007a; 2015). The analysis is based on participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and document analysis.



FIGURE 1. KARELIA ON THE MAP OF RUSSIA (ADAPTED FROM: [WWW.RUSSIANLESSONS.NET/RUSSIA/KARELIA](http://WWW.RUSSIANLESSONS.NET/RUSSIA/KARELIA))



FIGURE 2. BURIATIA ON THE MAP OF RUSSIA (ADAPTED FROM [WWW.RUSSIANLESSONS.NET/RUSSIA/BURIATIA](http://WWW.RUSSIANLESSONS.NET/RUSSIA/BURIATIA))

The fieldwork for this research took place in Prionezhskii district of Karelia, Petrozavodsk (the capital of Karelia), Okinskii district of Buriatia and Ulan-Ude (the capital of Buriatia). In the text, I use Prionezhskii district / Karelia and Okinskii district / Buriatia interchangeably in order to avoid constant repetitions, even though the districts constitute just a part of the respective territories of Karelia and Buriatia and cannot serve as a representation of the whole region. In some cases, I also use the short forms for Prionezhskii district (Prionezh'e) and Okinskii district (Oka). Similarly, when speaking about Veps I mean specifically northern Veps residing in Prionezhskii district of Karelia (an outline of Veps historical and present territory and the difference between the constituent groups will be presented in Chapter 2). By Soicts, I always mean Oka Soicts residing in Buriatia (as in Russian, the word *soioty* is sometimes used as an obsolete reference to the Tozhu people).

## Chapter overview

This dissertation is comprised of seven chapters. Chapter 1 provides the theoretical background of the research focusing on the notions of power, indigeneity, and subjectivity, as well as the concept of meshwork and its application to human – resource relations. It also discusses the notion of informality as a way of counter-conduct. Finally, the chapter provides

an outline of the evolution of the concept of indigeneity in the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation, as well as the specificities of indigenous peoples' relations with extractive industries in the Russian context.

Chapter 2 contextualizes the history and present situation of the two ethnic groups which are the focus of this research, Veps in Karelia and Sojots in Buriatia. It also provides an overview of the history of mining development in Karelia and Buriatia in order to situate mining legacies as a part of Veps and Sojots' history.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the methodological considerations of the research. It discusses the criteria applied to select the case studies and the choice of recurrent "yo-yo" fieldwork. It also outlines the methods of data collection used for this research such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and document analysis (mostly focusing on the analysis of Soviet-era and post-Soviet newspaper publications).

The subsequent four chapters are centered on analytical themes. Chapter 4 focuses on the notion of indigeneity in Karelia and Buriatia. It argues that both Veps and Soiot activists use the definitions of indigeneity provided by the state when articulating their indigenous claims. In both regions of study, the development of extractive industries and the character of historical and present relations with mining influenced the positioning of Veps and Sojots as indigenous small-numbered peoples of Russia.

Chapter 5 discusses material and symbolic meanings of resource extraction in Karelia and Buriatia, focusing first and foremost on the meanings of stone. The chapter argues that the discrepancies in the perceptions of stone in Karelia and Buriatia are related to the different roles of the state in each region. In Veps villages of Karelia, the role of the Soviet state was crucial starting from the 1920s when state quarries of diabase and quartzite opened in Rybreka and Shoksha villages. As most of the villagers were employed at the quarries, they acquired the state-promoted discourses on stoneworking as an important industry necessary

for the country's well-being. In Okinskii district of Buriatia, however, state influence was less visible, and the active development of mining companies started mostly in the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet-Union. Therefore, mining is largely perceived as a threat to the established lifestyle.

Chapter 6 analyzes mining development in Karelia and Buriatia as a phenomenon connecting past, present and future in both case studies. It focuses on several dimensions of mining temporalities: day-to-day time, lifetime, and *longue dureé* of mining pasts and futures. In the day-to-day parts, various rhythms and cycles of adjusting to the industry or to the landscape (and its sentient beings) are discussed. The lifetime part centers on the crucial influence of mining on people's bodies and health in Karelia. Finally, the chapter relates the differences in mining temporalities in Karelia and Buriatia to the diverse industrialization paths of both regions as well as the role of the state in the formation of local relations with mining.

Chapter 7, the final analytical chapter of the dissertation, focuses on the concepts of rootedness and *resourcescape* and their influence on the construction of indigeneity in Karelia and Buriatia. It claims that the notion of rootedness or strong connection to place is manifested in both case studies, though in different ways (through knowing of the Veps language in Karelia or through connecting with the landscape and religion in Buriatia). The concept of *resourcescape* highlights the entanglements of different forms of resource extraction, including mining, hunting, fishing and foraging, in Karelia and Buriatia. Similarly to other forms of resource extraction, mining in both regions is seen as deeply rooted in the landscape.

The Discussion and Conclusion section summarizes the main findings of the dissertation and discusses the sources of similarities and differences between the situations of Veps and Sojots. It demonstrates the crucial influence of state policies and state-promoted

narratives on the articulations of indigeneity in Karelia and Buriatia. The section claims that local connections to land and resource may create temporary shifts in power relations and, consequently, question the omnipotent influence of the state on indigenous identity construction.

## **Chapter 1. Conceptual framework and literature review**

This chapter outlines theoretical and conceptual foundations of the dissertation and provides the background for the subsequent analysis of empirical findings of the research. The chapter centers on the notion of indigenous and local identity being in the constant process of flux and negotiation between communities and the state under the influence of state-promoted discourses and local connections to the land and natural resources. Its first part focuses on the notion of power creating knowledge and the implication of power flows and fluxes on human entanglements with landscape. This section also discusses the concept of indigeneity formed under the influence of dominant discourses and state-promoted narratives. The second section is devoted to the concept of dwelling in the landscape and the entanglements of human and non-human actors. In addition, it analyzes the concept of resource and the complex connections forming between humans and resources. The third section of the chapter is devoted to the evolution of the notion of indigeneity in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russian Federation. It demonstrates that state policies towards small-numbered indigenous minorities of the Russian North, Siberia and Far East have changed several times in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Contemporary legislation on indigenous peoples' rights in Russia remains vague, and therefore its implementations differ depending on a concrete region. The case studies of Veps and Sojots are to a large extent influenced by Soviet and post-Soviet policies towards ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples, and therefore this section will provide the background for further empirical analysis.

### **1.1. Indigeneity and power**

This section discusses how the articulations of indigeneity may become a result of negotiations and complex power relations between the state and its citizens. It focuses on the

concepts of multidimensional power, subjectivity formation, and the way power relations interact with temporal and spatial dimensions.

### ***1.1.1. Power, subject, and knowledge***

Michel Foucault (1990: 92) views power as “the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate.” When discussing power, Foucault does not refer to the groups or institutions dominating over citizens, to the modes of subjugation, or to the systems in which there are rulers and the ruled. Therefore, Foucault rejects binary oppositions in relation to power and views it rather as omnipresent essence, as it comes from everywhere and is aimed at multiple directions (Foucault, 1990). As everything is defined by power, the government is not a set of specific institutions, but the “conduct of conduct”<sup>3</sup> referring to guiding or leading one’s actions and behaviors (Dean, 2010: 17). “To govern” then means to act upon the possibilities of action of other people (Foucault, 1982: 790).<sup>4</sup> It refers to not only governing others (where “others” may refer to a ship’s crew, a household or the inhabitants of a certain territory), but also governing oneself – one’s own passions and instincts (Rose, 1999: 3). These actions create the type of power which is defined by Foucault as “governmentality.” Cameron (2015: 119) notes that governmentality represents a subtle form of power which relies on management, participation, consultation and documentation rather than violence and control. As Tania Li (2007: 4) notes, “...government operates by educating desires and configuring habits, aspirations and beliefs.” Governmentality results in the production of knowledges, and the generated “knowledges” also represent a form of power. Whereas power mechanisms produce knowledge, this knowledge in return extends

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<sup>3</sup> In Foucault’s writing, this term appears in French: *conduire de conduits* (Foucault, 1982) and is never used directly in English.

<sup>4</sup> As Foucault (1982: 221) notes further on the issue of power and conduct, “The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome. Basically power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government”.

and reinforces the power (Luke, 1995). In Foucault's writing, power and knowledge are always interrelated. Knowledge becomes an exercise of power, while power serves as a function of knowledge (Foucault, 1990). Through the particular practices of power/knowledge, new discourses are created. Foucault (1990) views discourse as formalized way of speaking and writing about reality which defines what can be thought or said about the world and what cannot.

In Foucault's thinking, power relations produce subjects. While it may appear that the nature of those who are governed determine the practice of governing, in practice it is reversed (Rose, 1999). Foucault's approach to subjectivity views it as a process during which the subject constitutes itself in different forms at different times through a variety of practices. Subjectivity, then, has no universal content, but has to constitute itself in specific ways depending on a concrete historical period (Kelly, 2013). The creation of governable subjects is not only influenced "from outside" but also relates to controlling one's own instincts and passions, i.e. "governing oneself" (Rose, 1999: 3). Thus, the process of subject construction depends not only on the governing body but on the subjects themselves. Foucault concludes that the "subject" is the product of these practices and methods of control, of the exercise of power.

While Foucault never addressed environmental issues directly in his writings, his concepts can be highly relevant for environmental thinking (Darier, 1999; Rutherford, 1999; Agrawal, 2005a, 2005b). Luke (1995: 67) notes that applying Foucault's reasoning to the theme of environment means viewing it not as natural sphere of ecological processes or mysterious domain of events which should be explained, but rather as "a historical artifact which is openly constructed." A number of scholars have applied the power notions defined by Foucault to land and natural resource conflicts. Li (2003: 5120) relates the concept of governmentality to resource struggles noticing that the resettlement of populations due to

industrialization or the attempts to “develop” rural livelihoods are examples of a governmental approach. Governmental desires to transform indigenous peoples into governable subjects in many cases go alongside their interests in aboriginal lands and resource extraction (Cameron, 2015). Sawyer and Gomez (2012: 8) stress the importance of intersections between forms of government, resource extraction projects and the shaping of indigenous peoples.

Foucault’s notion of power as being dispersed and operating throughout the society is in line with a number of works analyzing socialist and post-socialist states. Verdery points out that the socialist-type power was decentralized and functioned due to the diffusion of the means of constraint which were not directed “from above” but were available to average citizens (Verdery, 1991). Ssorin-Chaikov (2003: 203) notes that Soviet-type governmentality relied on its weaknesses and thrived on them: it was effective precisely because the state was “widely dispersed in the minute texture of everyday life.” The forms of state, therefore, should not be seen as monolith, but as constantly changing and fluid (Ssorin-Chaikov, 2003).

When there is power, according to Foucault (1990), there is also resistance, or counter-conduct. While the discourse or the production of new knowledge may be an instrument of power, it may also be a point of resistance (Foucault, 1990). In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault discusses “micro-powers” which define “points of confrontation, focuses of instability, each of which has its own risks of conflict, of struggles, and of at least temporary inversion of the power relations” (Foucault, 1977: 27). Laura Siragusa (2018) brings the example of Veps students and activists who communicate in Vepsian online for secrecy. This way, Siragusa argues, they temporarily shift the established power relations as the Russian speakers who normally dominate the public space become marginalized (Siragusa, 2018). Tobias Holzlehner (2014: 31) discusses informal cross-border trade or smuggling in the Russian Far East as “a localized reaction to state action.” Informal cross-border trade

becomes a reaction to gaps in legislation, unreliability of formal transportation options, and specific import taxes. In the situations when the control over border regimes is monopolized by the state and commodity flows are controlled by large corporations, informal transportation networks become a way to subversively challenge and question these monopolies and could even be viewed as a practice of resistance (Holzlehner, 2014). However, it is also important that these practices do not develop outside of the state's framework, but instead appear as a response to state's actions, and therefore "zones of informality equally exist inside the state" (Holzlehner, 2014: 32).<sup>5</sup> Therefore, informal practices in Russia become a way to question the role of the state, at the same time remaining inside the state and its power, as they are a reaction towards state policies.<sup>6</sup>

### ***1.1.2. Indigeneity shaped by dominant discourses***

Similarly to *aboriginality*, which is defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary as "the quality or state of being aboriginal,"<sup>7</sup> the term *indigeneity* may be defined as "the quality of being indigenous." The word "indigenous," in turn, is defined in Oxford English Dictionary as "originating or occurring naturally in a particular place."<sup>8</sup> The word "indigenous", therefore, has a strong reference to "origins", and the current use of the concept implies the idea of original occupation of a concrete territory (Stavenhagen, 1994). It is an ambiguous category, as in many cases this original occupation cannot be properly documented, and those who nowadays claim to be "indigenous" may in fact have replaced the previous occupants of the territory in the distant past (Stavenhagen, 1994). The second important criteria of "indigenusness" are the historical continuity between the original population and those who

<sup>5</sup> See also Verdery (1996) on informality as a set of tactics which interact with the formal on some level.

<sup>6</sup> See also Wilson (2002) on the perspectives of indigenous inhabitants of Sakhalin, Russian Far East, who believe that they have moral entitlement to fish illegally beyond their quota and to sell this fish on black market as the quota norms were established by the "outsiders" who have no right to regulate the local resources.

<sup>7</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/aboriginality> (accessed April 8, 2019)

<sup>8</sup> Oxford English Dictionary: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/indigenous> (accessed April 8, 2019)

currently identify as the descendants of this population. This continuity may be genetic (biological reproduction) or cultural (preservation of cultural forms such as language or religion) (Stavenhagen, 1994).

The category of indigeneity is a subject of controversy and debate in academic literature (Barnard, 2004; Dahl, 2012). It is argued that this category should not be taken as self-evidently appropriate, but instead situated in broader notions of social power (Anderson, 2004). Andre Béteille notes that the concept of “indigenous people” is problematic due to its essentialist nature, as the people seen through the lens of indigeneity are expected to “carry their identity with them wherever they go and whatever they do” (Béteille, 1998: 190). The usefulness of the loaded terms “indigenous” and “native” is questioned (Kuper, 2003), as these categories create dichotomies and exclude certain groups from privileges aimed at stereotyped “native” communities. Besides, the notion of “indigenous peoples” may be seen as a bureaucratic term which is hard to apply to the diversity of local claims made by specific groups (Bowen, 2000). The criteria often used to define indigenous peoples such as first-come, non-dominance, cultural difference, and self-ascription all have their problems and limitations (Barnard, 2006). The understandings of indigeneity also largely depend on political situations in different states, and the strictly formulated definitions of confinement to place or enumeration may form a sharp contrast with local perceptions of entitlement (Nakhshina, 2016; Vladimirova, 2006). Clifford (2007: 198) points out that due to diverse range of experiences of various indigenous groups the boundaries of “indigeneity” are still fuzzy, despite the attempts of International Labor Organization (ILO) and UN bodies to formally define indigenous peoples. There are no officially recognized definition of indigenous peoples, and its creation will probably not be attempted in the near future due to the fluid nature of indigenous identity as well as heterogeneous views and agendas of indigenous groups worldwide (Niezen, 2003; de la Cadena and Starn, 2007). In order to re-

conceptualize indigeneity it should be seen as a fluid concept within larger social fields of difference, in relation to what it is not (de la Cadena and Starn, 2007).<sup>9</sup> The ambiguity of the indigeneity concept made it possible for a number of groups around the world to construct their indigenous subjectivities within the framework of this shared notion (Nikolaeva, 2017).

The word “indigenous” has its origins in Spanish *indigenas* meaning “standing outside civilization”; nevertheless, the notions of indigeneity have been in many ways informed by the legacies of imperial contact (Tsing, 2009). David Maybury-Lewis (1997: 54) asserts that “indigenous peoples are defined as much by their relations with the state as by any intrinsic characteristics that they may possess.”<sup>10</sup> The notion of “indigeneity” itself is the concept with which developed initially in European colonialism and later within postcolonial discourse (Cruikshank and Argounova, 2000). As Anna Tsing (2009: 55) points out, the concept of “rights” in international context has originated in Christian values; therefore, the notions of indigenous land rights resulting from their sacred relations with their territory were facilitated by Christian arguments about justice and entitlement. The current focus of many indigenous organizations on “documentation” of their entitlements, i.e. the stress on wording as a prerequisite of having rights, has also been formed by imperial, missionary, and internationalist legacies (ibid. 56). Colonial discourse creates the fixed notion of the colonized who are perceived as “the other” but at the same time entirely knowable and visible (Bhabha, 1983: 23). Escobar (1995:9) argues that the social production of space is bound with the production of differences, subjectivities and social orders, such as First and Third

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<sup>9</sup> Due to this fluidity of the term, as Anna Tsing argues, it becomes important to discuss indigeneity rather than move immediately to the specifications of indigenous claims (Tsing, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the notion of self-awareness as a prerequisite for indigenous identity is constantly challenged. In 1995, the appeal of the Boer people to the UN asking for recognition as indigenous people based on self-definition was refused, as well as in several other cases such as Welsh and Farer peoples (Sokolovskiy, 2007). These cases show that the fundamental nature of self-identification principle can be questioned. It is important for the group and its indigenous status to be legitimized, accepted by the general audience: it could be other indigenous groups, non-governmental organizations, international bodies or the states where the groups are placed (Tsing, 2007).

World, North and South, center and periphery. Through producing a specific discourse about Third World, the power over it is exercised, and the production of knowledge is linked to control and spatial hierarchy (Escobar, 1995: 8-9).

Contemporary representations of indigenous communities have their origins in the Enlightenment when the first conceptualizations of “exotic others” appeared.<sup>11</sup> At that time, aboriginal societies were viewed as idealized societies which, on the other hand, needed to be “civilized” (Nakashima and Roué, 2002: 316). The production and appropriation of knowledge on indigenous groups has for a long time been carried out by socially dominant newcomers who possessed the power over geographical and social space. In today’s world, many of these assumptions are still preserved. Indigenous groups may be presented as societies living in the past and refusing any changes, or as a “dying” culture (Weaver, 2000); alternatively, they may be viewed as societies truly close to nature who should teach the rest of the world how to lead a sustainable lifestyle. While the concept of ecological nobility aimed to empower indigenous peoples, in many cases it reinforced the existing discrimination (Ellingson, 2001; Nadasdy, 2005) embedding their complex relations with environment into a concrete paradigm.

The representation of indigenous communities through the lens of ecological nobility has its implication on the cases of extractive industry development. Nadasdy (1999: 4) states that the reinforced dichotomy between “traditional” and “modern” leads to disregarding the possibility “that aboriginal people may possess distinct cultural perspectives on modern industrial activities such as logging or mining.” As Kirsch (2007: 314) notes, “...instead of allegories about environmental activism, anthropologists need ethnographic accounts that

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<sup>11</sup> At that time, indigenous peoples were depicted in two opposite ways: as backward and undeveloped, or as “noble savages”, being close to nature and representing the values which Western society had forgotten (Outram, 1995: 66-68).

better represent the complex and potentially contradictory ambitions of indigenous movements.”<sup>12</sup>

Tania Murray Li (2000: 151) argues that indigenous self-identification is not natural or inevitable, and at the same time not simply constructed or invented; this process may be described as “positioning which draws upon... landscapes or repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle”. Li refers to the specific circumstances under which individuals come to identify themselves as indigenous as articulations drawing from Stuart Hall. In Hall’s theory articulations are the form of connections that under certain conditions can produce a unity of different elements, but this link is not compulsory; one should ask under which circumstances could (or could not) such a link be formed (Grossberg, 1986: 53). Articulation, as Hall formulates it, is the non-necessary link between a social force which is making itself and the ideological realm which allows bringing a new set of subjects into political and cultural scene (ibid. 55). Clifford (2001: 479) refers to indigenous communities as “articulated”, and views it as the constant process of “making”, “unmaking” and “remaking” of cultural forms, when communities reconfigure themselves drawing selectively on remembered pasts. Li (2000) shows how the articulations of indigeneity may be influenced by specific political circumstances and how indigenous agendas become reassessed for positioning the group in the “tribal slot” (Li, 2000: 175).

A vast body of literature on the articulations of indigeneity demonstrate how indigenous groups in different parts of the world receive support from international human

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<sup>12</sup> However, questioning the myth of primitive ecological wisdom, as Milton (1996: 112) argues, does not mean showing that non-industrial societies have nothing to teach the industrial world – otherwise the concept of traditional ecological knowledge would not appear. But it is important to show the value of a more sensitive understanding of how human societies interact with their environments. When analyzing a conflict around natural resource extraction, we need to recognize the complexity of interests for each actor involved and analyze the concrete situation without framing it automatically into a pre-existing discourse.

rights organizations by reasserting their indigenous claims within the existing discourses of “noble savage” or “exotic other” (Cruikshank & Argounova, 2000; Li 2000; Warren & Jackson, 2003). In a similar way, indigenous peoples in post-Soviet Russia receive support from the state when they frame their indigenous claims within the accepted definitions of indigeneity such as vaguely defined “traditional lifestyle” (Donahoe, 2011: 413). As Sokolovskiy points out, contemporary discourse on indigeneity in Russia is still ultimately influenced by Soviet and post-Soviet essentialist theories, and therefore indigenous communities are often viewed as primitive, yet exotic (Sokolovskiy, 2013).

Power and creation of dominant discourses may not only be a state initiative. Natalya Novikova introduces the concept of *oilism* to illustrate complex relations between indigenous communities, state and oil companies in Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District. According to Novikova, *oilism* can be described as the merging of oil business and state authorities. By now, according to Novikova, this system has become dominant in northern regions of Russia. *Oilism* means that the interests of oil companies and authorities coincide in many aspects, and as a result the power in the region belongs in fact to oil companies who determine the status and material well-being of the aboriginal population (Novikova, 2014: 180). Watts (2004: 54) refers to “oil complex” as a unity of firm, state and community; the activities of oil companies, as he points out, create a challenge for customary forms of authority, state institutions as well as inter-ethnic relations. Such coalitions of extractive businesses and authorities are present in many Russian regions. Etkind (2014: 162) argues that the Russia’s “oil curse” leads to the concentration of power in hands of a number of oil magnates (Etkind calls them *oiligarchs*) thus creating an extremely uneven distribution of wealth in the state. Therefore, the relations between indigenous groups and large-scale industrial companies become uneven hierarchical relations of power. As oil and gas extraction are one of the main

pillars of Russia's economy, the interests of oil and gas companies are prioritized by the state while the interests of indigenous minorities are viewed as secondary (Tomaselli & Koch, 2014; Koch & Tomaselli, 2015).

The concept of articulation, then, is deeply related to the process of making indigenous subjects. This process also means the formation of indigenous voices defined by Tsing (2007: 38) as "the genre conventions with which public affirmations of identity are articulated". The power belongs to genre convention, not the speaker, so ordinary people can speak with this kind of voice, but they should find a channel to make their voices heard. Random unstructured complaints have no voice, but when the speakers find a way to articulate their complaints in a publicly recognizable genre they gain voice.

Indigenous peoples' social identities are mostly constructed using external definitions and categories, and it is up to them, as Donahoe notes, whether to accept them (as indigenous peoples of Russia mostly do), modify them (as Canada's First Nations are doing) or to reject them altogether (Donahoe, 2013). The emergence of new models of indigenous relations with environment or industry as well as challenging the dominant discourses represents the establishments of indigenous subjects.

A possible example of the emergence of indigenous subjects can be found in the study of Warnaars and Bebbington (2014: 115) who analyze the example of Ecuador indigenous groups. Indigenous representatives respond to the debates on mining and development creating "alternative" development models based on the protection of nature and the pursuit of human welfare. These alternative models are to a large extent based on the feelings of attachment to place, nature and historical occupations. For example, the groups of people with historical ties to mining are one of the strongest actors resisting large-scale companies at their territory for various reasons: knowledge of harmful effects of mining, desire to protect

their own interests as artisanal miners, or environmental concerns (Warnaars and Bebbington, 2014).

Another example of indigenous subjectivity is the case study of Sojots conducted by Donahoe (2011). The Sojots had to struggle for their indigenous rights which they were systematically denied by the authorities (Donahoe, 2011: 405). This situation led to their significant assimilation and abandonment of reindeer herding by the 1980s. Following the collapse of the USSR, Sojot revitalization movement has started. The Declaration of Sojot people, adopted in 1994, stated: “We seek greater control over our destiny...” (ibid. 407). However, to achieve this goal Sojots needed to reinforce their identity as indigenous people; so, they reinforced the elements of traditional lifestyle in the way it was seen within dominant discourse. Their fight for indigenous rights, as Donahoe concludes, in many aspects resulted in self-restriction and perpetuating a static definition of “indigenoussness” (ibid. 412). According to Donahoe, the attempt of Sojots to create their indigenous subjectivity failed, as they succumbed to the dominant discourse. Nevertheless, it is important that the struggle for recognition in the late 1980s started as challenging the existing understanding of Sojot indigenoussness. While they did not fully achieve what they aimed for – “the control over their destiny” – the start of the campaign and the resistance towards the state indicated the attempt to re-establish indigenous subjectivity in the way the members of the Sojot community saw it.

Rebecca Hall (2012) presents diamond mining industry in the Canadian North as a neoliberal continuity of internal colonization of indigenous peoples and criticizes the assumption that indigenous development means developing a capitalist economy. This naturalized belief that there is no alternative to global capitalism results in ignorance of traditional indigenous economies (or mixed economies). As a result, Hall argues, indigenous peoples are not given the option of saying “no” to resource extraction at their territory, and, more broadly, to capitalism development (Hall, 2012: 389).

The whole regime of development, Subhabrata Banerjee (2000: 11) argues, depends on Western knowledge system and marginalizes non-Western forms of knowledge. The notions of progress and development can be viewed as the continuation of colonial modes of control. Aboriginal studies are thus theorized in relation to Western cultures, and the dichotomies that result from this position (development versus no development; traditional versus modern; land use versus conservation) serve to perpetuate Western notions of progress (Banerjee, 2000: 30).

A notion shared by many authors is that indigenous peoples should have greater control over resource management, and the pace of development should benefit the community and territory (Bowman, 2011: 28). However, the notion of “benefit” may be problematic as well, as different communities (or members of the same community) may have different notions of what is beneficial. It may be job creation or financial compensation, less environmental pollution or complete closure of industry. Thus, it may occur that when writing about financial compensations as an ultimate solution, the authors again apply the Western notion of benefit without close attention to the needs of indigenous citizens.

### ***1.1.3. Indigeneity and governable space and time***

Spatial and temporal standardizations are often discussed in academic literature as an example of creating the relations of power and control. In Foucault’s works disciplinary power is enacted through space and time, as well as people’s activities and behavior. Thus, in his theory Foucault connects space, temporality and the production of subjects. Foucault sees the formation of timetables and the general structuring of time as a way to gain control through “adjusting the body to temporal imperatives” (Foucault, 1979: 151). A well-known example of spatiotemporal surveillance and control is the panoptical organization of the

prison in Foucault's example (1979: 203). The principle on which Panopticon is based implies that the people would never know when they would be viewed, but they knew it could happen at any time, and this inevitability of supervising allowed the exercise of power by the prison administration. As temporality is directly related to industrialized production, bureaucracy, state ideologies and techniques, it has been one of the crucial tools of understanding modernity (Ssorin-Chaikov, 2017). While modernity produces industrialization, bureaucracy, and discipline, they in turn produce the subjects. In Foucault's writing, space and time appear as the modes of articulation of power/knowledge and specific discourses.

The standardization of time was needed in order to effectively manage a specific territory (Verdesio, 2013). The creation of new time-related conceptions was also in many ways linked to new machine-dominated culture. Katherine Verdery (1996) demonstrates how time was used by socialism as a state building resource. Verdery defines this process as *etatization* (from Romanian word *etatizare* – “the process of statizing”) and highlights various forms of this process: seizure of time through rituals, calendars or workday schedules, as well as more subtle interaction with everyday politics of time (Verdery, 1996: 40). Temporal definitions of indigeneity may also serve as a tool of power and control. One of the ways to differentiate between “indigeneity” and “non-indigeneity” would be the various conceptions of time and space, or, as Mary Louise Pratt point out, to the priority of time and space. The notions of indigeneity denote “who was here (or there) first,” thus establishing the dichotomous relations between “the indigenous” and “the invaders” (Pratt, 2007: 398). Indigenous peoples are placed into the realm of prehistory, thus making them radically different (Verdesio, 2013).

Another powerful force generating indigeneity would be the notion of remoteness, e.g. marginal or peripheral position towards the centralized state (Pratt, 2007). Space functions as

a central organizing principle in the social sciences (Gupta and Ferguson, 2001: 34). The importance of place for consolidating people's identities has been widely studied in human geography, and one of the central assumption in these studies is that people's relationships with their surroundings are shaped by the relationships they have with other people, and, consequently, that their cultural identity can be – to some extent – formed by the place they occupy (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001: 178).

Lefebvre (1991: 85) views “social space” as a product of culture which is constructed or produced. During construction and change of space different actors are defined by the position they occupy, and these positions depend on the capital they possess (Bourdieu, 1985: 723-724); thus, spatial distributions and social relations are connected to power. Bourdieu especially focuses on one of the forms of symbolic power – the power of creating new groups (both the groups that are already established and those that yet have to be constituted). This can be achieved by various means: through mobilization or by speaking on the group's behalf as an authorized spokesperson (Bourdieu, 1989: 23).

Foucault views power as something exercised through the organization and structuring of space. In almost any society there are relations of power which characterize and constitute the social body; these power relations cannot be established and implemented without the production and circulation of a particular discourse (Foucault, 1980: 93). Scott (1998: 2) views disparate processes within a state (such as the creation of last names, the design of cities and transport routes, the standardization of language and legal discourse) as the attempts to “arrange” a population and simplify the structure of the state.

Escobar (1995) argues that the social production of space is bound with the production of differences, subjectivities and social orders, such as First and Third World, North and South, center and periphery. Li (2014) notes how colonial regimes interpreted scarce indigenous populations and their landscape as a sign that the land was not properly

used or owned and imposed their own regimes of land management. Through producing a specific discourse about Third World the power over it is exercised, and the production of knowledge is linked to control and spatial hierarchy (Escobar, 1995: 8-9).

Indigenous groups are often ultimately linked to the space they occupy even through definitions and terminology. As Malkki (1997: 58) notes, the terms such as “native” or “indigenous” reflect the idea of rootedness of cultures in soils which in many cases stresses their “special connection” with territory. This “special connection,” though, is a vague term which is not commented further (Sokolovskiy, 2007). Appadurai claims that natives are defined as not simply coming from a certain place, but as being “somehow incarcerated, or confined to those places” (Appadurai, 1988: 37). Because of this “confinement” indigenous groups are often defined in terms of natural rootedness in a specific place (Cerwonka, 2004). Living in the area recognized as “place of traditional inhabitation of indigenous peoples” is a precondition for eligibility for some of the privileges of indigenous status (Donahoe et al., 2008). For example, in the Soviet Union and Russia the definition of indigeneity has always been linked to residence a specific territory. Sokolovskiy (2007: 79) calls this phenomenon of linking people to territories, and through territories to rights “territorialized ethnicity”. Sack (1983) defines territoriality as the attempt to enforce control over a geographical area and by this to affect and influence the interactions of people, things and relationships.

Therefore, the construct of indigeneity as a concept is in many cases related to the particular space, and the “rootedness” in this space as well as “special connection” to it are viewed as prerequisites for indigenous identities. In this sense space is tied to power and the production of differences within dominant discourses on indigeneity. To relate space to power, Rose uses the term “governable space” which represents the way space is produced and organized in the exercise of power (Rose, 1999: 32). For Rose, governable spaces are

“modalities in which a real and material governable world is composed, terraformed and populated” (ibid. 32).

However, as power is not viewed as one-sided process, governable spaces are not simply “imposed” on subjects but formed alongside with the process of the production of subjectivities. Liffman notes that social production of territory is at the same time personally experienced and politicized, so territoriality represents various sets of contrasts: local vs. global, state vs. indigenous, objective vs. subject centered. It is possible to conclude that territoriality is constructed not only on the basis of state’s discourses, but also from people’s understanding of material practices, and it involves people’s active constructions of indigenous localities (Liffman, 1998: 3).

Spaces of indigeneity appear when indigenous subjects start making claims related to their identities, rights and territories. Indigenous spaces, according to Watts (2004: 72) are achieved through the juxtaposition of ethnicity and oil (as in Watts’ case study oil represents the ground for the emergence of indigenous subjects) and as an effect of ethnic mobilization of indigenous groups which produce new governable spaces. The production of space is therefore the result of the shifts in power and the emergence of new forms of relationship between indigenous groups, extractive businesses, and the state.

## **1.2. Human entanglements with landscape and resource**

This section discusses the entanglements of humans and resources in the landscape. It is largely based on the works of Tim Ingold (2000; 2006; 2007; 2015) as well as the studies of the social configurations created by natural resources (Ferry & Limbert. 2008; Richardson & Weszkalnys, 2014). The first part of the section discusses the concept of dwelling and

embodied relations with the landscape. The second section focuses on the theme of human relations with natural resource extraction discussing how humans and resources mutually construct each other in the process of their interaction.

### ***1.2.1. Dwelling in the landscape***

In this section I will focus on several concepts emerging from the works of Tim Ingold. I base the analysis of my empirical findings on his concepts of dwelling and lines' entanglement to demonstrate the intimate connections formed between humans and industry in Karelia and humans and landscape in Buriatia. The ties with nature and industry influence the local residents' sense of place and the feeling of belonging. Place has an impact on identity construction and become means of definition of one's identity (Greider & Garkovich, 1994). Although places exist as specific locations, people construct them according to their own subjectivity.<sup>13</sup> Places become sites of collective memory and political identities (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013).

In contrast to the concept of "construction" or "building" perspective, Ingold (2000; 2011) develops his *dwelling perspective* based on the works of Martin Heidegger on dwelling as being-in-the-world. Within the dwelling perspective, the perceptions of the world and being in the world cannot be divided. As Ingold notes, "a place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there... And these, in turn, depend on the kinds of activities in which its inhabitants engage" (Ingold, 2000: 192). Whereas the concept of "constructing" the nature involves the separation between the natural world and human mind, in dwelling perspective "the world continuously comes to being around the inhabitant." This relation to the landscape can be defined as "sentient" or "animated"; it is based on feelings,

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<sup>13</sup> The Telengits stress the importance of travelling through the landscape in order to understand their lives. If one travels through Altai, it would lure it back as it would become a part of the person (Halemba, 2006).

intuition and ethical considerations. Based on the concept of dwelling, Ingold (2000) suggests a “relational” model of indigenous identity which is different from the established method of defining indigeneity based on descent. For Ingold, indigenous identities are formed by the people’s relationships with the land; from the land they “draw their sense of being” (Ingold, 2000: 140).

Extending his dwelling perspective into the field of craft, Ingold (2000) views dwelling as “weaving” in contrast to “making”: while making regards the object as an idea, weaving interacts with the object directly through the embodiment of a rhythmic movement. In the process of weaving, the forms of objects are not imposed from above but gradually grow based on the mutual interactions of people and materials.

Landscape and its inhabitants are mutually connected and entangled. While humans modify the landscape, it shapes their identities (Bender, 1993) and their relations with each other (Christian, 1989). As Hirsch (1995) notes, the perceptions of landscape go far beyond its understanding as a visual phenomenon. Dwellers perceive their landscape through their bodies and movements (Ingold, 2000), though the sounds related to a particular surrounding (Gell, 1995) or through interactions with nonhuman entities (Willerslev, 2007). As Pedersen (2009) notes, due to the changing movement patterns in nomadic landscapes, they are perceived as infinite and heterogeneous due to the variety of interactions between humans and landscape.

Ingold (2007a) distinguishes between two types of relations with the landscape and formation of lines, namely transport and wayfaring or dwelling. Whereas the wayfarer, when moving, actively engages with the land and treats it “as a mesh of interweaving lines” (ibid: 75), transportation routes are oriented towards a particular destination. Transportation lines, as Ingold (2007a) notes, are straight and regular, and they are planned, surveyed, and controlled by the state. The lines of dwelling in the landscape, however, become forms of

threading our biographies with the land (Ingold, 2007a). Alla Bolotova (2011) refers to threading human biographies with the land as a symbolic appropriation of nature in her study of urban dwellers in the Murmansk region. Bolotova studies the inhabitants of two cities – Kirovsk and Kovdor – and analyzes their experiences about “appropriation” of unfamiliar nature. One of her informants recalls her experience with bilberry, which she mixed with other berries at first but learnt to distinguish. The berries that had been unknown to her became her “own” after the experience of dwelling in the particular environment (Bolotova, 2011: 10). Similar strategies of appropriation will be discussed further in the analytical chapters of this dissertation.

### ***1.2.2. Resources as produced and producing***

This section discusses the links between people and natural resources, and the mutual influences they have on each other. The word “resource” is derived from the Old French *ressource*, or source, meaning a (natural) spring. The term, therefore, implies the notions of dynamism and (re)generation (Ferry & Limbert, 2008: 5). Resources may be defined as substances “identified as useful, valuable, and natural in origin from their environment” (Richardson & Weszkalnys, 2014: 6). As Tanya Richardson and Gisa Weszkalnys note, resources should be viewed not simply as substances existing in “nature”, but as entanglements of various discourses, arrangements and practices which ultimately make them resources (ibid. 6).

As the meanings of things “are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories” (Appadurai, 1986: 5), objects and humans “continuously and reciprocally bring one another into existence” (Ingold, 2006: 10). When studying the objects' trajectories and patterns, we are able to understand the human actions attributing meanings to these objects (Appadurai, 1986). In the concept of resource, social and material aspects of meaning correlate. Resources

are at the same physical entities and objects which are characterized by specific values. Natural resource exploitation is closely related to the process of making boundaries between subject and object, and therefore between nature and culture (Richardson & Weszkalnys, 2014). Therefore, a substance becomes the resource only with the human act of appropriation, which constitutes its symbolic “birth” (Ferry and Limbert, 2008). Natural resources are not just socially produced, but also produce new social configurations (Richardson & Weszkalnys, 2014; Gilberthorpe, 2007) and may lead to drastic changes in the landscape producing “minescapes” (Ey & Sherval, 2015).<sup>14</sup> As Andy Bruno (2018: 147) points out, “a rock can excite and destroy, facilitate and undermine, or create value and costs.” A number of scholars have discussed the symbolism of natural resources including oil and gas (Saxinger, 2015), copper (Cameron, 2011; Cooper, 2011; Davidov, 2014), gold (Davidov, 2013b), sapphires (Walsh, 2004; Walsh, 2010), pearls (Eaton, 2016), silver (Ferry, 2002), diamonds (Argounova-Low, 2004; Falls, 2014; Yakovleva, Alabaster & Petrova, 2000), red mercury (Onneweer, 2014).

Decorative stones are often filled with multiple layers of symbolism. They may be perceived as an important source of trade valued for durability or firmness, and as an object of beauty praised for its looks. A well-known example is jade symbolism in Chinese culture where this stone ensures good luck and protects its owner from evil spirits (Ko, 2008). In the Evenki communities in Buriatia, jade generates complex meanings being viewed simultaneously as solid (as it maintains its shape and structure through centuries) and fluid (due to its unpredictable price and varying demand in Russia and China) (Safonova, Sántha & Sulyandziga, 2018). Tatiana Argounova-Low (2004) analyzes the case of diamond symbolism

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<sup>14</sup> See also Marchant (2018: 194): “Objects are no longer viewed as representations of social relations, but also as creators of such relations; objects *do* things.”

in Sakha Republic (Siberia). When diamonds were just discovered in Sakha,<sup>15</sup> they were initially depicted neutrally, as a “Soviet thing” and as a strategic resource crucial for the state. Consequently, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the representation of diamonds in Sakha gradually became more “ethnicized” and therefore associated with Sakha local identity (Argounova-Low, 2004: 263). Veronica Davidov refers to complexity of gold symbolism in the Soviet Union: gold was considered “both a symbol and an anxiety-provoking reality that holds within itself the danger of pollution and must be handled with extreme caution” (Davidov, 2013: 24). Andrew Walsh (2004) discusses the case of sapphire extraction in Madagascar where miners keep asking what sapphires are used for; whereas they know that sapphires primarily serve for the production of jewelry, this version looks implausible to them, and they still believe that there is some other secret sphere of sapphire usage. The process of transformation of mineral specimens from natural into social objects is analyzed by Elizabeth Ferry (2005) with the example of Guanajuato, Mexico. The minerals there have two sorts of value: one is meaningful for local inhabitants and is defined in social terms: the worker has personally taken the stone from the mine. The second type of value is relevant only for outsiders and comes from the stones’ rarity and the perceived difficulty of obtaining them outside of Guanajuato (Ferry, 2005).

There are a number of studies showing the importance of mineral extraction for aboriginal societies. Pringle (1997) and Cameron (2011) describe how widely dispersed and important metal was in prehistoric Arctic cultures. Cameron criticizes the established view on mining as something alien to indigenous cultures and traces the significant role of “copper stories” in different Inuit narratives in Canada (Cameron, 2011). Cooper points out metals were appreciated by indigenous cultures of North America for not only their visual appear

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<sup>15</sup> The first diamond deposit in Sakha (and in the whole Soviet Union) was discovered by Larisa Popugaeva and her assistant Fedor Belikov in 1954.

and practical purposes, but for their association with supernatural spirits (Cooper, 2011: 254). These examples offer ground for more complex analysis of indigenous peoples' relations with extractive industries. They help to re-think the established Arctic and indigenous narratives away from post-colonial framing and the traditional binary notions such as "traditional" versus "modern", "Inuit" versus "European" and so on (Cameron, 2011: 188).

Due to the centuries-old tradition of stone mining, Veps in Karelia have developed strong connections with stone which symbolically dominates the landscapes and life cycles of the villages today. They experienced the switch from small-scale artisanal mining to extensive industrial development in the Soviet time, and the closure of the state enterprises and turn towards private mining in the 1990s; these changes have influenced their lives and shaped their perceptions of stone. The intertwined life histories of persons and things were discussed by Kopytoff (1986) as "cultural biography of things"; Kopytoff, thus, draws the analogy between the biographies of people and things or "the way societies construct individuals and the way they construct things" (ibid: 89). Kopytoff especially emphasizes the conflicting social identities and uncertainties of valuation both people and things experience in complex (large-scale, commercialized) societies. Gosden and Marshall (1999) develop the concept of cultural biography stating that "as people and objects gather time, movement and change, they are constantly transformed, and these transformations of person and object are tied up with each other". Due to these mutual ties, objects may become valuable through their links with powerful people, and, vice versa, "individual's standing is enhanced through possession of well-known objects" (Gosden and Marshall, 1999).

Tilley (2004: 19) views animism as a system of thought when natural objects – for example, trees, stones, buildings or monuments –, are treated "as being alive or having a soul, and akin to a person." In this system people, animals and things mutually participate in the existence of each other – for example, when the prey symbolically "allows" the hunter to

obtain itself (ibid. 20). Ingold (2006) holds a similar notion of animism seeing it as a continuous process of mutual interaction between people and things. Animism, therefore, questions the whole differentiation between the categories of living and non-living entities. Animism becomes a process which is only a part of continuous intertwining among people and objects in the world, when everything in the environment is linked and entangled (ibid. 13).

Industrial sites produce various meanings for the people involved in resource extraction. This is the industry which is often associated with hard labor and danger of injuries, and in Russian context, due to the country's vast territory, in many cases it means being away from home for several months a year or resettlement for the whole family; such a work also often involves extreme weather conditions. When so much is sacrificed for this industry, it becomes extremely important to perceive not only its material benefits, but also symbolic meaning. Gertrude Saxinger (2015) illustrates the cases of symbolic attachment to industrial sites developed by extraction workers in Siberia. These symbolic connections are often reinforced with advertising and PR strategies of companies. The workers directly correspond with these messages saying in interviews: "what we do is important for us, for the industry and for the state" (Saxinger, 2015: 94). While fly-in fly-out workers do not have enough time to develop the sense of attachment to northern settlements, for those who migrated permanently the feeling of attachment to industry goes alongside the sense of belonging to a place. Alla Bolotova (2012) illustrates how her informants, all current or former industrial workers, shift their perception of environment rather easily depending on the context: from a resource which should be processed to the place of leisure and relaxation which should be protected (Bolotova, 2012).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Bolotova brings the example of Maria, former industrial worker, who defines a pile of waste belonging to a different enterprise as harming environment: "It is so ugly how they destroyed the nature!". At the same time,

In the next part of the chapter I will discuss the changing notion of indigeneity in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, and will also connect the problem of indigeneity construction and the development of extractive industries in Russia. The following section aims to link the theoretical discussions on power and subjectivity, human – landscape interaction and the multiple meanings of resource extraction.

### **1.3. Indigeneity in post-Soviet Russia**

This section focuses in more details on the evolution of the indigeneity discourse in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. It discusses that state policies towards indigenous minorities of Russian North, Siberia and Far East have undergone several drastic changes and are still viewed as vague and region-specific. The second part of the section centers on the relations between indigenous minorities and extractive industry development in Russia, arguing that due to Soviet legacy of strong state protecting its minorities, indigenous groups rarely find open ways to exercise their agency in relation to resource extraction.

#### ***1.3.1. State power and indigeneity in the Soviet Union and Russia***

As Alexander Etkind (2014) points out, contemporary Russian state is still commonly referred to as “post-Soviet,” and it is possible that many of the current phenomena of Russia have their origins in the Soviet policies. Although almost thirty years have passed since 1991 and many changes have occurred since then, contemporary Russia “still defines itself in contrast with its Soviet past” (Etkind, 2014: 154).<sup>17</sup> It is therefore difficult to discuss

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she perceived another - even higher - pile of waste produced by the enterprise she identified herself with as an inevitable product of industry which was accurate, ordered and planned (Bolotova, 2012: 667).

<sup>17</sup> As Etkind (2014: 155) further notes on the impossibility of the state to move from the “post-Soviet” label, “the unprocessed memory of the catastrophic Soviet past keeps Russia in its interminable post-Soviet condition”. As the Soviet-time phenomena rarely face open discussions, they remain a part of the contemporary state narratives.

contemporary Russian politics towards its indigenous minorities without going back to the policies of the Soviet state and the narratives which were established and promoted in the Soviet period. This section will focus on the evolution of the notion of indigeneity in the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation.

In different periods of Imperial Russian, Soviet, and post-Soviet Russian history, state attitudes towards indigenous minorities residing in its territory varied significantly. The politics towards indigenous peoples in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia could be characterized as “non-intervention.” The Russian state tried to organize its indigenous population: thus, in 1822 the Statute “On the Governing of Outlanders” was published, and it became the first legal act defining the status of indigenous peoples (Diatchkova, 2011). However, the articles of the Statute took into account the peculiarities of indigenous lifestyle.<sup>18</sup> In Imperial Russia, indigenous peoples were never subject to slavery, nor were they forced to leave the territories of their residence.

The early years of the Soviet Union were characterized by drastic changes at various levels of the society, and the attitude of the state towards its small-numbered minorities changed as well. State policies towards indigenous peoples constituted a part of its more general national politics. In his 1914 essay,<sup>19</sup> Vladimir Lenin stated that the equality of all the nations and their right for self-determination should be recognized. However, the nations’ equal status was viewed by Lenin merely as the prerequisite for the main goal of peoples’ unification under the Communist state (Grenoble, 2003). The policies towards indigenous minorities mirrored this approach. They were actively studied in the 1920s with the aim to

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<sup>18</sup> Quotes from Statute of the Russian Empire “On the Governing of Outlanders”. July 22, 1822: Chapter V, § 25: “Nomadic outlanders remain at the same position... It is necessary to make them understand that... they would not have to become peasants against their will, and will not be transferred to a different social class without their consent”. Chapter VI, §68: “All vagrant and nomadic outlanders are governed according to their own prairie laws and customs.”

develop them and make them a part of the new Soviet state and to increase education and urbanization within ethnic minority groups (Austin, 1992). In 1926, the first list of indigenous peoples of the North was composed as a part of the special Decree “On the establishment of the temporary provisions on the management of native peoples and tribes of the northern outskirts of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic”.<sup>20</sup> Both Veps and Sojots were not included in the list. The Decree of 1926 also stated several criteria of the term “indigenous people”: small-numbered community living according to traditional lifestyle (reindeer breeding, hunting, fishing, as well as nomadic or semi nomad life) and being at the lower level of socio-economic development. The primary aim of the early Soviet policies was to overcome cultural and economic backwardness of northern populations.

This paternalistic position of the Soviet state strengthened in the following years. As the 1930s were the time of rapid industrial development, exploitation of natural resources and the construction of plants and factories became one of the primary goals of the state. Indigenous peoples in many cases resided at territories of natural resource extraction, and the communities were generally viewed in the industrialization context – as the object of economic changes (Vakhtin, 1992). Following the development in natural resources extraction in the North and Siberia, many Russians resettled to the lands which were historically inhabited by indigenous communities, and therefore the assimilation of indigenous minorities increased (Vakhtin, 1992; Vakhtin, Golovko & Schweitzer, 2004). By 1950s, more than 50% of the northern residents consisted of recent migrants, and by that time most of the population could speak Russian well, as it became the lingua franca for communication between indigenous residents and migrants (Vakhtin, 1992). In the late

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<sup>19</sup> Lenin V.I., “The Right of Nations to Self-Determination”. Published in *Prosvescheniye*, April-June 1914, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/self-det/index.htm>

1940s, the process called *politika poselkovanija* (the politics of settlement) started with the aim to transfer nomadic indigenous communities towards settled lifestyle (Yudin, 2012). The politics of settlement inevitably disrupted the connections of indigenous communities with their land and historical occupations, such as reindeer herding.

The attitudes of the state towards indigenous peoples started changing in the late 1980s, as a result of the general politics of *glasnost*'. In January 1987, the General Secretary of the Communist Party Mikhail Gorbachev delivered a program speech where he stated that from now on the state would pay more attention to all the ethnic groups of the USSR to take the interests of each of them into account.<sup>21</sup> This appeal of Gorbachev ultimately influenced the start of indigenous revitalization campaigns in many Russian regions.

In contemporary Russian society, there are different notions of indigeneity which are used by various actors and organizations depending on a concrete situation. Whereas in the Soviet time identity categories were taken as given (Donahoe et al. 2008), the 1990s-beginning of 2000s became the period when various ethnic groups in Russia started actively shaping their identities, and indigenous revitalization campaigns were launched in different regions of the country. During this time, several important legislative acts defined the notion of indigeneity and its essential elements. The Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993, Article 69) states that the rights of indigenous small-numbered peoples are guaranteed by the state. However, the article but does not define the category. The legal definition of indigenous minorities is mainly regulated by three federal laws: "On guarantees of the rights of indigenous small-numbered peoples of the Russian Federation" (1999), "On general

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<sup>20</sup> The decree of 1926 contained the list of twenty six indigenous peoples of Russian Soviet Federative Socialistic Republic: Sami, Nenets, Khanty, Mansi, Enets, Dolgan, Nganasans, Sel'kup, Ket, Evenki, Yukagirs, Evens, Chukchi, Koryak, Eskimo, Aleut, Itelmen Tofalars, Ulchi, Nanai, Nivkhs, Udege, Negidals, Oroch, Orochi, Chuvans.

<sup>21</sup> The Speech of Mikhail Gorbachev, January 27, 198; text available at <http://soveticus5.narod.ru/88/od1987.htm>

principles of the organization of communes of indigenous small-numbered peoples of Russian North, Siberia and Far East” (2000), and “On territories of traditional subsistence of indigenous small-numbered peoples of Russian North, Siberia and Far East” (2001).<sup>22</sup>

The definition of small-numbered indigenous peoples outlined in 1999 Federal law includes four main aspects: where people live, how they live, population maximum and self-identification. To be considered indigenous, the minority should reside at their ancestral territories, engage in traditional ways of subsistence, not exceed fifty thousand people in size, and self-identify as indigenous. All these aspects when applied to practical situations often create ambiguity and confusion. The “numerical ceiling” was established in the early 1990s as it was considered necessary that the term is well defined (Sokolovskiy, 2005; Donahoe et al., 2008). It is, however, problematic, as it limits those ethnic minorities which qualify in other aspects but whose number exceeds 50,000 people, and thus forces a dichotomization into small-numbered versus non-small-numbered (Donahoe et al., 2008).<sup>23</sup>

The notion of “traditional ways of subsistence” is also problematic, as the changes and developments inside indigenous communities are often not considered by local or regional authorities (Espiritu, 2001). Thus, in 2009, Primorskii court of the Russian Far East concluded that traditional subsistence rights of indigenous communities at the territory of “Verkhnebikinskii” natural reserve were not violated, as hunting and fishing were conducted using snowmobiles and motor boats; the court concluded that the usage of mechanical transport devices contradicts the notion of “traditional subsistence”. This example shows

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<sup>22</sup> There are several additional legal acts mentioning the rights of indigenous peoples. The law “On subsurface resources” (1995, with changes in 2016) states that the interests of small-numbered peoples should be protected by the state when it is needed (Article 4.10), and that a part of tax revenues from resource extraction at the territories of small-numbered peoples’ residence should be allocated for their socio-economic development (Article 42).

indigenous peoples are not seen by Russian legislation as groups adapting to the development in the society; post-Soviet understanding of indigeneity represents rather primordialist than constructivist approach, as indigenous peoples are by definition “tied” to a certain land and certain occupations (Sokolovskiy, 2013). As Appadurai (1988: 37) notes, in many cases that natives are defined as not simply coming from a certain place, but as being “somehow incarcerated, or confined to those places”. The connection to place is illustrated by the example of Donahoe et al. (2008): when in 1994 two districts in the Republic of Tyva became officially listed as territories of indigenous Tozhu people’s residence, all residents of these two districts were automatically counted and registered as Tozhu even though most of them did not self-identify as Tozhu. However, in the situations when a whole district is recognized as the territory of indigenous people’s residence, the opportunity to receive benefits from the state often makes indigenous status equally desired by indigenous and non-indigenous actors (Beach, 2007).

The concept in indigeneity is also problematic as it creates artificial divisions in situations when people of different ethnicities live and work at the same territory for years, engaging in similar activities; however, some of them are officially registered as indigenous (and thus are eligible for benefits and additional state support), while others are not, even though their connection to the territory of their residence and traditional occupation may be similarly strong. This is the case at the Kola Peninsula in Northwestern Russia where Sami and Komi people live side by side, both being involved in reindeer herding, while the Sami are officially recognized as indigenous, and the Komi are not. To deal with this problem, Sokolovskiy (2013) suggests that instead of undifferentiated support for the entire category

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<sup>23</sup> Karelia is a vivid example of such situation: there are several Finno-Ugric ethnic minorities in the region, including Karelians, Veps, and Finns. While Karelians are defined as “indigenous” in Karelian Constitution, and they are also a target of various grants and cultural support programs aimed at indigenous peoples of the Republic, by Federal legislation they cannot be considered indigenous as their total number in Russia is 65,000 people.

Russia needs to set up more attuned and differentiated policy, targeting different subgroups of this larger category of indigenous peoples.

While the period of the 1990s, early post-Soviet years, were marked with intensive revitalization movements and focused on indigenous political participation, contemporary policies of the Russian state primarily target cultural aspects of indigeneity. Sardana Nikolaeva argues that the creation of indigenous subjects' in Russia is "a process of depolitization of indigeneity, positioning it not as a powerful source of resistance and political voice... but rather as a position of marginality, based on cultural origins." The change in state's policies towards indigenous minorities is noticeable if we consider the history of the Russian indigenous organization RAIPON.<sup>24</sup> When RAIPON was established in 1990, its mission was defined as "to protect the legitimate interests and rights of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation" (Semenova, 2007: 25). However, as RAIPON eventually took a more critical position in regards to indigenous rights protection in Russia and started openly discussing the problems faced by indigenous citizens, in 2012-2013 the organization was shut down by the Russian government (Tomaselli & Koch, 2014). In 2013, RAIPON received the permission to re-open (Koch & Tomaselli, 2015), but it is now severely controlled by the state. Several indigenous activists including former vice-president of RAIPON Pavel Sulyandziga<sup>25</sup> and a representative of Shors<sup>26</sup> Yana

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<sup>24</sup> Russian Association of the Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North (R: *Assotsiatsiia Korennykh Malochislennykh Narodov Severa*)

<sup>25</sup> Pavel Sulyandziga is an indigenous rights activist from the Russian Far East (Udege indigenous minority). Until 2010, he was the first vice-president of the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) and member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. In 2016, indigenous organization *Batani* led by Sulyandziga was recognized by the Russian government as a foreign agent. In 2017, Pavel and his family asked for asylum in the USA (SakhaDay, May 3, 2017, <http://sakhaday.ru/news/pavel-sulyandziga-prosit-ubezhishhe-v-ssha/>. Accessed May 6, 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Shors or Shorians are an indigenous people of Turkic origin residing in the Kemerovo region in Russia.

Tannagasheva<sup>27</sup> were forced to leave Russia in the recent years after they faced persecutions in relation to their work.

### ***1.3.2. Indigenous peoples and extractive industries in Russia***

In popular culture, Russian North and Siberia are often associated with lack of connectivity and vast empty spaces, even though the situation may be more complex, and the perceptions of remoteness vary (Vakhtin, 2017). The protagonist of the Soviet-time “Song of Enamored Yakut”<sup>28</sup> who travels from one village to another one to see the girl he fell in love with, states, “I need just one day to reach my beloved one, just a little bit – two hundred kilometers.” The ironic contrast between “just a little bit” and the actual journey (a whole-day trip by reindeer) in the song produces a vivid image of vast remote Yakutia for the listeners. It also creates a specific stereotypical image of a native person: sincere in his feelings, but at the same time naïve and close to nature. The notion of remoteness created associations with backwardness.

Academic literature on Russian North and Siberia also widely covers the issues of remoteness and infrastructural development. Caroline Humphrey describes her trip to Tuva Republic in late 1980s: “It is still difficult to get to...there is no railway, the road crosses a high mountain pass which is snowy even in midsummer, and plane tickets, unless booked months in advance, are obtainable only on a who-you-know basis” (Humphrey, 1989). Ethnographic studies on roads and mobility in Siberia (Argounova-Low, 2012; Argounova-Low and Prisyazhnyi, 2015; Kuklina and Holland, 2018; Safonova and Sántha, 2011)

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<sup>27</sup> Yana Tannagasheva is an indigenous rights activist from Kemerovo region in Russia who held several speeches at the UN drawing attention to the struggle of Shor people against coal mining companies in the region. In April 2018, Yana and her family left Russia and asked for the refugee status. Their location is currently not disclosed for safety reasons (Anti-Discrimination Centre, <https://adcmemorial.org/www/14218.html?lang=en>, accessed May 6, 2019).

<sup>28</sup> In Russian, “Песня влюбленного якута.” The song was performed by Kola Bel'dy, a Soviet singer of indigenous origin, in 1977

demonstrate the importance of new transportation possibilities in remote areas as well as the entanglements of social aspects of infrastructure with the lives of local residents.

The fact that Russian territory is so vast and characterized with diverse natural resources ensured that the knowledge of the country's natural riches for commercial and industrial use remained one of key priorities in different times (Oldfield, Lajus & Shaw, 2015). As early as mid-19th century the representatives of Russian intelligentsia advanced ideas on the interactions between nature and humans, when humans were presented as part of nature, not as a species above it. At the end of the 19th century, Russian scientists began to develop notions of conservation of forests, soils, and other natural resources (Josephson, 2013). Early Soviet years, however, started with the impulse to desacralize and demystify the concept of nature; desacralization was needed in order to dominate and transform the natural world (Weiner, 1988) and it was resonating with the central idea of Enlightenment (McGrath, 2002). The idea of human dominance over nature supplemented the overall goal of complete reconstruction of social order, and the task of conquering nature was among the most important ideological frames of the USSR (Bolotova, 2005). Natural resources, therefore, were considered mainly as a building material for "better future" (Zaharchenko, 1990). This vision is reflected in the popular Soviet slogan, the quote of a famous plant breeder Ivan Michurin: "We cannot wait for favors from Nature; we must wrest them from her" (Josephson, 2013). The understanding of nature in the Soviet Union was closely linked to the overarching role of humans in history; they were seen as progressively evolving towards total mastery of the course of life on the planet (Weiner, 2000). The discourse of a grandiose battle between humans (and machines) and natural forces becomes especially important in the Soviet years (Clark, 1981). A Soviet man is described as being superior to the powers of nature, among others water (fighting with floods and ice-drifts) and cold climate (for example, when conquering the Polar regions or building cities on permafrost). In popular

literature, as Weiner notes, antipathy towards nature frequently went alongside anthropomorphizing: nature was portrayed “as a consciously antisocialist force” (Weiner, 2000: 169).

Whereas daily life in the Soviet Union was often a site of ideological intervention (Kiaer and Naiman, 2006) and the attitudes towards nature were shaped by dominant discourses, it was not the only influencing factor. The responses to nature are highly diverse and ambivalent, and they are deeply embedded in people’s everyday life and complex social practices. These notions are often opposed to official bureaucratic discourses (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998).

The northern territories of Russia are rich in mineral resources that lead to increase of extractive industry in the region, mainly organized by state patronized private businesses from Russia and abroad, by the state or by private companies. Russia is one of the world’s largest oil producers (competing with Saudi Arabia) and also the world’s number one natural gas exporter, and most of its reserves are in Western Siberia (Stammler and Wilson, 2006). No wonder that the conflicts between oil and gas producers and indigenous communities in Siberia are often in the focus of scholarly attention. Whereas some studies discuss the negative influences of oil production on demography and health (Pika and Bogoyavlensky, 1995), the majority of projects concentrate on conflicts over land use. Olga Murashko identifies more than 70 “hot spots” for potential conflicts between industrial projects and indigenous population in Russia (Murashko, 2008: 49).

Russian indigenous and environmental legislation is often contradictory and its implementation is in many cases rather weak, and partly because of that indigenous communities can rarely take an active role in negotiations with extractive businesses (Stammler & Wilson, 2006; Wilson & Swiderska, 2009; Øverland, 2009). Emma Wilson (2002: 163) suggests that the main reason for this weak role of indigenous communities is

“their fatalism and their fear of opposing authority.” Another problem is that the compensations for the lands taken for oil, gas or mining industry are normally paid to administration, and thus indigenous communities feel they do not get any “direct” profit (Habeck, 2002). An additional factor to take into consideration for oil and gas companies is the emphasis on damage prevention instead of damage compensation (Stammler & Wilson, 2006).

In Russia, as Florian Stammler (2011: 262) notes, many indigenous communities internalize the idea of superiority of state’s interests which is a part of Soviet legacy. The indigenous elite mostly trained in the Soviet Union often views confrontation with state’s position as morally questionable and value collective interests over individual needs. Besides, the Soviet ideology promoted a common development model of “one unified people”, and thus the coexistence of industry with herding or fishing was envisaged (Stammler & Forbes, 2006: 52). As a result, indigenous groups affected do not have the tradition, the power and the connectedness allowing them to resist against industrial development (Stammler, 2011).

A number of authors also mention the economic importance of extractive industries for indigenous livelihoods. Piers Vitebsky stresses the important role gas exports play in Soviet (soon Russian) economy as well as regional development (Vitebsky, 1990). Natalia Novikova (2008) points out that despite many conflicts between indigenous inhabitants and businesses in Khanty-Mansi Autonomous region, for many Khanty and Nenets the oil companies represent an important source of income. Anna Sirina (2009) mentions that according to survey carried in 2005 by Gail Fondahl, indigenous Evenki wanted to benefit directly from ESPO pipeline through the provision of new jobs. Stephan Dudeck analyzes the case study of the oil town of Kogalym and reindeer herding areas surrounding it noticing that in the recent years more and more indigenous Khanty and Nenets are employed by oil companies. For oil companies it mean better relations with reindeer herders and more control

over the surrounding territory, while for indigenous citizens such employment brings additional income, access to medical services and other facilities in the city and closer contact with state and industry representatives (Dudeck, 2008). The study of Dudeck demonstrates that the categories of “indigenous person” and “industry representative” can get blurred, especially in the cases when these categories overlap and form one common multi-layered identity.

The recent case of *Dylacha* mining brigade (in Russian, *obshchina*) in Buriatia illustrates the contested notion of “traditional indigenous activity” in relation to indigenous communities (Safonova & Sántha, 2010). *Dylacha* was created in the beginning of the 1990s in Bauntovskii<sup>29</sup> district of Buriatia and engaged in various activities, including jade extraction. In 2012, its leaders were accused in a major scale fraud, and in 2013 *Dylacha* was liquidated. One of the reasons for the closure was the argument that such a modern activity as mining cannot be considered traditional indigenous economic activity.<sup>30</sup> The leaders of *Dylacha* received massive support from Russian indigenous activists and organizations, and the *obshchina* even applied to European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg stating that “...mining and processing of jade has been a traditional livelihood of the indigenous peoples of the Baikal region dating back hundreds of years”.<sup>31</sup> The official website of *Dylacha* states that such state actions “push indigenous peoples away from modern life towards stone age”.<sup>32</sup> The opponents of *Dylacha*, however, state that mining is not listed as traditional activity in any of the five Federal Laws regulating the work of *obshchinas* in Russia, and imply that the leaders of *Dylacha* are simply playing the “indigeneity” card in order to legitimize their

<sup>29</sup> Bauntovskii district is located in the northeast Buriatia. Evenki (indigenous people of Russia) constitute 5% of the district’s population (its total population is 8,743 people (2017)).

<sup>30</sup> “The conflict around the Evenki *obshchina* *Dylacha* reached federal level” in *Novaya Buriatia*, <http://www.newbur.ru/articles/10670>

<sup>31</sup> Report on observations to communications sent and replies received by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, James Anaya, 3 September 2014, p. 39

business.<sup>33</sup> The case of *Dylacha* reflects the contradictions related to contested views of traditional indigenous activities in contemporary Russia.

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<sup>32</sup> “The appeal of Dylacha will be heard at European Court of Human Rights”, the official website of *Dylacha*, <http://xn--80aak2a2dva.xn--p1ai/index.php/novosti/212-rassmotrenie-delo-dylachi>

<sup>33</sup> “Dylacha raises more questions than gives answers” in *Free Lance Bureau*, <http://flb.ru/infoprint/53055.html>

## Chapter 2. Past and present of Veps in Karelia and Sojots in Buriatia

This chapter provides background information on the communities which are in the focus of my research, Veps in the Republic of Karelia (Northwestern Russia) and Sojots in the Republic of Buriatia (South-Central Siberia). The chapter discusses the history of indigenous status recognition in both communities, as well as their historical and present connections to the stoneworking industry. Although the regions of Karelia and Buriatia are situated far from each other, almost at the opposite ends of Russia (see Fig. 3), there are a lot of similarities in the history of Veps and Sojots' indigenous status recognition, as well as in the interactions between

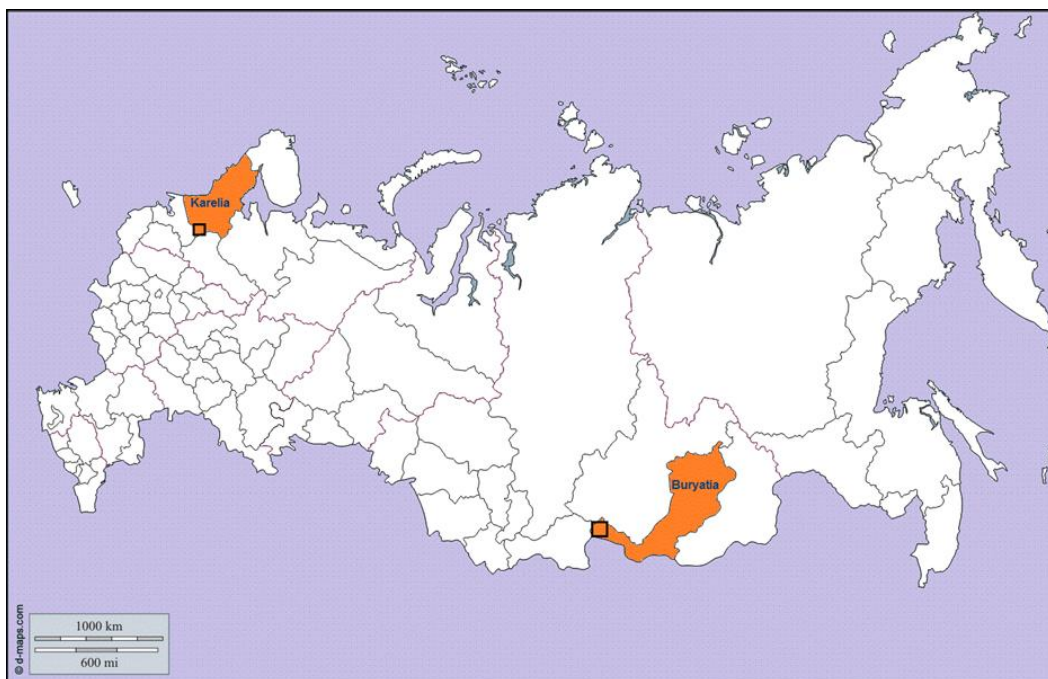


FIGURE 3. KARELIA AND BURIATIA ON THE MAP OF RUSSIA

## 2.1. Veps in Prionezhskii district of Karelia

This section will provide an outline of the history and present situation of Veps people in the Republic of Karelia. It will discuss the position of Veps as the ethnic minority divided between three Russian regions and the implications of administrative divisions imposed by the Soviet state on the development of Vepsian language and communication between the groups of Veps residing in different regions. As the dissertation is specifically focused on northern Veps residing in Karelia, this section will briefly discuss their history as well as historical and present situation of mining development in Prionezhskii district of Karelia. The section demonstrates that mining development played an important role in the history of northern Veps and influenced the formation of their regional identity.

### 2.1.1. *Veps: a divided minority*

Veps (also referred to as Vepsians or Vepses) are a Finno-Ugrian ethnic minority residing in three regions in the Northwestern Russia: Republic of Karelia, Leningrad region and Vologda region. All three regions border each other and constitute a part of the Northwestern Federal District of the Russian Federation. The center of the Northwestern Federal District is the city of St. Petersburg.

The Veps residing in Karelia are also called “northern Veps” (Strogal’schikova, 2014). The other two groups of Veps are referred to as “middle Veps” (residing in Leningrad and Vologda regions) and “southern Veps” (residing in Leningrad region) (see Fig. 4). A small number of Veps also reside in the Irkutsk region of Russia in south-central Siberia: those are the descendants of the Veps who migrated to Siberia during Stolypin’s reforms<sup>34</sup> in 1911 – 1913 (Strogal’schikova, 2016).

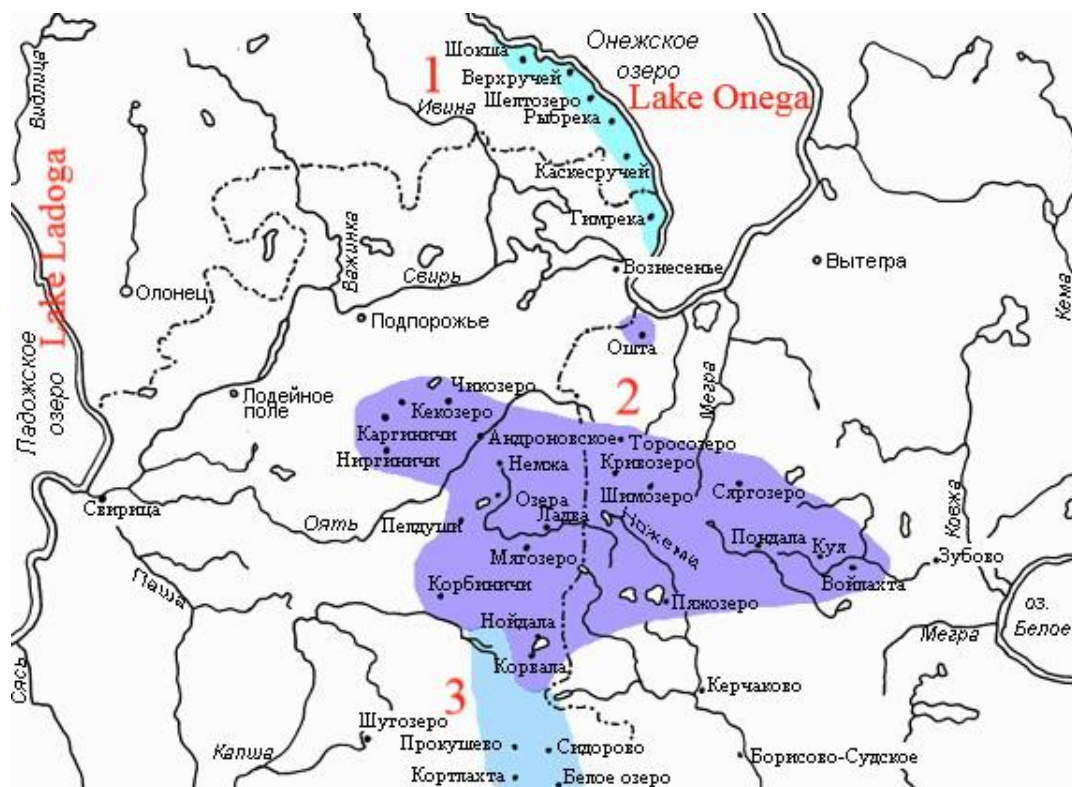


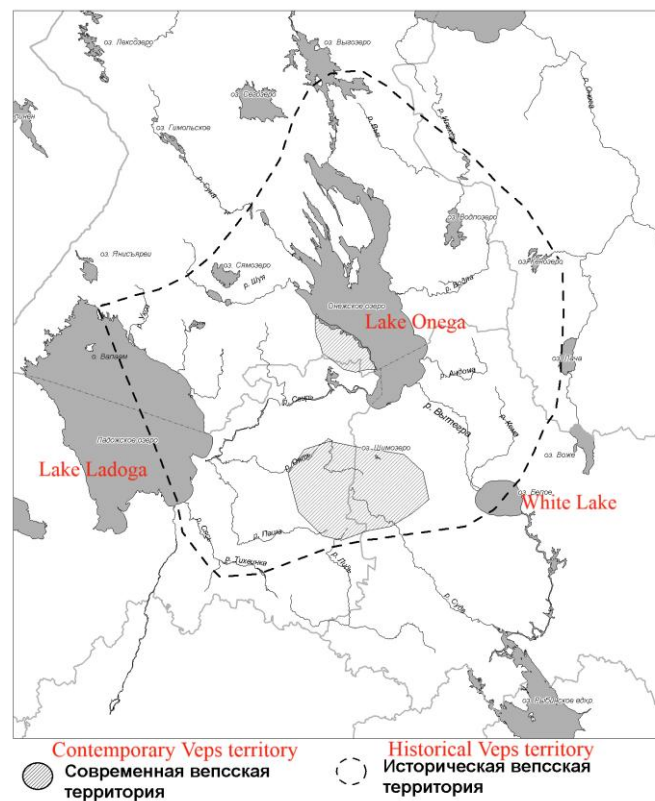
FIGURE 4. ETHNIC GROUPS OF VEPS: (1) NORTHERN VEPS, (2) MIDDLE VEPS, (3) SOUTHERN VEPS. ADAPTED FROM: [HTTP://PHONOGR.KRC.KARELIA.RU/SECTION.PHP?ID=25](http://phonogr.krc.karelia.ru/section.php?id=25)

The total number of Veps in Russia, according to the 2010 census, is 5,936 people. The census data demonstrate that the number of Veps is diminishing, as according to the 2002 census there were 8, 240 Veps in Russia (Davidov, 2017). In 2000, Veps received the status of indigenous small-numbered people of the Russian Federation. In 2006, they were also included in a separate list of indigenous small-numbered peoples of the Russian North, Siberia and Far East.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Stolypin land reform conducted between 1906 and 17 aimed to allow peasants to own land individually. Its aim was to encourage peasants to acquire their own land in order to create a class of small farmers. As a part of the reform, Veps families from Northwestern Russia received land allotment in the Irkutsk region and migrated there.

<sup>35</sup> Government Resolution of the Russian Federation, April 17, 2006: <https://rg.ru/2006/04/25/severniy-perechen-dok.html> (accessed April 13, 2019)

Historically Veps inhabited the area around Lake Ladoga, Lake Onega, and White Lake (Kurs, 2001: 70) known as Mezhozer'e (Vinokurova, 1994). However, as the lifestyle of Veps did not differ from their neighbors, they began to merge with the people living next to them, such as Slavs (Kurs, 2001). The southern Veps were intensely Russified, while the northern Veps were under the influence of Karelians. By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the territory where Veps resided was already much smaller and included the central part of Mezhozer'e and the southwestern coast of Lake Onega (Strogalschikova, 2012). Currently, the territory where Veps reside is significantly smaller than in the past (see Fig. 5).



**FIGURE 5. CONTEMPORARY AND HISTORICAL VEPS TERRITORY. ADAPTED FROM MULLONEN (2012).**

The connections between Veps residing in different regions were weakened during the Soviet period due to administrative divisions. In 1924, Vepsian villages on the coast of Lake Onega were divided between Karelia (in that period Karelian ASSR) and Leningrad region.

The villages belonging to Karelian ASSR became a part of the National Veps district with the center in Sheltozero village (Kurs, 2001). The villages belonging to Leningrad region, at the same time, received little support, as they were situated at the periphery of the region and were surrounded by Russian-speaking settlements, and thus assimilation of Veps in these villages increased rapidly (Strogal'schikova, 2016).

In 1937, the administrative border between Leningrad and Vologda region divided a number of Vepsian settlements. In 1953 -1958, the residents of several Vepsian villages in Shimozerskii district of Vologda region (around 6,000 people) were forced to relocate to the larger settlement Oshta, as it was considered more economically effective to support fewer larger settlements than a number of smaller ones (Kurs, 2001). Additionally, the resettlement was planned as a measure of support aimed at the re-building of Oshta village which was severely destroyed during the Second World War (Strogal'schikova, 2016). Due to the relocation, the Vepsian population of Shimozerskii district became assimilated with the Russian-speaking residents of Oshta (Strogal'schikova, 2016). Another consequence of the administrative divisions and relocations was the increased difficulty of communication and travel between the Veps settlements which were attached to different regions. Transport connections between different administrative units were often poor (Strogal'schikova, 2014). Due to limited travel opportunities, the communication between the groups of Veps residing in different regions became scarcer.

Besides, the groups of Veps residing in different regions became more separated from each other due to the differences in their activities. In 1703, an arms factory was built in Petrozavodsk,<sup>36</sup> close to the territory where Karelian Veps resided,<sup>37</sup> and Veps peasants were

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<sup>36</sup> The name of Petrozavodsk comes from the words Petr (for Peter the Great) and *zavod* (R: factory) referring to the arms factory built by the order of Peter I in 1703. The city of Petrozavodsk grew out of the workers' settlement surrounding the arms factory.

recruited to work in the factory (Davidov, 2017). In addition, Karelian Veps were engaged in stoneworking activities, as Prionezhskii district in Karelia was rich in stone deposits. The local identity of Karelian Veps, therefore, was shaped by their long-term involvement in the extraction of rare minerals in the territory of Prionezhskii district (Davidov, 2017). The Veps residing in Leningrad and Vologda districts were engaged in logging and in many cases had to work away from home forming logging brigades (Strogal'schikova, 2016). Another issue influencing the local identity was the remote or non-remote position of Vepsian villages. The villages of Prionezhskii district in Karelia, for example, are situated relatively close to Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelia, and it takes local residents 1-2 hours to reach Petrozavodsk by bus or car. In contrast, Vepsian villages in Vologda region are often considered remote. As the TV program *Vesti – Karelia* devoted to Vepsian villages in Vologda region states, “No trains go here, and it is difficult to reach Vologda Veps by car as well... Some villages are not even marked on maps” (*Vesti – Karelia*, October 2, 2013).<sup>38</sup>

Soviet-time administrative divisions and the policies of the 1950s – 1960s, such as the relocation of small villages' populations to larger settlements, led to significant separation of different groups of Veps from each other. In addition, such policies influenced the assimilation of Veps minority, as due to relocations they often needed to settle among Russian-speaking families and would therefore switch to Russian as the language of communication. The development of each group of Veps was also influenced by specific features of their landscapes, as well as the level of closeness to regional and federal centers. This dissertation focuses specifically on the case studies of northern Veps residing in Prionezhskii district of Karelia. However, in order to avoid generalizations it is important to state that the patterns of history and development of northern Veps in many cases do not

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<sup>37</sup> Due to the Great Northern War (1700–1721) between the Tsardom of Russia and the Swedish Empire, the need for armament manufacturing in the Northwest of Russia increased.

correspond with the history and contemporary life of other groups of Veps in Leningrad and Vologda regions.

### ***2.1.2. Veps in Karelia: introduction***

The Republic of Karelia is situated in the North-West of Russia. Karelia borders Finland to the west, Leningrad region to the south, Arkhangelsk region to the west, and Murmansk region to the north (see Fig. 7). The population of Karelia, as estimated by the Russian Federal State Statistics Service in January 2019, is 617,920 people. The capital of Karelia is Petrozavodsk, situated in the southern part of the Republic, with a population of 279,190 people (estimated in 2018).



FIGURE 6. KARELIA AND ITS NEIGHBORING REGIONS.  
ADAPTED FROM:  
[HTTP://BIO.KRC.KARELIA.RU/CONFERENCES/SOIL\\_CLASSIFICATION\\_04/KARELIAMAP.JPG](http://bio.krc.karelia.ru/conferences/soil_classification_04/kareliamap.jpg)

Karelia is a multi-ethnic region with three Finno-Ugrian minorities: Karelians, Veps

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<sup>38</sup> Source: <http://www.finnougoria.ru/news/33795/> (Accessed April 13, 2019)

and Finns. In 2010, according to the census, there were 3,423 Veps in Karelia. In 2000, Veps received the status of indigenous people of the Russian Federation after a campaign initiated by Vepsian activists (Strogalschikova, 2014). Karelians are not eligible for this status according to Russian legislation: only the ethnicities which number less than 50,000 people in Russia may be considered indigenous small-numbered peoples, while in 2010 Karelians numbered 60,815

In Karelia, Veps reside in several villages along the coast of Lake Onega, in Prionezhskii district (also called Prionezh'e more informally). This is the part of Karelia which is situated close to Petrozavodsk, the capital of the Republic. Vepsian villages constitute just a part of the larger district of Prionezhskii district.

Between 1994 and 2004, the territory of the Vepsian villages had autonomous status as Veps national district (or Veps *volost'*, in Russian) – see Fig. 7. The Veps national district was established in January 1994 and united Shoksha (and Kvartsitnyi), Sheltozero, Rybreka and several smaller villages situated next to them (see Fig. 7). The word *volost'* indicated that the new establishment was smaller than the Russian *raion* (though here I translate both as district). The Veps national *volost'* was formed from the settlements which were formerly a part of Prionezhskii *raion* (district). It was envisaged that the district should have its own budget, and the district council would decide which organizations and enterprises have the right to operate in its territory (Strogalschikova, 2016). The creation of the autonomous district, as was planned, would also allow the successful development of Veps language and culture.



FIGURE 7. VEPS NATIONAL DISTRICT (VOLOST'). ADAPTED FROM:  
[HTTP://LIBRARY.KARELIA.RU/LIBRARY/HTML/VEPS.HTM](http://library.karelia.ru/library/html/veps.htm)

However, the time of the Veps district's establishment was also the period of deep economic crisis of the 1990s when a number of mining enterprises stopped working. In 1999, there was an attempt to overcome the financial difficulties by initiating the *RESURS* program of economic development relying on the expansion of resource extraction in the territory of the district. The program implicated the recruitment of fly-in-fly-out workers, and therefore was criticized, as it did not contribute to the sustainable development of the district and did not provide employment opportunities for local residents (Strogaľ'schikova, 2016). Due to the initiation of *RESURS* program, between 1998 and 2002 the district's revenues experienced a six-fold increase. However, less than 20% of this revenue actually stayed in the district (as most of it went directly to the federal budget of Russia), and the district's financial difficulties progressed (Strogaľ'schikova, 2016). Due to economic constraints, as well as because of the

changes in federal legislation regarding the territories of municipal settlements,<sup>39</sup> Veps national district was liquidated in 2004. It was divided into three village settlements (*R: sel'skoe poseleniie*): Sheltozero, Shoksha, and Rybreka settlements. All three settlements subsequently became parts of Prionezhskii district.

During my fieldwork I was working in several of the largest Vepsian villages: Shoksha (and its neighboring settlement Kvartsitnyi), Sheltozero, and Rybreka (see Fig. 8). In the following sections I will provide a brief description of each of the villages. The distance between the capital of the Republic and all the villages of the former Veps volost' is less than 100 km. This relatively short distance influences the living patterns of the local residents (they travel to Petrozavodsk often for shopping or medical appointments, feel connected to the city, many of them have relatives there whom they visit regularly).

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<sup>39</sup> Federal Law "On the general principles of organization of local governance in the Russian Federation," 06.10.2003: <https://www.zakonrf.info/doc-15671746/gl2-st10/> (Accessed April 12, 2019). According to the law, only two types of local governance could be established in Russia: *raion* (R: district or county) and *sel'skoe poseleniie* (R: village settlement). Veps national volost' did not qualify for either of these categories, it was too small to be considered *raion* (district) but too large for a village settlement.



FIGURE 8. VEPS VILLAGES OF PRONEZHSHKII DISTRICT AND FORMER VEPS NATIONAL DISTRICT.

## Shoksha

The village of Shoksha (in Vepsian, Šokš) is situated 61 kilometers from Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelia. The village is named after the small river Shoksha which passes through it. The village was first mentioned in cadastres in 1563. In 2013, there were 168 permanent residents in Shoksha<sup>40</sup>. In summer, the population grows, as many families move from Petrozavodsk to their houses in the village which are now used as summer houses. Shoksha and its neighboring settlement Kvartsitnyi are nowadays considered a joint settlement. Shoksha and Kvartsitnyi are situated next to the raspberry quartzite quarry (from which Kvartsitnyi received its name) and the quarry producing diabase gravel which is now closed.

<sup>40</sup> Shoksha settlement in Pronezhskii district: <http://www.vrorgo.ru/2018/04/11/selo-shoksha/> (Accessed April 11, 2019)

## **Kvartsitnyi**

Kvartsitnyi is the settlement built in the early 1970s next to Shoksha (5 km from the village) closer to the shore of Lake Onega. Kvartsitnyi was planned as the workers' settlement built next to the diabase gravel quarry which started operating in 1973 (its construction started in 1971) and was managed by *Mosoblstroimaterialy*, the state enterprise based in Moscow. The new quarry produced building materials for the Moscow region. Due to financial support from Moscow, all the houses in Kvartsitnyi had amenities such as heating and hot water (a special boiler house providing heating for the houses was built in Kvartsitnyi with the support of the quarry). Initially, the new quarry recruited local workers from Shoksha, some of whom initially worked for the raspberry quartzite quarry.

## **Sheltozero**

Sheltozero is the former centre of Veps volost' (as well as Veps national district existing in the Soviet period). The village is situated 70 km from Petrozavodsk, on the coast of Lake Onega. In Sheltozero, there is the museum of Veps culture founded by Ryurik Lonin in 1967. In addition, every year the Veps celebration *Elonpu* (V: *The Tree of Life*) is held in Sheltozero.

## **Rybreka**

The village of Rybreka is located slightly further from Petrozavodsk (82 km) along the shore of Lake Onega. It is first mentioned in cadastres in 1496, but it is estimated that Veps lived on its territory since the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>41</sup> In 2013, 427 people lived in Rybreka permanently, but many people work in shifts at the local quarries. Rybreka is the center of gabbro-diabase extraction in Prionezhskii district. In the Soviet period, the extraction was carried out by the state enterprise *Onezhskoe rudoupravleniie*. Currently, there are around ten private quarries of different size operating in the village. This number may vary, as some of

the quarries stop operating and get closed, while new ones may be opened.

### ***2.1.3. Veps in Karelia: a historical outline***

This section will provide a brief outline of the history of Veps people and Vepsian language in Karelia from the 19<sup>th</sup> century till the present time. The beginning of ethnographic studies of Veps are often associated with the name of Anders Johan Sjögren (1794–1855), a Finnish scholar and academic who visited Veps in Karelia several times in the 1820s (Kurs, 2001). As a result of the trips, Sjögren stated that Veps represent an independent Finno-Ugrian ethnic community, and their language is distinct from other kin languages such as Finnish or Karelian (Strogaľschikova, 2016). He also wrote down a number of texts in Vepsian, thus opening the language up for further academic investigations. In 1842, another Finnish scholar, Elias Lönnrot, expanded Sjögren’s collected materials on Veps as a result of his several-month expedition. Lönnrot’s doctoral dissertation devoted to Vepsian language was defended in Helsinki in 1853 (Strogaľschikova, 2016). Since the 1880s, Russian ethnographers also started studying Vepsian language and culture. Scholarly attention towards Veps became especially strong in the 1920s, after the 1917 Revolution, as one of the central points of the Soviet program in that period was the development of “backward communities” (Filimonchik, 2011). Like other ethnic minorities, Veps were seen by the Soviet authorities as “disappearing” people who needed additional support to develop. In 1927, Stepan Makar’ev defended his doctoral dissertation on Karelian Veps in Leningrad University. In his dissertation, Makar’ev presented a thorough account of Veps occupations, households, food habits, system of rites and beliefs (Filimonchik, 2011). In the early 1930s, a group of Leningrad scholars under the leadership of Matvei Hämäläinen started work on the creation

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<sup>41</sup> The website of the Prionezhskii district, <https://prionega.karelia.ru>

of Veps written language based on Latin alphabet (Filimonchik, 2011).

In 1924, Prionezhskii district of Karelia, where northern Veps resided, became a part of the Karelian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (KASSR) (Davidov, 2017). Finnish Communist expatriates who migrated to the neighboring Karelia after the 1917 Revolution played an important role in the regional politics (Austin, 1992). For them, migrating to Soviet Karelia was a form of escapism, as they saw Karelia as an important part of Finnish culture and were willing to build socialism on this kin land (Austin, 1992). In the 1930s, Finnish Communist expatriates were joined by large numbers of Finnish immigrants who moved to Karelia from Canada, the United States and Finland (Golubev & Takala, 2014). In the beginning of the 1920s, Finnish became the second official language in Karelia alongside Russian.

In 1927, two Veps national districts were established, Sheltozerskii district in KASSR (with its center in Sheltozero village) and Vinnitskii national district in Leningrad region (Strogaľschikova, 2016). The 1926 census demonstrated that the number of Veps was growing (32, 773 people in total); out of them, 8,587 Veps lived in Karelia (Siragusa 2018). At that time, almost all Karelian Veps lived in Sheltozerskii district (8,343) and constituted 93,7% of its total population (Strogaľschikova, 2016).

The language politics of Karelia in the 1920s is sometimes referred to as “finnization” (R: *finnizatsiia*) (Klement’ev, 1994). Finnish expatriates played an important role in the regional politics, and therefore Finnish language was strongly promoted. In 1921, it was officially decided that the creation of Karelian written language is not possible due to the existence of its several distinct dialects, and thus it was recommended by the All-Karelian

Congress of Soviets<sup>42</sup> to educate Karelians and Veps in the Finnish language (Strogaľ'schikova, 2016).

In 1935, however, the Finnish government of Karelia (under the leadership of Edvard Gylling) was dismissed, and their language politics was declared fallacious (Strogaľ'schikova, 2016). Among the charges common for the 1930s in the Soviet Union, such as espionage and “bourgeois nationalism,”<sup>43</sup> former leaders of Karelia were accused in an attempt to alienate Veps and Karelian children from their native languages and cultures, as well as from Russian language (Strogaľ'schikova, 2014). In 1937, the education in Karelian and Vepsian schools was transferred to native languages. At that time, the previously existing Vepsian written language based on Latin alphabet was switched to Cyrillic alphabet (Strogaľ'schikova, 2014). For several months in 1937 there were attempts to publish a part of the local newspaper of Prionezhskii district, *Krasnoe Sheltozero*, in Vepsian (See Fig. 9). However, as Figure 9 demonstrates, most of the words in the publications of 1937 were derived from Russian with Veps endings added to them. In many cases, the existing Veps synonyms were not taken into account. For example, the phrase “on the road” is written using the Russian word *doroga* (road) with a Veps ending “l” meaning “on something” (i.e. *dorogal*) despite the existence of the Veps word *te* (road). The tone of the publications blindly copies the Russian-language Soviet newspapers without paying much attention to the Vepsian language itself. Therefore it is hard to refer to the Veps publications of 1937 as actual promotion of the Vepsian language.

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<sup>42</sup> The Congress of Soviets was the supreme governing body of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and several other Soviet republics from 1917–36.

<sup>43</sup> In Marxism, bourgeois nationalism is the practice by the ruling classes of deliberately dividing people by nationality, race, ethnicity, or religion, so as to distract them from initiating class warfare.



FIGURE 9. A VEPSIAN-LANGUAGE PAGE FROM KRASNOE SHELTZERO (IN CYRILLICS), JULY 1, 1937

Within the year, however, the political landscape changed again. Karelian and Veps activists were suspected of collaboration with Finland, and therefore in 1938 education in both languages stopped, and a number of Veps and Karelian scholars and activists were arrested. Stepan Makar'ev was arrested and executed in 1937. Matvei Hämäläinen, the author of the Vepsian alphabet, was arrested in 1938 and spent one and a half year in prison (Filimonchik, 2011). In 1938, both national Veps districts in Karelia and Leningrad region were liquidated. Former Sheltozerskii national district became a part of Prionezhskii district (Strogal'schikova, 2014). After the Soviet – Finnish War,<sup>44</sup> the Karelian Autonomous Soviet

<sup>44</sup> The Soviet – Finnish War, or The Winter War, - a military conflict between the Soviet Union and Finland (November 30, 1939 - March 13, 1940).

Socialist Republic became the Karelian-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic,<sup>45</sup> and Finnish was once again introduced as one of its official languages. However, the issues of Karelian and Vepsian languages' development were not raised in that period (Strogaľ'schikova, 2014).

The arrests and repressions of the 1930s, the Winter War (1939 – 1940) as well as the Great Patriotic War (1941 – 1945) had a negative influence on the demographic situation of the Veps in Karelia. In 1941 – 1944, parts of Karelia, including Prionezhskii district, were occupied by Finns, and a number of Veps families left their villages in that period (Strogaľ'schikova, 2016). In the 1960s – 1970s, due to “liquidation of the villages without prospects” policy, many Veps migrated from smaller villages to larger settlements or to urban areas (Strogaľ'schikova, 2014). The policy of “liquidation of the villages without prospects” recognized the smaller rural settlements as economically inefficient and forced the migration of its residents to larger villages or to the neighboring towns. Because of this policy, a number of small Vepsian villages in Karelia became abandoned.

Although until the 1930s Veps lived in a rather closed community, the rapid development of mineral extraction influenced the ethnic composition of the area, as it happened in other regions of Russia influenced by the development of different branches of industry (Pika & Grant, 1999). Until mid-20th century, Veps constituted more than 95% of the population of Prionezhskii district. However, the situation changed due to large outmigration from Vepsian villages to urban areas in 1960-1970s; at the same time, people from other settlements or regions moved to Prionezhskii district of Karelia to work in the mining industry. The number of mixed marriages started growing, and in most cases Russian became the language of communication in such families. Soviet assimilation policies towards

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<sup>45</sup> The Karelian-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic was established on March 31, 1940 by merging the KASSR with the Finnish Democratic Republic. The latter was created in the territory ceded by Finland in the Winter War by the Moscow Peace Treaty, namely the Karelian Isthmus and Ladoga Karelia, including the cities of Vyborg (in Finnish, Viipuri) and Sortavala.

Vepsian language and culture led to the situation when young people from Vepsian families were often registered as Russian (Strogalschikova, 2014). The assimilation of Veps accelerated, and already by 1959 the number of Veps registered during the census was half that of 1930s (Strogal'schikova, 2016). Figure 10 demonstrates the rapid decline in the number of registered Veps between the censuses of 1939 and 1959. The assimilation of Veps continued until the next change in the political situation in the region in the late 1980s and the beginning of the revitalization campaign for Karelian and Vepsian languages and cultures and the escalation of public interest towards the situation of Finno-Ugrian minorities in Karelia.

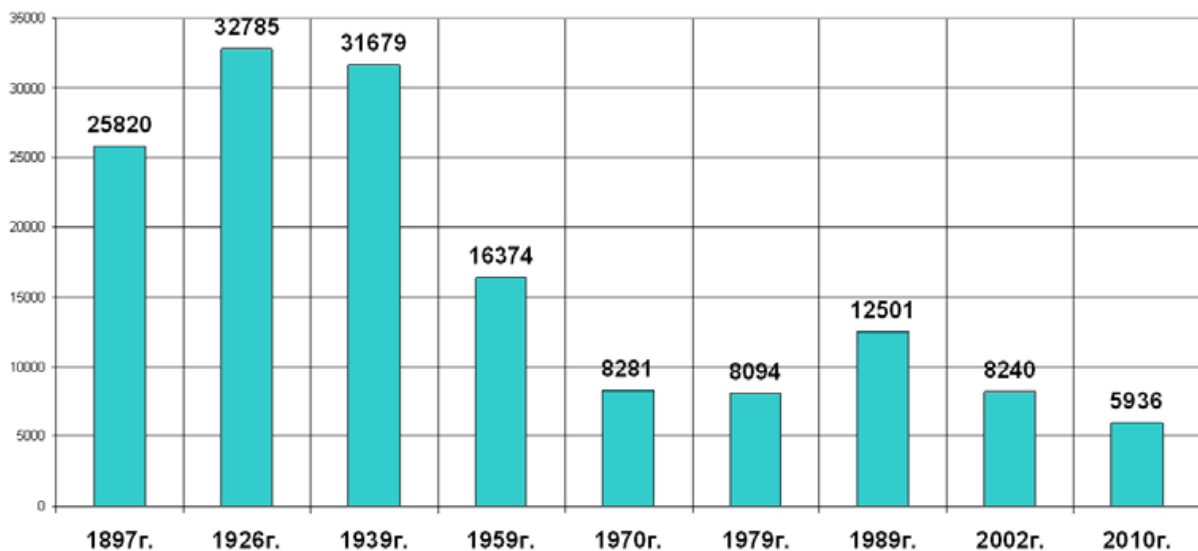


FIGURE 10. THE DYNAMICS OF VEPS POPULATION ACCORDING TO CENSUS DATA. SOURCE: STROGAL'SCHIKOVA, 2014

In May 1987, the discussion on the future of the Vepsian language started in the local Karelian newspaper *Kommunist Prionezh'a* (Vepsy: *modeli etnicheskoi mobilizatsii*, 2007). The discussion led to a conference on the current position of Veps, during which it was decided to create a standardized Vepsian alphabet based on one of its widespread dialects. In 1987, the Veps celebration called *Elonpu* (*The Tree of Life*) was held for the first time in the

Leningrad region (Siragusa, 2017). Later, the annual celebration symbolizing the continuation of Vepsian language and culture also started being celebrated in Karelia and the Vologda region (see Fig. 11).



FIGURE 11. THE CELEBRATION OF THE TREE OF LIFE IN KARELIA IN JULY 2018

The program on Vepsian language revival of the late 1980s – early 1990s was formulated during the conferences in Oзера village (Leningrad region) and in Petrozavodsk (Karelia) in 1987 – 1988 (Strogaľschikova, 2014). It included the creation of a unified Latin-based alphabet for the written Vepsian language (1989), the establishment of the Finno-Ugrian school Petrozavodsk in 1994, and organizing language classes in Prionezhskii district of Karelia. In addition, the Departments of Finno-Ugrian languages were established in the two universities of Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelia, since 1990. The Society of Vepsian Culture (established in 1989) was actively supporting these projects. The authorities of Karelia started supporting press in Vepsian (*Kodima*, monthly), and radio- and TV-broadcasts in Vepsian language. In 1996, the first collection of short stories and poems in Vepsian was published. All these milestones were reached due to the work of Veps scholars, writers and activists from Petrozavodsk and Prionezhskii district, including Zinaida Strogaľschikova,

Nina Zaitseva, Irma Mullonen, Irina Vinokurova, Elizaveta Kharitonova, Anatolii Petukhov, Alevtina Andreeva, Nikolai Abramov, Ryurik Lonin, Natalia Ankhimova and many others.

However, since the early 2000s the previously reached milestones in the development of Vepsian language and culture have proved hard to maintain. One of the previously established higher education programs in Vepsian language got closed due to the lack of applicants, and the second program (at Petrozavodsk State University) struggled hard in 2011 to find students. Since 2015, special stipends of 5,000 rubles monthly (slightly less than a half of the minimum wage in Karelia) have been established by the Karelian government for students studying Karelian and Vepsian languages in order to encourage applicants to choose these specializations (*Respublika*, December 18, 2014). The number of classes in Vepsian in Finno-Ugrian school dropped from five classes a week to one-two. In 2004, Veps national district was liquidated, and it is now difficult for local activists to develop Vepsian language and culture in Vepsian villages which are a part of the larger Prionezhskii district.

However, there are also a number of recent initiatives to promote the Vepsian language and culture. Some of them are closely related to digital technologies: for example, it is possible to connect to the monthly meetings of the Veps speaking club<sup>46</sup> (in Vepsian, *Paginklub*) from anywhere in the world using Skype. Larisa Smolina and Vladimir Slavov created several short films devoted to Veps traditions (such as *Sel'ktas vedes kala kokib – Fish Bites in Clear Water* and *Živatad vepsläižiden elos – Animals in the Life of Veps*). They also created a series of short YouTube films aimed at those wishing to study basic Vepsian language.<sup>47</sup>

In 2000, Veps received the status of indigenous small-numbered peoples of the

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<sup>46</sup> The name *Paginklub* can be translated from Vepsian as “Speaking club.” The creation of Paginklub club will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7

<sup>47</sup> The videos are available at Larisa Smolina’s YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCukj1NRb-QzW1RhxyUfGo0A> (Accessed April 14, 2019).

Russian Federation. In 2006, they were also included in the separate list of Indigenous small-numbered peoples of the Russian North, Siberia, and Far East. Due to their indigenous status Veps settlements could start participating in projects financed directly from the federal budget of Russia.<sup>48</sup> In 2002 – 2009, the renovation of the school in Sheltozero was partly financed from the federal budget (Strogal'schikova, 2017), as well as the renovation of Veps ethnographic museum (*Litsei*, October 17, 2012). Additional benefits of indigenous status for Veps in Karelia include fishing quotas as well as increased retirement benefits.<sup>49</sup> In April 2019, Veps residing in Prionezhskii district (but not those living in other parts of Karelia) were included in the all-Russian list of the indigenous peoples of the North who have the right to retire five years earlier than the rest of the Russian citizens.<sup>50</sup>

The local history of Veps in Karelia reflected much more general issues of state policies towards ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia. Table 1 summarizes the milestones of Veps history in Karelia which are strongly related to the general directions of Soviet and post-Soviet policies of various historical periods. This section demonstrates strong influence of state policies on the position of Veps, but at the same time shows that these policies were often inconsistent or contradictory, and therefore the state cannot be presented as a unified force, but rather as the constellation of micro-powers with different directions. The next section of the chapter will demonstrate the profound influence of mining development on the history of Veps in the Republic of Karelia.

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<sup>48</sup> As Petrov (2008) notes, indigenous privileges and benefits in Russia are modest comparing to other Arctic countries.

<sup>49</sup> The increase in monthly retirement benefits for Veps in Karelia is 5180 roubles for 2019 (Karelia. News, March 5, 2019: <https://www.karelia.news/news/2323837/vepsy-karelii-polucat-dopolnitelnuu-pensiu>, accessed May 3, 2019).

<sup>50</sup> The amendment to the regulation of the Russian Federation (October 1, 2015) adopted on April 13, 2019: <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/420305886>). Soiots in Okinskii district, just as Veps, initially were not included in the list of indigenous peoples having the right for earlier retirement and had to obtain this right in court (they were included in the list as a special amendment in November 2017). This regulation refers to the “social retirement benefits” which are paid to those citizens who do not have employment record.

**TABLE 1. IMPORTANT PERIODS OF NORTHERN VEPS' HISTORY**

<b>Historical period</b>	<b>Historical event</b>
1824 - 1827	Anders Johan Sjögren visits Veps and recognizes them as a distinct ethnic minority
1842	Elias Lönnrot visit Veps and conducts research for his subsequent doctoral dissertation
1913	First Russian – Veps dictionary published (author: Pavel Uspenskii, based on Cyrillic alphabet)
1921	Karelian authorities declare that Veps children will be educated in Finnish
1927	Sheltozerskii Veps national district established in Karelia
1932	Veps alphabet (based on Latin alphabet) established, first Veps ABC primer published
1937	Education in Veps schools transferred to Vepsian language
1937 - 1938	Repressions of Veps scholars and activists
1938	Education in Vepsian language stopped (transferred to Russian)
1939	Sheltozerskii district liquidated
1941 - 1944	Occupation of parts of Karelia, including Prionezhskii district, by Finns
1960s – 1970s	“Liquidation of Villages without Prospects” policy, large outmigration from Veps villages
1967	Veps museum created in Sheltozero (Prionezhskii district) by Ryurik Lonin
1987	Veps conference held in Oзера village, Leningrad region. It gathered scholars and activists from Karelia, Leningrad and Vologda regions. The guiding principles of Veps revitalization campaign were formulated there.

1988	The meeting “Veps: the problems of economic and cultural development during <i>perestroika</i> ” held in Petrozavodsk, Karelia.
1989	Veps alphabet created (based on Latin alphabet)
1989	Veps festival “Tree of Life” held in Sheltozero (Prionezhskii district)
1993	First issue of Veps newspaper <i>Kodima</i> published
1994	Finno-Ugrian school opens in Petrozavodsk (offering classes in Finnish, Karelian, Vepsian languages)
1994	Veps <i>volost</i> ’ (Veps national district) created in Karelia
1996	First collection of Vepsian stories and poems <i>Kodirandaine</i> published in Petrozavodsk
2000	Veps recognized as indigenous small-numbered people of the Russian Federation
2004	Veps <i>volost</i> ’ liquidated
2006	Veps included in the list of indigenous peoples of North, Siberia and Far East of the Russian Federation

#### ***2.1.4 History and current state of mining in Vepsian villages in Karelia***

The development of stoneworking in Prionezhskii district in Karelia started already in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The area of the district is rich in two rare stones which are well suited for construction sites — gabbro-diabase and raspberry quartzite.<sup>51</sup> Diabase, a dark-grey rock which becomes black when polished, can be found in significant quantities only in Karelia (near Rybreka village in Prionezhskii district), Ukraine and Australia (Davidov, 2013a). As for raspberry quartzite, it is valuable due to its unusual dark-red color, firmness, and rarity: the only place in the world where it can be extracted is the quarry near Shoksha in Karelia. In

literature, raspberry quartzite is sometimes referred to as “the porphyry of Shoksha” because of its unusual deep red color (Burukovskaya, 1985).

Gabbro-diabase (see Fig. 12) belongs to the group of rocks that originated as a result of slow solidification of magma in the depths of the Earth crust at a high level of pressure from the layers of the earth above. The result of this process was the dense structure of the rock. The initial stages of gabbro-diabase formation are the same as those of granite and basalt. However, the subsequent stages were different, so the qualities of all three stones differ from each other. A distinctive feature of diabase is its high firmness.



**FIGURE 12. GABBRO-DIABASE. SOURCE:  
[HTTPS://GABBROKARELIA.COM](https://gabbrokarelia.com)**

Raspberry quartzite (quartzite-sandstone – see Fig. 13) is a metamorphic (modified) rock. Quartzite spent a long time in the depths of the Earth, being compressed and heated. Initially, it was petrified sand (sandstone), consisting of millimeter fragments of a very solid mineral - quartz (hence the name quartzite). The estimated age of the quartzite is more than two billion years. Its dark red color is the result of the admixture of the mineral hematite (Popov, 2018).

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<sup>51</sup> Both stones are also referred to more colloquially as diabase and quartzite.



FIGURE 13. RASPBERRY QUARTZITE. SOURCE: [HTTPS://GEMGUIDE.RU](https://gemguide.ru)

In the 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, many northern Veps worked as *otkhodniki* (seasonal labor migrants) at construction sites in different parts of the country (Strogalschikova, 2012). For many Veps families, seasonal labor was the main source of income. Outside of Karelia, Veps were recognized as masters of stone cutting, and stoneworking brigades regularly accompanied the stones to construction sites. The Veps *otkhodniki* used to leave Karelia in early spring and came back in late autumn. While the men were away, women took over household work. The Veps ethnographic museum is Sheltozero village in Prionezhskii district (opened in 1967) is situated in the former house of Ivan Mel'kin who managed the transfer of Vepsian stone to the construction sites of St. Petersburg and Petrozavodsk. The museum contains a special exhibition devoted to mining and the travels of Vepsian brigades.

Gabbro-diabase and raspberry quartzite were used for decorative purposes in a number of cities, first and foremost Moscow and St. Petersburg. However, the stones also traveled abroad. In 1847, twenty seven blocks of raspberry quartzite were sent to Paris for Napoleon's sarcophagus (Strogalschikova, 2014) which is now located in *Les Invalides* (See Fig. 16). As a legend says, Tsar Nicholas I commented on this occasion, "What a strange fate for the emperor! He lost his glory in Russia, and yet Russia is building his tombstone" (Burukovskaya, 1985).



FIGURE 14. NAPOLEON'S SARCOPHAGUS IN LES INVALIDES, PARIS. SOURCE: [HTTPS://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/RETOUR\\_DES\\_CENDRES](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Retour_des_cendres)

The first gabbro-diabase quarry operated by the government, *Onezhskie razrabotki diabaza* (later *Onezhskoe rudoupravlenie*), opened in Rybreka in 1924 (*Respublika*, November 19, 2014). Large-scale extraction of raspberry quartzite near Shoksha (*Shokshinskie razrabotki*) also started in the 1920s. In 1959, both quarries were merged into the same enterprise (*Respublika*, November 19, 2014). *Onezhskoe rudoupravlenie*, the state industrial enterprise, was managing both the diabase quarry in Rybreka and the quartzite quarry near Shoksha (*Na rubezhe*, January – February 1964). In 1938, raspberry quartzite was presented at the New York World Fair where it received appreciation (Yeryomin, 2004). At first, all the works at diabase and quartzite quarries were performed manually, but already in the 1930s the quarries were to a large extent mechanized and more than 2,000 people worked there. The first mining teams consisted mainly of local Veps, many of whom had experience of working with the stone (*Respublika*, November 19, 2014). Both gabbro-diabase and raspberry quartzite were used for decorative purposes in Petrozavodsk, Moscow, Leningrad, Yalta, and many other cities. Gabbro-diabase was used for the pavement of Red Square in Moscow, while parts of Lenin's Mausoleum situated there were made of raspberry quartzite in 1930 (and later restored in 1972). The quartzite from Shoksha was also used for the Tomb

of the Unknown Soldier situated next to the Kremlin in Moscow (*Kommunist Prionezh'a*,<sup>52</sup> April 30, 1988).



FIGURE 15. THE SCHEME OF A BALL MILL (SOURCE: [HTTPS://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/BALL\\_MILL](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ball_mill)).

Raspberry quartzite was also widely used for industrial purposes, e.g. in the production of glass. Due to its firmness and durability, quartzite was used for the grinding balls for ball mills<sup>53</sup> which were a part of glass production (see Fig. 15).

In the 1940s, the production of gabbro-diabase and raspberry quartzite in Karelia was stopped because of the Great Patriotic War and the occupation of Veps villages by Finns. However, soon after the war ended it was resumed, even though in the first years the quarries had to shift back to manual labor due to the lack of equipment. The publications of the 1960s report that both quarries were largely mechanized (*Na rubezhe*, January – February 1964). In 1971, the new quarry producing diabase gravel opened near Shoksha. The quarry was managed by the Moscow-based enterprise *Mosoblstroimaterialy*, the gravel stone produced by it was intended for the factories and houses in Moscow region (KP, March 3, 1984). In the beginning of the 1970s, the new settlement of Kvartsitnyi was built next to the quarry, five kilometers from the village of Shoksha.

Both diabase and quartzite quarries were managed by the state, but Veps continued to

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<sup>52</sup> KP in further references

<sup>53</sup> A ball mill is a cylindrical device used in grinding materials like ores, chemicals, or paints. The grinding is done by impact of the balls from near the top of the shell. The quartzite was used for the production of grinding balls. As the mill turns, the balls grind the raw materials.

be symbolically linked to the stone, and this link was promoted in the Soviet-time local press. In these publications, Veps were referred to as “the ancient craftsmen” who learned how to work with stone a long time ago (KP, April 30, 1988) or even described poetically as the strong people who were fighting with the stone and Karelian nature: “because of their blood, the stone is so red here” (KP, January 9, 1971). The link of Veps with stoneworking was promoted in literature as well. In his poem *The Ballad on Vepsian Stone* (1970), the Karelian poet of Finnish origin, Taisto Summanen, recalls the history of Vepsian mining with a poetic image of the small people commemorating Lenin in stone (for the Mausoleum): “We will create our song not out of words, but out of stone – for centuries.” In academic literature of the Soviet period, the continuous involvement of Veps in stoneworking was characterized as evidence of their fast ethnic development and consolidation of the people. Stoneworking, the development of seasonal labor, as well as the mechanization of agriculture were viewed as the factors which “put the Veps on the same level with the peoples surrounding them” (Pimenov, 1965: 249).

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the mining deposits of quartzite and gabbro-diabase were partly closed, partly sold to private companies, the majority of them being from other Russian regions, some of them foreign or involving foreign partners (Davidov, 2013a). Currently, raspberry quartzite extraction is working small-scale producing gravestones as well as stone tabletops, vases, and other elements of design for private buyers. Since 2005, its extraction is carried out by the private enterprise *Kvartsit*. Quartzite is also sold as the stone used in saunas due to its abilities to hold at high temperature. The diabase gravel quarry which was built in 1971 got bankrupt and closed in the 1990s. As the quarry was supporting the whole settlement of Kvartsitnyi, most of its residents were left without job, and in addition, without heating and hot water which were provided by the quarry’s boiler houses.

Currently, most of the residents of Kvartsitnyi and Shoksha work at the quarries in Rybreka or in other parts of Karelia.

In Rybreka, gabbro-diabase mining is still actively continued by private companies (Strogalschikova, 2012), and most of the extracted stone is taken away from Karelia. However, the exact number of the quarries registered in Rybreka may vary, as some of the quarries are registered, but not operating, and at the same time new quarries may be opened (for example, in the summer of 2014, a new company from Moscow<sup>54</sup> started extracting stone near Rybreka). At the celebration of Miner's Day in Rybreka in August 2017, it was stated that ten quarries currently operate in Rybreka<sup>55</sup>.

The largest of these companies is *Karelkamen'*, which positions itself as a successor of former state enterprise. Today it employs around 200 people and is from time to time involved in charity projects in Rybreka and its neighboring villages (*Moskovskii komsomolets v Karelii*, September 3, 2014). The taxes paid by *Karelkamen'* constitute a large part of Prionezhskii district's budget; thus, Rybreka and other villages largely depend on it, and they are largely supported by local administration (Trofimova, 2015). Other mining companies, especially the ones which were only recently established in the district, are sometimes criticized in the media for damaging the forest around the villages or for the noise they produce (*Vse*, June 3, 2014), as well as for occupying public roads (*Prionezh'e*, April 9, 2015). In April 2015, several residents of Rybreka filed a complaint stating that the transfer of gabbro-diabase pollutes the air in their village. The residents of Vepsian villages are also worried about the drop in fish population in Lake Onega, and they relate this problem to the activities of private mining companies (Trofimova, 2015).

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<sup>54</sup> Torgovo-promyshlennaia nerudnaia kompaniia (Source: <https://stolicaonego.ru/analytics/233410/>).

Therefore, the changes of the 1990s had a different impact on the three settlements in the focus of my study. Shoksha and Kvartsitnyi experienced the closure of mining enterprises and the resulting loss of jobs. In addition, the residents of Kvartsitnyi (and partly Shoksha) lost the support which the quarries were providing (e.g. the boiler-house or the support of local schools). In Rybreka, the economic situation is seemingly better, but the companies producing diabase are not transparent (even the exact number of the quarries is not very clear). Besides, as the newspapers' publications demonstrate, many local residents view the activities of the mining companies negatively (due to the noise or dust they produce). At the same time, the economic dependence of Rybreka on the mining industry is widely acknowledged. This section demonstrates that the perceptions of stoneworking in Prionezhskii district of Karelia are complex and reflect the long-term engagement of local residents in mining industry.

## 2.2. Soiots in Okinskii district of Buriatia

This section focuses on historical and present position of Soiots and Oka Buriats residing in Okinskii district, as well as their interactions with gold and stone extraction. The first part of the section provides background information on the district, its position in Buriatia, climatic conditions, main settlement, and the construction of the Mondy – Orlik road. The second part focuses in more detail on the history of Soiots and Oka Buriats. The third part of the section discusses the development of mining industry in the district starting from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>55</sup> The companies which were mentioned during the celebration (and which I also encountered during the fieldwork): (1) Karelkamen', (2) Interkamen', (3) Kara-Tau, (4) Prionezhskii kar'er, (5) Drugaiia Reka, (6) Drugoretskoe. (7) Valun, (8) Severkamen', (9) KarelFlotInvest, (10) Torgovo-promyshlennaia nerudnaia kompaniia. The index of the enterprises registered in Rybreka mentions many more, though most of them are marked as liquidated: <https://inndex.ru/ul/rybreka>

### 2.2.3. *Okinskii district of Buriatia: introduction*

The Republic of Buriatia is located in South-Central Siberia, in the Asian part of Russia (see Fig. 16). It is situated along the eastern shore of Lake Baikal. It borders several other Russian regions: Irkutsk region, Zabaikalskii region, Tyva Republic. The population of the Republic is 972 thousand people (2010 census). In the south, Buriatia borders Mongolia. According to the 2010 census, ethnic Russians make up 66.1% of the total population of Buriatia, while ethnic Buriats make up 30%. The percentage of Sojots in the whole Buriatia, according to the 2010 census, is 0.4%.

Okinskii district,<sup>56</sup> which local residents in most cases call simply Oka (or, in Buriat, Akha) is situated in the western part of Buriatia (South-Central Siberia) and borders Irkutsk region (to the north), Mongolia (in its south-eastern part), Tyva Republic (Russia), and Tunkinskii district of Buriatia.

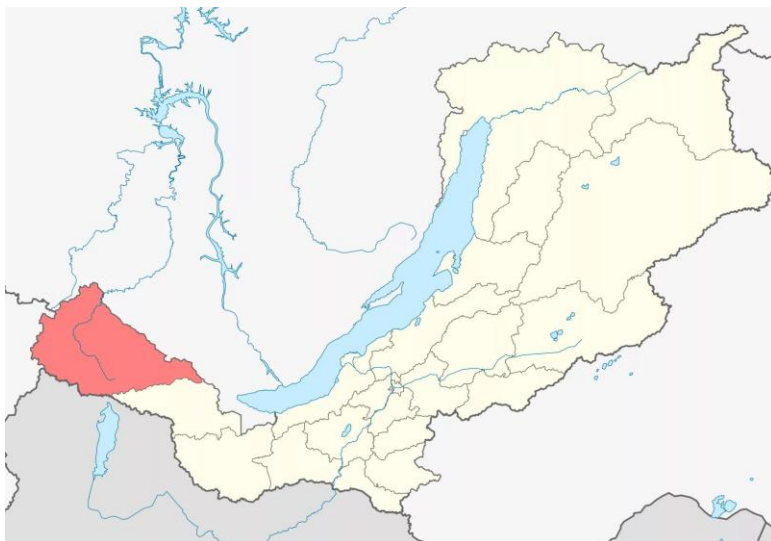


FIGURE 16. OKINSKII DISTRICT ON THE MAP OF BURIATIA. SOURCE: [HTTP://WWW.TURKCEWIKI.ORG/WIKI/DOSYA:LOCATION\\_OF\\_OKINSKY\\_DISTRICT\\_\(BURYATIA\).SVG](http://www.turkcewiki.org/wiki/dosya:Location_of_Okinsky_District_(Buryatia).svg)

While the district is the fourth largest in Buriatia based on its territory (26,5 thousand square kilometers), it is very scarcely populated and has only 5,400 residents. The main settlement of the district and its administrative center, Orlik, is located 713 km from Ulan-

Ude, the capital of Buriatia, and 460 km from Irkutsk, the main city of the Irkutsk region. Okinskii district is surrounded by mountain chains, the average height of which is 2,500 meters. The mountains make travel to the district especially difficult (Pavlinskaya, 2002).

The earliest known description of Okinskii district can be found in the notes of the famous Russian geographer, Petr Kropotkin, who visited the area in 1865. Kropotkin kept notes on the geography of Okinskii district, but also on the culture of its inhabitants, including traditional songs (B: *uliger*). Several other publications devoted to Okinskii district appeared in 1871 and 1911 (Pavlinskaya, 2002). In 1926, a thorough description of Okinskii district and its inhabitants – Buriats and Soiets – was prepared by Irkutsk-based ethnographer Bernard Petri. The trip of Petri will be discussed in more details in the next section of the chapter, as he was mostly focused on the culture and language of Soiets. In the Soviet period, after several ethnographic expeditions of the 1920s, the mentions of Okinskii district in publications were rare, until the expeditions of Valentin Rassadin in the 1980s. Since the 1990s, the district received scholarly attention due to the Soiot revitalization movement (Pavlinskaya, 2002; Zhukovskaya, 2005; Donahoe, 2011; Belyaeva-Sachuk, 2012).

Okinskii district is a remote part of Buriatia: it takes around twelve hours to get to Orlik from Ulan-Ude, the capital of the republic, and approximately eight hours to drive from Irkutsk. However, whether there is a regular minibus leaving every morning for Ulan-Ude or from there, in order to get to Orlik from Irkutsk one needs to use car sharing. The region is one of the most remote parts of Buriatia, and thus it is often perceived as a special, “sacred” place, the land full of legends, or as the land of wilderness and untouched nature. Despite its remote position, Okinskii district is a rather popular tourist destination and attracts around 15-20 thousand tourists each year (Shodorova and Yurieva, 2010).

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<sup>56</sup> Okinskii district is also referred to as “Okinskii raion” in Russian or as “Akha aimag” in Buriat

The name of Okinskii district comes from the Oka River, a confluent of the Angara. The river passes through most of Okinskii district's settlements including Bokson, Sorok, Orlik, Saiany, and Huzhir (see Fig. 17). The climate of Okinskii district is relatively harsh. In winter, the temperature may go below -40, and the snow may stay from November till May. The warm summer period is rarely longer than forty days, and even during this time night frosts may occur (Pavlinkaya, 2002). Summers are not always warm, and it is therefore difficult to grow vegetables. As a result, local residents of Okinskii district are rarely engaged in agriculture.

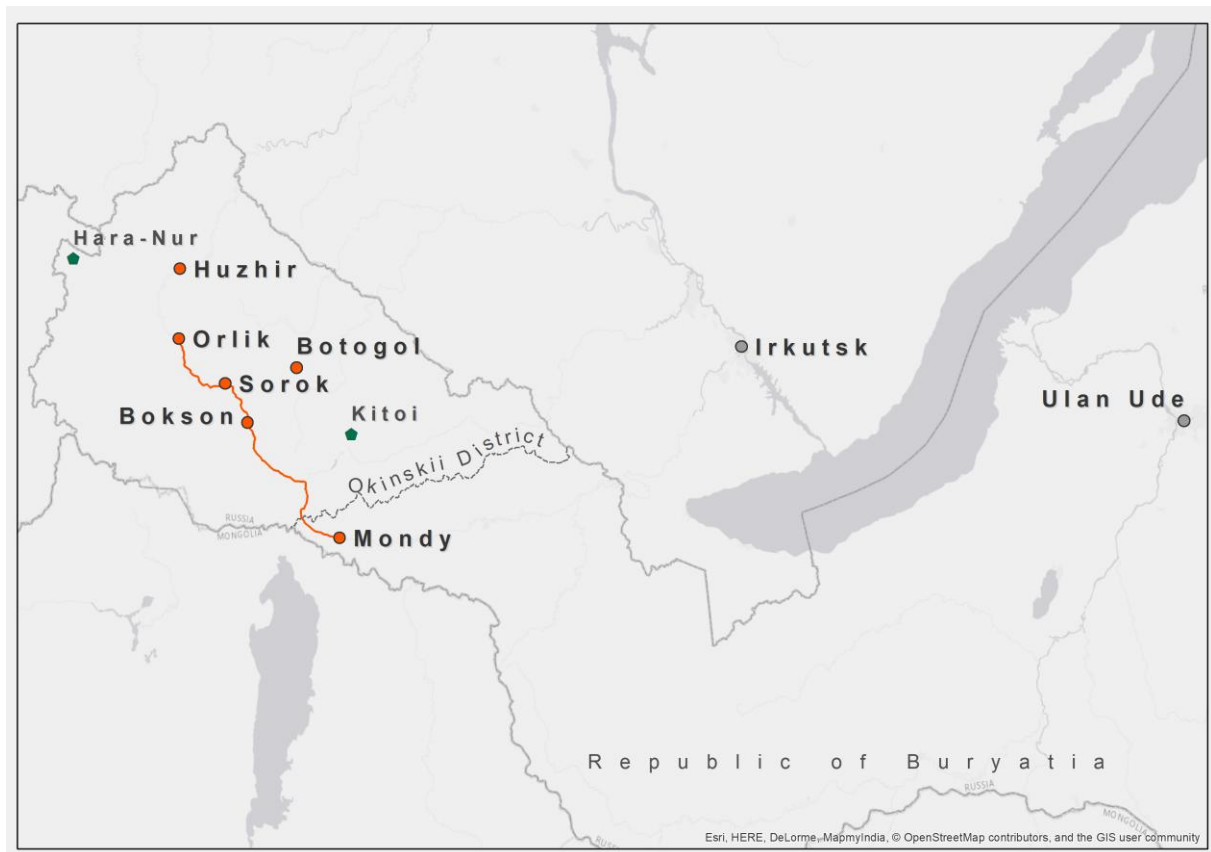


FIGURE 17. THE SETTLEMENTS OF THE OKINSKII DISTRICT.

## Orlik

Orlik is the largest settlement of Okinskii district. It is located on the right bank of the Oka River, surrounded by mountains (see Fig. 18). Its population, according to the 2010 census, is around 2,555 people. The settlement was established in 1927. Between the 1950s and the present time, the population of Orlik has grown significantly (from 987 people in 1959). This is the final point of the Mondy – Orlik automobile road. The administration of Okinskii district, as well as the local library and archive are located in Orlik. As the residents of Okinskii district are trying to develop local tourism, there are several guesthouses in Orlik, and some of the local residents also offer private rooms to tourists or provide transfers to various natural attractions of Okinskii district.



FIGURE 18. A VIEW OF ORLIK, THE MAIN SETTLEMENT OF OKINSKII DISTRICT (JUNE 2016)

## Sorok

Sorok is the settlement located on the Mondy – Orlik road, 40 kilometers to the southeast from Orlik. Its population is 739 people (2010). Sorok is recognized in the Okinskii district as the center of Soiot culture. The small ethnographic museum of Soiot culture *Ilchir* is situated there. The boarding school for the children of Okinskii district which offers Soiot classes is also located in Sorok.

## Huzhir

Huzhir is the settlement situated 50 kilometers to the north of Orlik. Its population is 625 people (2010). The settlement is connected to the well-known Buriat epic poem *Gesar* (also *Geser*), as several places around Huzhir were mentioned in the poem. One of the famous battles of Gesar, the main hero of the poem, is believed to take place near Huzhir (Papaev, Imethenov & Sharastepanov, 2004). Currently, there are plans to create a gold processing plant (*Huzhir Enterprise*) near the settlement.

## The Mondy – Orlik road

Before the 1990s, there was no road connecting Okinskii district with the rest of Buriatia. The area was connected to Ulan-Ude, the capital of Buriatia, by plane. There was also the old Oka path which was normally traveled by horses. Even at the beginning of the 1980s the journey from Mondy (the settlement in the neighboring Tunkinskii district) to Orlik by horse would take 4-5 days. In winter, it was also possible to get to Okinskii district by car using *zimnik*<sup>57</sup> – an ice road. However, transportation via *zimnik* could easily be disrupted

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<sup>57</sup> "Zimnik" is the Russian word for temporary "winter roads" which are constructed every year, approximately between December and March/April, on snow or on river ice, in order to serve remote regions of Siberia.

because of dry segments of the road (R: *sushniaki*) where the water ran low while the ice stayed.

The construction of the gravel road to Orlik began in 1985-1986. It was carried out by Buriatia's unit on road planning, building and reparation (*Buriatavtodor*) in cooperation with the gold mining enterprise *Zabaikalzoloto*. The construction of the road was finalized in 1993, though it was not constructed according to the initial plan because of the financial constraints of the 1990s. Therefore, the road is not protected against possible floods of the Oka River, and parts of it get washed out from time to time.<sup>58</sup>

In the local press of Okinskii district, the construction of the Orlik – Mondy road was viewed as a sign of progress or as a symbol of “civilization” brought to the district. In one of the publications, it was even called “The Road of Life.”<sup>59</sup> At the same time, the construction also generated worries, as the construction of the road was associated with the possibility of rapid development of resource extraction. One of the publications in the local newspaper states, “With the construction of the road in Oka many problems in the life of its residents have eased, but at the same time new ones have appeared. This is the interference from the outside world into the nature.” (*Saianskaia Nov'*, September 24, 1993) The local residents were worried that the new road would result in a boom of industrial development and therefore change the established lifestyle (*Akha*, July 15, 1994). Today, the construction of the road represents an important milestone in Okinskii district's history. Some of the locals, when speaking about the past, divide it into “before the road” and “after the road.”

### ***2.2.3. Soiots and Oka Buriats: past and present***

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<sup>58</sup> In the section on the Mondy – Orlik road, I rely partly on the data of the interview conducted with the former worker of Buriatavtodor who managed the road construction in Okinskii district (Interview B24).

The population of Okinskii district is constituted of Buriats and Soiets.<sup>60</sup> These two ethnic groups, while residing next to each other, developed in the district in mutual influence (Pavlinskaya, 2002). Until the 1990s, the residents of Okinskii district were commonly referred to as “Oka Buriats” (Rassadin, 1987), and Soiets were not officially distinguished from the Buriat inhabitants of Okinskii district (Rassadin, 2010). The language of Soiets is especially close to Tofa language (Tofalaria, Irkutsk region) as well as the language of Dukha people (Tsaatan) residing in Mongolia (Mongush, 2012). The Soiets of Buriatia are also a kindred ethnic group of Tozhu residing in eastern Tuva in Russia (Stepanoff, 2012). The harsh climate of Okinskii district, which did not allow opportunities for agriculture, resulted in the preservation of the traditional ways of subsistence, such as nomadic pastoralism<sup>61</sup> and hunting (Pavlinskaya, 2002). Soiets' traditional occupations include taiga hunting and reindeer herding (Mongush, 2012).

The ancestors of Soiets, the Samoyedic people<sup>62</sup> of the Saian Mountains<sup>63</sup>, moved there from Western Siberia in the late Neolithic period (Pavlinskaya, 1999). The ethnonym of Soiets possibly comes from the name of The Saian Mountains. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the territory of the contemporary Okinskii district was populated by several tribes<sup>64</sup> who engaged in hunting, reindeer herding, and cattle breeding and developed in mutual cultural influence (Pavlinskaya, 2002). At that time, the traditions of yak breeding were already established, and today Soiets remain the only indigenous people of Russia engaged in yak breeding

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<sup>59</sup> The name “The Road of Life” usually refers to the ice road connecting the seized Leningrad to the rest of the country during the Great Patriotic War. The usage of this term in the case of the Mondy – Orlik road signifies its high importance for the residents of Okinskii district.

<sup>60</sup> Alternative spelling in English: Soyots. The word “Soiot” in Russian may also refer to an old name of Tuvinians (Tozhus). To differentiate between the two, the Soiets of Okinskii district are sometimes referred to as Oka-Soiets (Oehler, 2018).

<sup>61</sup> Nomadic pastoralism is a form of pastoralism when livestock are herded in order to find fresh pastures on which to graze, following an irregular pattern of movement.

<sup>62</sup> The Samoyedic people are a group of closely related ethnic groups that speak Samoyedic languages, which are part of the Uralic linguistic family in Russia.

<sup>63</sup> The Saian (Sayan) Mountains are a mountain range in southern Siberia, Russia, and northern Mongolia. In the past, it served as the border between Mongolia and Russia.

(Kurdyukov, 2012). Fishing, at the same time, was not widespread, as it was considered a sinful activity. Soiots and Oka Buriats started fishing only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, following Russian military and administrative workers who started settling in the area (Kurdyukov, 2012).

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the ethnic composition of the area got more diverse due to the influx of Buriat migrants who merged with the local population. After the border between Russia and China was set in 1727,<sup>65</sup> the ancestors of Soiots were cut from their kin ethnic groups including Tsaatans and Tozhu (Zhukovskaya, 2005). The territory of Okinskii district became a part of Enisei county, and later, Krasnoyarsk county of Russia (Pavlinskaya, 1999). After the border was established, two border guards were set at the territory of Okinskii district. The military posts of both guards were comprised of Buriats (around 400-500 Buriats moved to Okinskii district at that time). Besides, a number of Buriat families migrated to Okinskii district from Mongolia in the same period; they were encouraged by the government to settle in Okinskii and Tunkinskii districts in order to populate the border area (Pavlinskaya, 2002). Therefore, by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century the population of the area changed rapidly due to the influx of Buriats. At the same time, some of the tribes populating the area earlier, such as Eudints, migrated out of the district (Pavlinskaya, 2002). Due to the remote position of the district, the various ethnic groups residing there cooperated a lot with each other while being separated from the rest of the country by the mountains. The groups soon got divided based on the activities they were engaged in: Haasut and Soiots, engaged in reindeer herding, resided in the upper part of the Oka River. The lower part of Oka (near Sorok and Bokson settlements) was populated by Haasut and Soiots whose main occupation was hunting.

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<sup>64</sup> Irkit (hunters and reindeer herders), Haasut, Soiots, Eudints (cattle breeders) (Pavlinskaya, 2002)

<sup>65</sup> The Treaty of Kyakhta signed by Imperial Russia and Qing Empire of China in 1721 regulated their relations until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The Treaty concluded the agreement on setting the borders between Russia and China.

Finally, Buriats, engaged in cattle breeding, lived in the lowest part of the district, in the valleys (Pavlinskaya, 1999).

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the number of Buriats in Okinskii district was more than two times higher than the number of Soiets. The administrative management of the area, as well as trading was conducted by Buriats. Due to the intermarriages, the cultures of Buriats and Soiets became more and more merged (Pavlinskaya, 1999). These processes resulted in rapid changes in Soiot culture by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By that time, the Soiot language got replaced by the Buriat language. Besides, due to the decrease in the purchases of fur in Russia, many Soiets had to switch from hunting to cattle-breeding, and thus became more assimilated with the Buriat population (Pavlinskaya, 1999; Zhukovskaya, 2005). At the same time, the Buriat culture got influenced by the Soiot traditions and this process resulted in the establishment of the new type of high-altitude nomadic pastoralism (Pavlinskaya, 1999).

The post-Revolution reforms of the 1920s (such as the creation of kolkhozes in Okinskii district, prohibition of religious rituals, liquidation of individual households – all led by Buriats) influenced the ethnic consolidation of Soiets who demanded the establishment of Soiot council with the center in the Sorok settlement (Pavlinskaya, 1999). During this period, the first expedition aimed to study Soiot livelihoods in Okinskii region took place. It was led by the famous Russian ethnographer, professor of Irkutsk University, Bernhard Petri<sup>66</sup> (Badmaev, 2005). After the expedition, Petri (1927: 19) concluded: “So, we have a people without a language, without own culture and without a territory. We can state that it is even not a separate people, but a Soiot branch assimilated by Buriats. The process of assimilation

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<sup>66</sup> Bernhard Petri (1884 – 1937) – Soviet ethnographer, Professor of Irkutsk State University since 1918. Led the ethnographic expeditions to Tofa (1925), Oka Soiets (1926, 1928, 1929), Evenki (1930). Was arrested in 1937 and accused in spying; executed in 1937 (Sirina, 2002). Petri is still remembered in Okinskii district as “the true defender of Soiets” (*Akha*, November 1, 2002).

has come so far that we cannot think about any revitalization for Oka Soiot. We can only let them disappear fully in the Buriat mass.”

In 1927, however, two Soiot representatives traveled to Irkutsk and filed a written complaint trying to persuade Petri to help them to form a self-governing territory (Pavlinskaya, 2002). As a result, Petri appealed to the Buriat-Mongol branch of the Committee for the North asking to create a Soiot *somon* (local council), which was indeed created in the 1930s (Pavlinskaya, 2002; Belyaeva-Sachuk, 2012). In 1928, Soiot were included in the first list of small-numbered peoples of the Soviet Union. However, the second expedition to Soiot, conducted in the 1930s, concluded that Soiot had disappeared as an ethnographic group and assimilated to Buriats; soon after that Soiot were deleted from the list of small-numbered peoples and their district was liquidated and became a part of Okinskii *aimag* (B: district) (Donahoe, 2011). Later, in all official documents Soiot were automatically registered as Buriats (Pavlinskaya, 2002).

During the purges of the 1930s, Okinskii district experienced the demolition of the well-known Zhelgen *datsan* (Buddhist temple) and the arrests of well-known religious activists including the famous shaman Chimit Putunkeev (Tuluev, 2000). The events of the 1930s left a deep impact in the district, and even during the revitalization campaign of the early 1990s, a number of elderly residents reflected that they “were afraid that the history would repeat itself” and the revitalization attempt would result in new repressive measures of the state (Akha, December 1, 2009). Since the 1930s, Soiot were also encouraged to switch from their nomadic lifestyle to forming collective farms (Rassadin, 2010) as a part of the all-state sedentarization campaign aimed at nomadic peoples of the USSR. During the period of Soiot sedentary lifestyle, yak breeding was actively developed in the district (Kurdyukov, 2012). At the same time, reindeer herding was declared “unproductive” in 1963 and stopped in the whole territory of the district (Donahoe, 2011). Almost at the same time Soiot became

artificially alienated from hunting, as the rights to hunt in the district's territory were transferred to the state hunting agency (Kurdyukov, 2012). This situation led to their significant assimilation and abandonment of reindeer herding by the 1980s. By the 1980s, it looked like Sojots had been completely assimilated in the ethnic group of Oka Buriats (Pavlinskaya, 1999).

At the end of the 1980s – beginning of the 1990s, however, the ethnic revitalization campaign of Sojots started in Okinskii district. In 1992, the Center of Soiot Culture was created, and in 1993, the Association of Oka Sojots was formed (Zhukovskaya, 2005). While in 1987, only around thirty people would name themselves Sojots, during the local census of 1995, 2,047 people (almost half of the district's population) registered as Sojots (Pavlinskaya, 1999). Once the Association of Sojots was established, one of the main tasks of its program was the revitalization of traditional Soiot ways of subsistence. To reach this aim, 60 reindeer were brought to Okinskii district from the neighboring Tofalaria in the autumn of 1994 (Mongush, 2012). Two Tofa reindeer herders also arrived to Okinskii district in order to instruct the local residents in herding skills. The whole project was funded by the Totem Peoples Preservation Project NGO and its founder, Daniel Plumley (Oehler, 2018). In the 1990s, the national Soiot celebration *Zhogtaar (Meeting)* was established; since 2004, it has been renamed *Ulug-Dag*. The celebrations are mostly centered on national sports' competitions and hunting-related activities (such as archery); in addition, drawing contests are held (Slepnev, 2018).

The issue of Sojots' indigenous status was raised in Okinskii district since the early 1990s, but as Sojots were not registered in the all-Soviet censuses of 1959, 1979 and 1989, this issue was not addressed at federal level.<sup>67</sup> In March 2000, after several rounds of appeals

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<sup>67</sup> Official website of Okinskii district's administration: <http://okarb.ru/okinskij-rajon/sojoty-okinskogo-rajona.html> (Accessed May 4, 2019).

to the Government of the Russian Federation from Buriat authorities, Soiets were registered as an indigenous small-numbered people of the Russian Federation. This milestone was widely covered in local newspapers as a victory (*Akha*, April 5, 2000; May 4, 2000) or as the sign that Soiets finally “received recognition” (*Akha*, December 1, 2009). The newspaper publications stated that the indigenous status would help the residents of Okinskii district receive additional financing directly from the federal budget (*Akha*, May 4, 2000). Indeed, a number of local projects (such as the renovation of the school in Sorok which was now named the Soiot boarding school) were supported from the federal budget as the support program for indigenous small-numbered peoples. In comparison to Veps in Karelia, the process of Soiets’ recognition as the indigenous people of the Russian Federation in the 1990s was covered in the media far more widely. This was probably related to the absence of Soiets from 1959 – 1989 censuses. In order to motivate the districts’ residents to get registered as Soiets during the local census of 1995, the positive outcomes of indigenous status recognition needed to be clearly communicated.

There are a number of similarities between the Soviet-time histories of Veps and Soiets. Both minorities experienced short periods of cultural development in the 1920s and the purges of the 1930s. In Karelia, the 1930s’ repressive measures targeted the Veps language, while in Buriatia the main target was the religion: Buddhism and shamanism. Finally, both Veps and Soiets experienced ethnic revitalization campaigns of late 1980s – 1990s led by scholars and local activists and resulting in the recognition of both as indigenous small-numbered peoples of the Russian Federation. The most important milestones of Soiot and Oka Buriat history are summarized in Table 2.

**TABLE 2. IMPORTANT PERIODS OF SOIOTS AND OKA BURIATS' HISTORY, OKINSKII DISTRICT**

Historical period	Historical event
17 <sup>th</sup> century	Four tribes of Okinskii district, including Soiets, established at its territory
1727	Russian-Chinese border established. Migration of Buriats to Okinskii district
1927	Expedition of Bernhard Petri
1928	Soiets included in the list of small-numbered peoples of the Soviet Union
1930	Soiot national council ( <i>somon</i> ) established
1930s	Demolition of Buddhist temples, repressions of Soiot leaders
1963	Reindeer herding declared “unproductive” and liquidated
1980s	Ethnographic expeditions of Valentin Rassadin
1992	Center of Soiot Culture created
1993	Association of Oka Soiets established
1994	60 reindeer transferred from Tofalaria
1995	Local census of Okinskii district: 2,047 people registered as Soiets
2000	Soiets registered as indigenous small-numbered minority of the Russian Federation
2001	Soiot ABC primer published
2006	Soiets included in the list of Indigenous peoples of North, Siberia and Far East
2016	Project of territory of traditional subsistence in Okinskii district

The next section will focus on the development of mining in Okinskii district. It will concentrate on several historical periods including graphite extraction of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Soviet-time geological explorations, and current extraction of gold and jade in the district. This long history of resource extraction ultimately influenced the complex attitudes to mining among contemporary residents of Okinskii district.

#### ***2.2.4. Mining in Okinskii district of Buriatia: history and present time***

Okinskii district in Buriatia is rich in mineral deposits including gold, jade (nephrite), graphite, bauxite, phosphate, and asbestos. The locals often say jokingly that they have “all Mendeleev’s table under their feet.” Currently most of the mining companies located in Okinskii district extract gold. The area is also rich in jade which is currently the target of illegal extraction.

The local residents of Okinskii district engaged in resource extraction as early as the 19th century. There is evidence showing that amateur gold extraction took place near the Kitoi River. In the mid-19th century, Soiot hunters accidentally found graphite of a high quality near Mount Botogol in Okinskii district (Dorzhieva, 2014). In that period, graphite was widely used for pencils and crucibles, and starting from 1840 was scarce in Europe (Hobta & Snopkov, 2007). Soon after graphite was discovered, Jean-Pierre Alibert, an entrepreneur of French origin living in Russia, started a factory extracting the graphite near Botogol. Alibert brought a team of French workers to help him, but he also employed local residents at the graphite mine. The extracted graphite was transferred to Germany, to Faber Company in Nuremberg. In order to transfer graphite from Okinskii district, Alibert built two roads: one of them was functioning only in winter, and the horse-road track allowed transferring small portions of graphite all year round. A part of the extracted graphite was

even transferred from Siberia to Europe by water: the waterway went along the Shilka and Amur Rivers, and then across the Pacific, the Indian and the Atlantic oceans (Hobta & Snopkov, 2007). Transportation of the extracted stone was expensive, and thus the graphite mine was closed in 1857, as a cheaper technology of producing graphite was discovered in France. Soon after that, Jean-Pierre Alibert left Okinskii district, and the Botogol mine was abandoned. Later, in the Soviet period, there were attempts to re-start graphite extraction at Botogol (as graphite was used for military needs), and some of my informants recalled working there in their youth. At the beginning of the 1990s, the extraction stopped again and will probably not be continued in the near future.

The story about Jean-Pierre Alibert and the fame of Siberian graphite is well-known in Okinskii district today. Every year the library and archive in Orlik hold exhibitions devoted to the history of graphite mining in the region. During my fieldwork, there were plans to have a school trip to Botogol, so that local children would see the mine which is not easily accessible (a part of the route has to be conducted through mountains on horses or on foot).

In the Soviet period, Okinskii district became the site of active geological explorations. The first geological expeditions of state gold mining enterprise *Soyuzzoloto* in Okinskii district took place in 1934 and 1938 (*Akha*, February 16, 2000). Geological brigades were searching for gold, jade, wolfram, molybdenum, and other natural resources. In 1955, one of the largest gold deposits of the district, Zun-Kholba, was discovered (Volkov, 2012). The geological explorations of Okinskii district were often related to transportation problems due to the absence of roads and harsh climatic conditions (*Saianskaia Nov*<sup>68</sup>, October 31, 1987). In the Soviet local publications, the geologists were mentioned positively as “pathfinders” working hard for the benefit of the state, in accordance with the general Soviet discourse of romanticized geological explorations (Bolotova, 2005). For many locals,

geological explorations of the Soviet period were also the time of extensive encounters with Russians, as local residents worked for the geologists as guides, and geological brigades sometimes stayed next to the district's settlements.

Currently, more than twenty deposits of gold, bauxite and phosphate are developed in Okinskii district.<sup>69</sup> The largest gold deposits include Zun-Kholba, Konevinskoe, and Vladimirskoe deposits. Zun-Kholba deposit is owned by the company *Buriatzoloto*,<sup>70</sup> a member of *Nordgold*. Konevinskoe deposit used to be developed by *Huzhir Enterprise*<sup>71</sup> Company, but the mining is currently stopped (*Novosti Sibirskoi Nauki*, April 20, 2018). The owner of Vladimirskoe deposit is *Rifei*<sup>72</sup> Company. The gold companies working in the region are one of the main sources of Okinskii district's income, as their taxes constitute more than 70% of the district's budget (*Inform Polis*, July 22, 2015). *Buriatzoloto* is also involved in a number of social initiatives in Okinskii district (e.g. they support youth projects in Orlik). This support is considered insufficient though, and is sometimes referred to as *podachki* (R: pittances) in local publications (Baldanov, 2000).

The development of gold mining is problematic because of poor infrastructural conditions of Okinskii district. A number of gold deposits in the district are currently not being developed due to financial risks (as the deposits are difficult to reach, in case they prove less promising than was predicted the company would risk bankruptcy) (*Novosti Sibirskoi Nauki*, April 20, 2018). As most of the companies employ fly-in-fly-out workers, the residents of Okinskii district are rarely employed in gold extraction. This situation creates

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<sup>68</sup> SN in further references

<sup>69</sup> *Zolotodobycha*, <https://zolotodb.ru/article/11842> (Accessed on April 18, 2019)

<sup>70</sup> *Buriatzoloto* was founded in 1991. In 1995, 30% of the company's shares were sold to the Canadian company High River Gold. By 2005, HRG owned 85% of Buriatzoloto shares. The company is managed by *Severstal'*, the Russian enterprise which owns 53% of HRG shares since 2008 (Volkov, 2012).

<sup>71</sup> *Huzhir Enterprise* is a branch of *Vertex* mining company (registered in Moscow).

<sup>72</sup> *Rifei* used to be officially registered in Orlik, Okinskii district. It employs around 300 people, including local residents. In 2016, the company was on the edge of bankruptcy and changed its registration to Irkutsk. The owner of the company lives outside of Buriatia (*Arigus*, March 16, 2016).

concerns, as was expressed at the meeting with the former Head of Buriatia, Viacheslav Nagovitsyn, which I attended in July 2016. As a result, many local residents feel that their land is exploited by outsiders while they are not able to take advantages of their natural resources (Baldanov, 2000).

The development of gold extraction in Okinskii district also causes concerns related to pollution. In April 2019, Rifei enterprise was accused by the residents of the district of the pollution of the Kholba River near Huzhir (see Fig. 19). Near Samarta, where Huzhir Enterprise is operating, local residents often find dead birds or rodents, and the animals are believed to get poisoned by the soil and water where the gold mining waste is disposed (*Nomer Odin*, April 18, 2019).



FIGURE 19. THE KHOLBA RIVER IN APRIL 2019. SOURCE: [HTTPS://GAZETA-N1.RU/NEWS/SOCIETY/73987/](https://gazeta-n1.ru/news/society/73987/)

Jade was discovered in Eastern Saians in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it did not receive much attention from the state: the stone was used for the decoration of buildings or for interior details. The search for jade began in the Soviet period, and several deposits were discovered in Buriatia before the Second World War (*Inform Polis*, May 30, 2018). In the 1980s, jade was discovered in Okinskii district. Since the 1990s, several jade deposits in

Okinskii district are controlled by the company *Baikalkvartssamotsvety* based in Irkutsk.<sup>73</sup>

The company has been involved in a series of financial scandals. In 2016, it was accused of income understatements: while its official income was 3.5 million rubles per year, its Australian accounts held hundreds of millions of dollars (*Tunka24. Novoski Tunkinskogo raiona*, January 15, 2016). Besides, in recent years the jade warehouse of Baikalkvartssamotsvety in Okinskii district has become the centre of several criminal incidents. In 2012, several local residents tried to steal pieces of jade from the warehouse and were wounded by the guards (*Novaia Buriatia*, January 25, 2012). In August 2015, a similar situation occurred; this time, during the attempt to steal jade from the warehouse, one of the local residents of Okinskii district was killed (*Inform Polis*, June 1, 2017).

Historically, jade did not have much value in Okinskii district and its neighboring areas. It was sometimes used for saunas, as it was believed that the jade steam has healing qualities. However, since the early 2000s the demand for jade increased in China due to the Olympics (the Olympic medals were made of jade). In that period, informal jade extraction became widespread in Okinskii district. Nowadays, China is the main market for Buriat jade, as there it is considered a sacred stone and in certain historical periods was valued higher than gold or silver. A similar situation with unofficial expedition parties extracting jade used to exist among indigenous Evenki in Bauntovskii district (Safonova & Sántha, 2010). The case of the Evenki jade mining brigade *Dylacha* was discussed in more detail in the previous chapter.

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<sup>73</sup> *Baikalkvartssamotsvety* was founded in 1966 in Irkutsk region of Russia as the state enterprise. In 2001 the state enterprise got bankrupt and was privatized in 2003 (*Tunka24. Novoski Tunkinskogo raiona*, January 15, 2016).

At the end of 2015, the administration of Okinskii district initiated the project aimed at the recognition of 70% of the district as territory of traditional subsistence of Sojots.<sup>74</sup> According to the project, each mining company had to sign an agreement with the district's administration prior to starting natural resource extraction (*Nomer Odin*, February 22, 2016). The possibilities of the creation of territory of traditional subsistence in Okinskii district were actively discussed there during my fieldwork in summer 2016. In later amendments, territory of traditional subsistence would cover up to 90% of the whole territory of Okinskii district (*Baikalfinans*, July 28, 2016). However, the project was not supported by the Parliament of Buriatia. As most of the territory of Okinskii district belongs to the Forest Fund of Russia, this land is considered federal, and thus cannot be regulated directly by the district's administration. In July 2016, it was decided that the project development will be continued taking into account the requirements of the Buriat Parliament (*Buriaad Unen*, July 29, 2016). However, currently the project of territory of traditional subsistence's creation is stopped, and it is not clear whether it will be re-initiated in the near future.

This section demonstrates that mining development has a long history in Okinskii district of Buriatia. However, while in Karelia gabbro-diabase and raspberry quartzite quarries have been situated next to the Veps villages and most of the locals worked there, mining in Buriatia has mostly happened “at the periphery”, out of the scope of local everyday life. Because of that, it is often viewed in press as something hidden, and therefore not transparent and untrustworthy. In the following chapters I will demonstrate how the differences in mining histories influence contemporary views on resource extraction in Karelia and Buriatia, as well as the perceptions of local identity.

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<sup>74</sup> Territory of traditional subsistence (or territory of traditional nature use) – in Russian, *territoriia traditsionnogo prirodopol'zovaniia* (TTP) – is a type of land use and protected areas in Russia, established for protection of the tradition way of life of small-numbered indigenous peoples of Russia. TTP was introduced on April 22, 1992. Territories of traditional subsistence are subject to the Russian federal law of May 7, 2001 (amended on May 26, 2007).

## 2.3. Mining development and local identity in Karelia and Buriatia

Both in Karelia and Buriatia, mining development meant that the members of the previously closed communities started interacting with the “outsiders.” In the case of Okinskii district in Buriatia, these “outsiders” were the geologists probing for gold and jade in the region. In Prionezh’e in Karelia, the rapid development of mining brought a number of workers from different parts of the country to Veps villages, and thus changed the ethnic composition of the area and the perceptions of the local identity.

In both of the case studies, mining development was related to migration and interactions between people from different regions. However, the scale of this migration was different. In Karelia, a large number of newcomers arriving to work in state quarries from other parts of the Soviet Union drastically changed the ethnic composition of the region. In Buriatia, on the contrary, the interactions of Oka Buriats and Sojots with geological brigades exploring the territory and searching for gold were rather sporadic. Geologists mostly lived separately from the locals, though the residents of Oka often worked for them as guides (*Saianskaia nov’*, October 31, 1987). For children, the geologists coming to Okinskii district were often the first Russians they saw in their lives. Many middle-aged residents still remember the first encounters with Russian geologists in their childhood.<sup>75</sup> The Buriat word used in Okinskii district in relation to Russians, *orodmangad*, literally means “Russian others.” The word *Mangad* is also related evil character from Buriat epos,<sup>76</sup> or *uliger*. In this

<sup>75</sup> One of my interviewees, Nadia, who grew up on a farm near Sorok recalled how geologists started explorations close to their settlement. While most of the children were afraid of geologists, she tried to interact with them and even learned several Russian words (Interview B14). Later, when the family moved to Orlik, she mentioned that all the children in the settlement were afraid of Russians, and only for her there was nothing frightening about them, as she was used to geologists since childhood.

<sup>76</sup> The Buryat Heroic Epic “Alamji Mergen and His Little Sister Agui Gokhon.” Summary: [http://philology.nsc.ru/departments/folklor/books/t02\\_summary.php](http://philology.nsc.ru/departments/folklor/books/t02_summary.php)

epos, Mangad-khais is the eternal rival of the main character who invades his territory and appropriates his possessions. In some parts of Buriatia, the word *mangad* was also used when referring to the devil. All these additional meanings of the word may signal about Russians being perceived in Buriatia as “dangerous others.”

Little interaction of Oka residents with the “outside world” was to a large extent related to the geographical isolation of the district as a mountainous and hardly reachable area. While people from other parts of Buriatia mythologized Oka seeing it as a faraway place full of legends, the “outsiders” were mythologized in the district as well. Today, the population remains homogeneous, mostly consisting of Oka Buriats and Soicts, and the distinctions between these two groups are very often blurred. The number of Russians living in Okinskii district permanently is relatively small (slightly more than 100 people).

In Prionezhskii district of Karelia, the situation is very different. During this large-scale postwar outmigration from Veps villages discussed earlier in this chapter, the percentage of Veps residing in Prionezhskii district radically decreased. At the same time, in the 1950s – 1980s, a large number of workers from other parts of the country migrated to Prionezhskii district and started working in the quarries. As a result, the population of the district became much more diverse. The latest waves of in- and out- migration happened in 1990s and 2000s: after some of the quarries got closed, its former workers often decided to leave the settlements. At the same time, there were also people arriving to Prionezh’e from other parts of post-Soviet space, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan. Today, the population of the Vepsian village in Prionezh’e is diverse, as many former mining workers stayed in the area, and a number of people from other parts of Karelia also work at the quarries in Rybreka during 15-day shifts.

Different paths and speeds of mining development in Karelia and Buriatia had profound influence on the formation of local identity either as a homogenous and closed one,

or as a very diverse community of people united by their shared labor. In Okinskii district of Buriatia, geological explorations during the Soviet period brought rather sporadic contacts with the “outsiders” who were perceived as a dangerous force (since the usage of the word “mangad”). In contemporary Okinskii district, fly-in-fly-out workers of gold mining companies also live separately from the local residents, and there is little interaction between the two groups. In Prionezhskii district of Karelia, stoneworking development completely changes the ethnic composition of the area and resulted in the formation of new community which will be discussed in more details in the following chapters.

## Chapter 3. Methodology

This chapter will discuss the selection of the case studies chosen for in-depth analysis, the concept of multi-sited ethnography, and the main methods of data collection for the dissertation: participant observation in Prionezhskii district of Karelia and Okinskii district of Buriatia, interviewing, and document analysis. In addition, I will focus on the challenges of positioning the researcher in the field, as well as ethical considerations and limitations of this study.

### 3.1. Case studies

#### *3.1.1. Case studies' selection criteria*

A case study can be defined as intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalize across a larger set of units (Gerring, 2004: 341). The process of casing reflects the ultimate goal of the research: bridging the empirical and the theoretical and using theory in order to make sense of the evidence. As a result, the research aims “to produce theoretically structured descriptions of the empirical world that are both meaningful and useful” (Ragin, 1992: 225). By limiting the empirical world, it becomes possible to connect it to theoretical ideas. Therefore, a case becomes “an intermediate product in the effort to link ideas and evidence” (Ragin, 1992: 225).

This dissertation focuses on two indigenous minorities: northern Veps in Prionezhskii district of Karelia and Soicts in Okinskii district of South-Central Buriatia. I purposefully chose two cases, and the goal was not to compare them directly, but to show the diversity and situatedness of the concept of indigeneity in the Russian context, while simultaneously discussing common features between the cases. When choosing the case studies, I initially

decided to concentrate on Russia, as in many Russian regions the establishment of post-Soviet indigenous identities and the privatization or fast development of resource extraction were simultaneous processes. When narrowing down to two case studies in Russia, my main criteria were the involvement of indigenous community in stoneworking in past and present as well as the presence of small-scale mining of decorative stones. The nature of resource extraction in Russia is diverse, and oil extraction may possibly be viewed and treated very differently from stoneworking. Just as precious metals, decorative stones are filled with multiple layers of symbolism: as a result of hard labor, and at the same time as beautiful and rare objects praised for their looks (Ferry, 2005). When narrowing down my research, I decided to concentrate primarily on stone extraction in both case studies (with additional references to gold extraction in Buriatia).

The choice of Karelia as my primary case study was based on my familiarity with the research context. I grew up in Karelia and studied Vepsian language at Finno-Ugrian school of Petrozavodsk (established in 1994). The knowledge of both Russian and Vepsian allowed me to attend the meetings of Veps speaking club and Veps classes in Petrozavodsk and to analyze publication in the Veps newspaper *Kodima*. Besides, prior to starting the research I already understood the network of Veps activists in Petrozavodsk, and it was easier to establish connections with them, as in many cases we had common acquaintances or studied in the same school. However, despite being familiar with the activists' circles, I was still not close enough to them, as after finishing high school I did not continue studying Vepsian at the university level and thus gradually distanced myself from the circles of Veps scholars and activists. Therefore, I felt that my position as a researcher of Veps indigeneity formation is in balance: I knew enough about the field to start fieldwork rather smoothly, while at the same time I was not too involved personally, and thus my analysis would not be influenced by strong emotional connections to the interviewees or the field sites.

My familiarity with the Veps research context impacted my deep interest in the theme of the dissertation. The time of my early school years, mid-1990s, was the time of active development of Vepsian language. Our class was the second Vepsian class in the history of the newly established Finno-Ugrian school in Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelia. We visited the Veps museum in Sheltozero village and the Center for National Cultures in Karelia, and were surrounded there by the Veps scholars and activists whom I now cite extensively in this dissertation. Several times in a year, the Finnish partners of our school were visiting, and we would receive “foreign” presents which seemed like a wonder in our everyday reality. This was an unusual time: while the economic situation was extremely difficult, at the same time there was a lot of hope around, and the belief in the success of the revitalization campaign was a part of this general discourse. While the diabase and quartzite quarries in Prionezhskii district of Karelia were going bankrupt and the future of the Vepsian villages was unclear, the future of the Vepsian language was being established. Later, when I was reading about Okinskii district while preparing for fieldwork, I found many similarities between the regions in the period of the 1990s when ethnic revitalizations and the rapid changes in mining industry (privatization in Karelia and the boom of private mining explorations in Buriatia) were happening at the same time.

The choice of Veps in Prionezhskii district of Karelia and Soicts in Okinskii district of Buriatia for this dissertation was influenced by a number of common aspects between the histories of both indigenous minorities. Both Veps and Soicts have histories of encounters with mining industry dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. While Veps from Karelia were famous as skilled stoneworkers working with diabase and quartzite, Soict hunters discovered graphite in Okinskii district, and later worked for Jean-Pierre Alibert in the Botogol mine.

Both Veps and Soiots were not recognized as small-numbered peoples of the Soviet Union<sup>77</sup> and experienced repressions during the 1930s. In both Karelia and Buriatia, ethnic revitalization campaigns began in the late 1980s – early 1990s (Strogalschikova, 2014; Mongush, 2012) and resulted in the official state recognition of Veps and Soiots as indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation (2000) and indigenous peoples of the Russian North, Siberia, and Far East (2006). Today, both Veps and Soiots reside close to mining deposits, even though their level of involvement in mining industry is different.

In both case studies, mining industry of past and present centers on rare decorative stones (raspberry quartzite and diabase in Karelia, jade in Buriatia). Although gold mining is a prominent industry in Okinskii district of Buriatia, the local residents rarely engage with gold mining directly, as therefore it is present in their everyday realities mostly in the form of stories or gossips. Jade, on the other hand, is the resource local residents interact with directly. This concentration on rare decorative stones influences the complex perceptions of natural resources in both Karelia and Buriatia, when stone may be seen as a negative force but at the same time praised for its looks or respected as a part of sacred landscape.

Whereas there are many similarities between the case studies of Veps and Soiots, these indigenous minorities are also different in a number of aspects. The role of industry in Prionezhskii and Okinskii districts is ultimately different, as well as their position of closeness to the regional and federal centers (in the case of Prionezhskii district) or remoteness from both (in Okinskii district). These differences allow for thorough analysis of multiple interrelated issues such as the creation of indigenous identity under the influence of mining discourses, the difference in indigenous communities' relations with the state, the tensions between “formal” and “informal” notions of ownership and belonging.

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<sup>77</sup> Veps were not included in the original list of small-numbered peoples in 1926, and Soiots were included in 1928, but removed from the list soon after that.

### ***3.1.2. Within-case sampling***

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) highlight three possible crises which qualitative researchers face: representation, legitimation, and praxis. The crisis of representation refers to the difficulties of capturing dynamic and constantly changing life experiences when conducting the study. The crisis of legitimation relates to the problem of not supporting the analysis with the adequate amount of evidence, or not thoroughly assessing the data. Finally, the crisis of praxis refers to the relations between the produced text and possible changes in the society (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

In order to address these challenges, as Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) suggest, carefully planned sampling is important. Onwuegbuzie and Leech distinguish between three types of sampling designs which may be especially useful for qualitative researchers: (1) parallel sampling strategies facilitating credible comparisons of two (or more) different subgroups extracted from the same level of study; (2) nested sampling providing comparisons of two (or more) members of the same subgroup; (3) multilevel sampling designs analyzing two or more subgroups extracted from different levels of study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007: 239 – 240). These strategies reflect the overall understanding of qualitative research which aims to get insights about specific social processes within a particular temporal and spatial context.

When planning the data collection, I framed it within the multilevel sampling design, choosing several subgroups of interviewees and several sites of participant observation within the larger groups of possible informants in Pronezhskii and Okinskii districts. Prior to starting fieldwork, I conducted expensive desktop research of both case studies in order to identify possible key informants and the important events to attend, as well as to get familiarized with the research context in order to refine my interviews' structure. I decided to

rely on several groups of possible informants in Karelia and Buriatia: (1) residents of the villages in Prionezhskii district of Karelia and Okinskii district of Buriatia who are (or were) engaged in stoneworking and/or related to the revitalization campaigns for Veps and Soiot; (2) local administration representatives; (3) mining companies' management; (4) Veps and Soiot activists. It was envisaged that concentrating on these four groups of interviewees would allow the thorough analysis of each of the case studies.

During the fieldwork, however, I needed to change this initial design. First of all, I was not able to gain access to every subgroup identified (due to the remote location of mining enterprises in Okinskii district of Buriatia, I did not manage to talk to the mining companies' management, and even though I tried to contact them prior to starting fieldwork, I received no response. Besides, initially I relied on purposeful sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015) in both case studies and identified a number of key informants in Karelia and Buriatia based on literature review and newspaper analysis. However, when being in the field, I could not reach some of the informants I planned to talk to initially (e.g. the reindeer herder or the master making souvenirs out of jade in Buriatia), while simultaneously I met a number of very knowledgeable informants completely accidentally when attending public events or visiting the quarries.

The division between subgroups of informants which were initially identified is not strict, as the same person may play different roles in the community (e.g. administration representative and indigenous activist, mining worker and indigenous activist). When transcribing and coding the interview, I tried to define the role(s) of the informant based on the main themes raised during the interview.

My interview data were supplemented with the fieldnotes from participant observation from visits to the villages and attending events: some of the events I attended were identified through desktop research prior to starting fieldwork, but I also learned about some of them

while being in the field. I will further discuss sampling criteria for all the data collection methods in section 3.3.

### **3.1.3. *Multi-sited ethnography***

The term “multi-sited ethnography” is commonly used to refer to fieldwork conducted in more than one geographic location. Marcus (1995) in his influential paper defines multi-sited ethnography as a type of comparative method when ethnographic data drawn from different settings are juxtaposed to reveal new connections and associations. The concept of multi-sited ethnography generated mixed responses: it has been criticized for possible lack of depth or for holistic ambitions when the researcher aims to embrace too much (Falzon, 2009). However, multi-sited ethnography is also an attempt to adapt ethnographic research to changing realities of contemporary world, and it challenges the assumption that a field site can be explored in isolation from global processes (Candea, 2009).

Sometimes multi-sited fieldworks grow out of initially single-sited projects; in my case, however, I initially aimed to focus on two regions of Russia, and ideally not neighboring regions. Choosing two case studies would allow me to discuss the influence of indigeneity and mining state discourses on communities in more details, focusing both on similarities and differences and revealing possible connections and common traits. However, I also realized the possible challenges of this choice. There was a difference in my level of familiarity with the cases: while I grew up in Petrozavodsk, studies Vepsian language at school and travelled to Vepsian villages several times during my childhood and teenage years, I had no familiarity with Buriatia and with Okinskii district specifically. In Karelia, it was easier to establish contacts as I already had a certain understanding of the existing networks of Veps activists. In

Buriatia, I had to rely of several initial gate keepers such as my host in the local guesthouse, administration representatives or workers of Orlik library.

Finally, there were also budget restrains influencing the research design. I had accommodation in Petrozavodsk and could rather easily travel to Prionezhskii district which is situated close to Petrozavodsk. It was, however, much more costly to travel to Buriatia and to find accommodation there. Travelling by train was more affordable but would take 6-7 days, and flights to Ulan-Ude are normally very expensive.<sup>78</sup> To reduce the costs, I had to travel via Irkutsk and then find transfer to Okinskii district directly from there. Nevertheless, due to financial constrains I was able to spend less time in Buriatia than in Karelia. These factors needed to be taken in consideration when interpreting fieldwork data and drawing conclusions. Due to the uneven time spent at the fieldwork sites, I treat the case of Veps in Karelia as the primary case study in this dissertation. The case of Soiot in Buriatia serves as the additional case study providing supporting material for the analysis of Veps in Prionezhskii district, as well as demonstrating the differences in indigenous claims and in attitudes towards resource extraction among small-numbered indigenous communities of Russia. As a partial compensation for my shorter physical presence in Buriatia, I relied heavily on other sources of data such as publications in local newspapers. I also studied the communication of Okinskii district's residents via social media platforms (for example, *Okinskii anonym*<sup>79</sup> in the Russian social network *Vkontakte*).

When planning and conducting the research, I have applied the principles embodied by the concept of “yo-yo fieldwork” outlined by Helena Wulff (2002). “Yo-yo fieldwork” refers to both regular movement in and out of the field and to participant observation in many

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<sup>78</sup> In the autumn of 2017, soon after I returned from my second fieldwork trip, low-cost airline Pobeda Airlines started flights between Moscow and Ulan-Ude in Buriatia. However, at the time of my fieldwork low-cost options were not available.

<sup>79</sup> The creation of *Okinskii anonym* will be discussed in more details in the section 3.3.3.

local sites (Wulff, 2002). The fieldwork in Karelia and Buriatia was conducted in several phases which are shortly described in Table 3 at the end of this section.

In Karelia, I conducted the analysis of local newspapers and NGO documents, participant observation and interviews in several villages of the Prionezhskii district (Shoksha, Rybreka, Kvartsitnyi, and Sheltozero) and in Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelia, during several visit. The first visit was conducted in June-September 2015 (3.5 months). In June 2015, I primarily worked on newspaper materials, and in July-September 2015 I was visiting the villages for interviews with the local residents and analyzing the data I collected. The visits normally lasted 1-3 days. During that time I gathered the data which helped me to work on my dissertation prospectus in October-December 2015. In February 2016, I conducted the second visit to Karelia which lasted for one month. This time I was working mainly with newspaper materials in Petrozavodsk, but also conducting several visits to the villages. In June 2016, I visited two quarries, one in Shoksha and the second one in Rybreka, and interviewed several mining workers. In August 2016, after returning from Buriatia, I continued fieldwork in Karelia, mostly interviewing the activists in Petrozavodsk and conducting several additional visits to Shoksha and Kvartsitnyi. At that time I also got in contact with the activists of *Paginklub* (conversational club in Vepsian organized in Petrozavodsk). I managed to attend several meetings of Paginklub via Skype while being in Budapest in fall 2016, and in December 2016 I visited a meeting in person and managed to interview two of the participants. In April 2017, I again managed to attend two more meetings of Paginklub, and I also went to a nearby city Kondopoga with the Vepsian folklore collective *Randaine*, as I was invited by one of my informants.

During my visit to Karelia in July-August 2017, I mostly aimed to gather additional data to fill the gaps I had in my analysis. I conducted several interviews with the activists from *Paginklub* and from the Society of Vepsian Culture (one of my respondents was later

elected as the Head of one of the Vepsian villages, so became an administration representative). Finally, in December 2017, I attended the New Year's meeting of *Paginklub*, and in summer 2018 I held several additional interviews with quarry's management and conducted additional field visits to Vepsian villages, including *Tree of Life* celebration.

Multiple visits conducted to Karelia proved to be an effective method, as I was able to see the communities of Prionezhskii district's residents and Petrozavodsk-based activists and miners in dynamics, and every time returning from the field I had time to reflect on data and to think of additional questions I could ask or of possible developing of emerging themes. I witnessed the political and social changes happening in Prionezhskii district over the period from 2015 to 2018, the changes in the administration and in the quarries' management. Concurrently, I could also see the continuity of many issues emerging from the interviews and participant observation, such as local perceptions of mining. Every time, when entering the field, I felt more prepared and more familiar with the context. At the same time, when returning to Karelia again and again after several months' break, I was able to witness the changes and to get a sharper, fresher perspective of the field sites.

In Buriatia, the rotating method of fieldwork was chosen for more practical reasons, such as financial aspects of the research. The first phase of my research in 2016 was financed by CEU Short-Term Research Grant, and initially I planned to return to Okinskii district in the summer of 2017. However, I had to change this initial plan after the first stage of fieldwork (the reasons for this change will be discussed in section 3.5), and went to Ulan-Ude instead to conduct interview with Soiot and Evenki activists and work with the newspapers in the library. In future, I foresee additional fieldwork in Okinskii district, as I am willing to explore the recent changes happening in the districts' mining industry and territorial organization (such as the current situation with the Territory of traditional subsistence project).

Due to the rapid development of digital technologies, the concept of multi-sited ethnography becomes broadened. A number of questions may be asked in relation to digital data collection. Where would the borders of the “field” be? What counts as an interview? How would the relations between the researcher and the community develop in the online context? (Markham, 2013) It is difficult to say that the fieldwork gets disrupted or ends when the researcher leaves the field site physically; in my case, even when being in Budapest I continued following the news from Prionezhskii and Okinskii district and followed the Veps and Soiot activists through online networks. Some of the informants would find and add me on Facebook or *Vkontakte*, and our communication would continue even though I was not present in the field.<sup>80</sup> I continued working with the online publications from both Karelia and Buriatia and subscribed for the electronic version of Veps newspaper *Kodima*. I could even watch the broadcasts of conferences happening in Karelia when being in Budapest or connect to the meetings of Veps speaking club (*Paginklub*) using Skype. I also began following the groups of *Paginklub*, the Society of Vepsian Culture, and Okinskii anonym (the online platform of Okinskii district) in social media. This way I never felt alienated from my fieldwork sites and could continue research even though being thousands of kilometers away.

The online platform *Okinskii anonym*<sup>81</sup> was especially valuable for my research, as I could spend less time in Buriatia than in Karelia, and thus needed to rely on online communication more. The platform was created in 2014 in Russian social network *Vkontakte*. It was interesting for me to discover that in such a remote area as Okinskii district internet and mobile connection in fact play a vital role, and the local residents are constantly connected through online networks or through mobile communication. Most of the time, *Okinskii anonym* is filled with general advertisements, photos of local or Buriat natural

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<sup>80</sup> However, online communication between the researcher and the informant may also raise concerns related to high mutual visibility of both in social networks (Hine, 2015).

wonders as well as historical pieces devoted to the area, Soioys, or Buryatia in general. Transportation-related posts are also frequent: as transport connection between Orlik and Ulan-Ude is unreliable, and between Orlik and Irkutsk it is simply nonexistent, car sharing becomes an important issue. *Okinskii anonym* also serves as a resource of quick mobilization in case of road-related problems or natural disasters such as floods or rock falls. I was following the posts in *Okinskii anonym* regularly, and they provided valuable insights on many issues discussed in the dissertation such as local connections to nature, the relations with the mining companies, or the perceptions of local and regional administration (or the state as the general entity).

**TABLE 3. SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK ACTIVITIES**

Time period	Location	Activities
June – October 2015 (3.5 months)	Karelia: Prionezhskii district and Petrozavodsk	Participant observation  Interviewing  Attending <i>Tree of Life</i> and <i>Miner's Day</i> celebrations , Sheltozero and Rybreka  Visits to mining quarries  Newspaper analysis  Archival research  Presentation of research at Shoksha school and meeting with the teachers
February 2016 (1 month)	Karelia: Prionezhskii district and Petrozavodsk	Participant observation  Interviewing  Visits to mining quarries

<sup>81</sup> Link to *Okinskii anonym* social media platform: <https://vk.com/okinanon671030> (Accessed July 15, 2019).

		Newspaper analysis
June – July 2016 (1.5 months)	Buriatia: Okinskii district and Ulan-Ude	Participant observation  Interviewing  Newspaper analysis  Archival research  Attending <i>Buddha Maitreia</i> celebration  Attending the Meeting with the Head of Buriatia (Viacheslav Nagovitsyn), Orlik  Attending the Indigenous peoples' day celebration, Ulan-Ude
August 2016 (1 month)	Karelia: Prionezhskii district and Petrozavodsk	Participant observation  Interviewing  Newspaper analysis  Attending <i>Miner's Day</i> celebration, Rybreka.
October 2016 (2 weeks)	Karelia: Prionezhskii district and Petrozavodsk	Participant observation  Interviewing  Attending <i>Paginklub</i> meeting, Petrozavodsk  Attending Vepsian language class, Centre for National Cultures, Petrozavodsk
December 2016 (2 weeks)	Karelia: Petrozavodsk	Participant observation  Interviewing  Attending <i>Paginklub</i> meeting

		Newspaper analysis
April 2017 (2 weeks)	Karelia: Petrozavodsk, Kondopoga	Participant observation Interviewing <i>Attending Paginklub meeting</i> <i>Attending Vepsian language class, Centre for National Cultures</i> <i>Trip to Kondopoga with Vepsian choir Randaine</i>
July – August 2017 (1.5 months)	Karelia: Prionezhskii district and Petrozavodsk	Participant observation Interviewing Visits to mining quarries <i>Attending Miner's Day celebration, Rybreka.</i>
August 2017 (2 weeks)	Buriatia: Ulan-Ude	Interviewing Newspaper analysis Visiting Ivolginskii <i>datsan</i>
December 2017 (2 weeks)	Karelia: Petrozavodsk	Interviewing <i>Attending Paginklub meeting</i> Newspaper analysis
July-August 2018 (1.5 months)	Karelia: Petrozavodsk	Newspaper analysis Interviewing <i>Attending Tree of Life celebration, Sheltozero</i>

## 3.2. Data collection methods

This section discusses three main methods of collecting the data within the framework of field research. My fieldwork activities could be divided into three categories: I participated in daily life activities in Prionezhskii and Okinskii districts, conducted interviews with local residents, mining workers and activists in both districts, as well as Petrozavodsk and Ulan-Ude, and worked with local newspapers in National Libraries of Karelia and Buriatia as well as local library and archive in Orlik, Okinskii district.

### 3.2.1. *Participant observation*

Participant observation involves social interaction between the researcher and informants in the milieu of the latter, during which data are systematically and unobtrusively collected (Taylor, 1984). Recent interventions have argued that the meaning and value of participant observation goes far beyond gathering data. Ingold refers to participant observation as the practice of correspondence, or “living *attentively* with others” (Ingold, 2014; author’s emphasis). Conducting participant observation may also be seen as a process of personal education and development (Ingold, 2014). Shah (2017) views participant observation as a potentially revolutionary praxis as it makes the researchers question their established assumptions about the world and allows them to discover new ways of thinking, seeing, and feeling. Participation in the daily life of the community allows experiencing activities directly and recording these perceptions which contribute to the overall analysis (Spradley, 2016). The dual nature of the process (engaging in the activities and observing them at the same time), results in a mixture of visual, audial, olfactory and kinesthetic

experiences which mediate the gradual immersion of the researcher into the new environment.

In my research, participant observation played a crucial role, and I saw it not simply as a method of obtaining data, but as the process of learning. The fieldnotes demonstrate that many of my perceptions indeed changes over the course of three years of recurrent fieldwork. I started participant observation in August-September 2015 in four Veps villages in Karelia – Shoksha, Kvartsitnyi, Sheltozero, and Rybreka. The problem of field access and establishing oneself within a community is one of the central ones at the beginning of ethnographic fieldwork. In Karelia, I started familiarizing myself with the field site in each of the villages by attending a festival (Veps national holiday "Tree of Life" in Sheltozero and Miner's Day in Rybreka) and by visiting the Veps ethnographic museum in Sheltozero village. These activities helped me to establish several initial contacts with Veps activists and local residents and also receive advice on potential informants. Such initial contacts provided me with certain "credibility" in the community, as I already had a certain "history" through getting to know several people from the area (Wolff, 2002). As a result, it was easier to get access to different village sites such as the school, the church, or the local administration when I could mention some earlier acquaintances from the village. During my stay, I observed the daily activities of the local residents such as going to the forest, hunting trips, and leisure time near their houses, agricultural works, or school meetings. I tried to interact with the villagers informally at various situations: when buying food, taking walks near the coast of Lake Onega, attending events at the local schools in Shoksha and Rybreka, participating in celebrations. In many cases, such informal interactions turned out to be very important, as my interlocutors felt more relaxed and would talk more freely than in the "formal" interview context. At the end of each day, I was taking notes recording these interactions, as well as my impressions and feelings during the day. I tried to "experience" the fieldwork sites as much as

possible just walking, going to the lake or to the forest, observing different types of the houses, talking to local residents, shopkeepers, bus drivers, workers and other people I met on the way. In addition to the fieldwork diary, I took a number of photos of the field sites which I later used for the analysis commenting on them and looking for parallels between the fieldnotes and photographic evidences. Trying to bring something to the community, in September 2015 I delivered a presentation on higher education possibilities in Petrozavodsk for schoolchildren in Shoksha village. I also shared preliminary results of my research during the presentation for teachers and schoolchildren in Shoksha. My research in Prionezhskii district was later complemented by participant observation in Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelia: taking part in the meetings of Veps speaking club and Veps language courses, accompanying Veps national choir to their concert in Kondopoga, attending Veps celebrations and events at Center for National Cultures in Petrozavodsk. Some of the participant observation activities in Karelia were also conducted remotely: I participated in several meetings of Veps speaking club via Skype and watched the online broadcastings of two regional conferences on Veps language and culture held in Petrozavodsk (in 2015 and 2017).

I followed a similar pattern when beginning my research in Buriatia. In June-July 2016, I conducted participant observation in Orlik, the administrative center of Okinskii district, and Sorok, a smaller village which is often presented to visitors as “the centre of Soiot culture.” In both villages, I started with contacting the local administration and explaining the purpose and the timeframe of my research. During the first stage of my fieldwork in Buriatia, I participated in the daily routines of the community members such as trips to the stores, visits to the local *datsans*, or walks near the river. I accompanied my hosts on their visit to the local shaman in Orlik and tried to help them in their daily activities. As I lived in the local guesthouse, I also managed to spend time with the tourists who would visit

Orlik on their way to the natural sights of Okinskii district; others came to visit the shaman<sup>82</sup> and stayed for several days. When staying in Sorok, I also tried to take part in everyday activities of the locals, as I felt that by sharing common activities I become more integrated in the community. In summer 2016, I also managed to attend several events happening in Okinskii district, where I also took notes and took photos. I attended the meeting with the former Head of Buriatia Viacheslav Nagovitsyn<sup>83</sup> in Orlik, Buddha Maitreia<sup>84</sup> prayer in the local *datsan*, and the field trip of the conference *Dorzhiev's readings*<sup>85</sup> during which I visited several of the main natural attractions of Okinskii district with the conference participants. A great deal of my fieldnotes and informal conversations come from sharing shorter and longer trips with local residents; as Büscher and Urry (2009) suggest, traveling with the research participants is the powerful means of exploring and experiencing the nature of mobility in the field.

The possible weakness of the participant observation as a method is that it can easily be based on the researcher's preconceived notions and thus becomes biased (Flyvbjerg, 2006). During the fieldwork, I combined participant observation with interviewing as well as document analysis in order to combine my observations and impressions from being in the field and interacting with the local residents with the narratives of the locals, as well as the historical perspectives of the case studies.

### **3.2.2. Interviewing**

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<sup>82</sup> As the visitors from Irkutsk I talked with explained, the shaman in Orlik was considered especially powerful, so they came to see him in order to “fix” the negative prophecy they received earlier when being in Ulan-Ude.

<sup>83</sup> Viacheslav Nagovitsyn was the Head of Buriatia in 2007 – 2017 (succeeded by Aleksei Tsydenov).

<sup>84</sup> In Buddhist tradition, Maitreya will be the successor of the present Buddha who will achieve complete enlightenment.

<sup>85</sup> Dorzhiev's Readings is the annual conference held in St. Petersburg or in Buriatia in memory of Agvan Dorzhiev (1853 – 1938), Buddhist lama and scholar, one of the key figures in the history of Russian Buddhism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Another important method of data collection used in qualitative research is in-depth interviewing which may be viewed as the method complementing and enlarging participant observation (Burgess, 1993). The interview can be defined as a conversation that has a structure and a purpose determined by the interviewer; as a result, interview serves as a construction site for knowledge (Kvale, 2007). Through interviewing, the main goal of ethnography – learning from people rather than studying them – can be realized (Spradley, 2016). The vital importance of interviews as the means of grasping the informants' points of view has been widely stressed in ethnographic literature (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Alongside participant observation, interviewing played a crucial role in my research. In total, I conducted 66 interviews in Karelia (over the period of 2015 – 2018) and 36 interviews in Buriatia (in summer 2016 and summer 2017). The difference in the number of interviews results from the amount of time I managed to spend in both of the field sites.

In Karelia, most of the interviews were conducted with the residents of Prionezhskii district (in Shoksha, Kvartsitnyi, and Rybreka villages). Several interviews were also conducted in Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelia. My interviews in Petrozavodsk were conducted primarily with Veps activists, mining company managers, and the participants of *Paginklub* (V: Speaking club). I got acquainted with my first interviewees<sup>86</sup> from Prionezhskii district when attending *Elonpu* (V: *The Tree of Life* - Veps national celebration held annually in Sheltozero village) in July 2015. Soon after that, I came to Shoksha and

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<sup>86</sup> In this dissertation, I use the terms “interviewee” and “informant” interchangeably. Recently, there have been a number of discussions in academic newsletters (such as “Anthropology matters”) regarding the usage of the word “informant” when referring to ethnographic interviewing. It was pointed out that the term “informant” may bring associations to colonial history or cause unsettling connotations of espionage, especially when referring to post-socialist countries (Katherine Verdery refers to the common usage of the term “informant” by ethnographers and secret police in *My Life as a Spy* (2018)). In Russian anthropology and ethnography, however, the term is widely used without negative connotations (e.g. Rychkova & Petrov, 2015; Rakhmanova, 2014). In Russian language, the connotations of espionage are carried by a different term (*informator*). Therefore, I keep “informant” and “interviewee” as terms referring to the research participants with whom I had a recorded and transcribed interview. I also use “interlocutor” to refer to the participants of relatively informal and unstructured ‘conversations’ recorded in fieldnotes.

Kvartsitnyi and stayed with the long-time resident of Shoksha, a former worker of the diabase gravel quarry in Kvartsitnyi, who served as my gate-keeper in both Shoksha and Kvartsitnyi and shared her knowledge of the settlements' history (Interview K9). In August-September 2015, I visited Shoksha, Kvartsitnyi, and Rybreka regularly, while at the same time working with newspapers in the library of Petrozavodsk and in the Veps museum in Sheltozero. Newspaper analysis provided me with the background information on Vepsian villages as well as mining development in Karelia. This information helped to refine the interview themes and come up with more specific questions. When interviewing the Veps activists in Petrozavodsk as well as the representatives of mining companies, I would in most cases contact them via email or social networks, provide an outline of my research and ask for a possible meeting.

After establishing the initial circle of contacts in Shoksha, Kvartsitnyi and Rybreka through my gate-keeper, I used snowball sampling method (Marshall, 1996; Noy, 2008) to draw on the social networks of the informants in order to find new ones. At the end of each interview I would ask the informant, "Whom else would you advise me to talk to?", thus expanding my set of possible interviewees. I also met some of the informants while walking in the villages or attending the local events such as *Miner's Day* in Rybreka. In this respect, it was much easier for me to meet people in Vepsian villages than in Okinskii district of Buriatia due to the spatial organization of the households. In Karelia, house fences are normally quite low; besides, in summer or early autumn many local residents were outside in their gardens taking care of the vegetables and flowers. It was relatively easy to approach them, introduce myself and start a conversation. In Buriatia, however, fences are high, and it is almost impossible to see the house yards if one is walking along the street (see Fig. 20, Fig.21). In addition, agriculture is not particularly developed in Okinskii district due to its harsh climate and the historical nomadic lifestyle of its residents, and therefore there are no

gardens outside of the house where the residents would work during the day. Therefore, whereas I met a large number of interviewees in Karelia by the fact of simply being in the settlements and taking walks along the roads, most of my interviews in Buriatia were pre-arranged, as I needed to rely on snowball sampling and references of my hosts in Orlik.



FIGURE 20. AN EXAMPLE OF A HOUSEHOLD IN RYBREKA, KARELIA



FIGURE 21. AN EXAMPLE OF A HOUSEHOLD IN ORLIK, BURIATIA

After conducting the first set of interviews in July – September 2015, I transcribed them and conducted thematic analysis highlighting the common issues raised. After that, I and returned to the field site in Karelia during several additional trips in 2016 – 2018 to take more interviews, now focusing more specifically on the main themes which were raised in the first set of interviews.

When conducting fieldwork in Buriatia, I used the experience gained in Karelia. As I did not know anybody in Okinskii district, I had to rely a lot on my hosts, the owners of the guest house in Orlik where I stayed during most of the fieldwork. I got several initial contacts through the references of my hosts. Other valuable experiences were visiting the local administration in Orlik and the Orlik's library. Both in the administration and in the library, I met the people who were deeply interested and engaged in my research and provided me with

references of possible interviewees. I also met a number of people with whom I had formal interviews and more informal conversations during my trips to local *datsans* (Buddhist monasteries). Finally, due to the remote position of Okinskii district, the trip there would take 8-12 hours, and I had several informative conversations while being on the road. My “road conversations” on the way from Irkutsk to Orlik served as a slow introduction into the life of the district and provided excellent background for further research. During the second trip to Buriatia in 2017, I concentrated on interviewing several Soiot and Evenki activists living in Ulan-Ude (I got their contacts through snowball sampling).

The age of my informants in Karelia and Buriatia varied between 25 and 88 years. The interviews lasted between 40 minutes and two hours and were conducted in Russian.<sup>87</sup> In Prionezhskii district of Karelia and in Petrozavodsk, the interviews started with introductory questions on the informant’s family history and background. After that, the conversation moved to several thematic areas including the informants’ perceptions of work in the quarry in past and present, relations (if any) with Vepsian language and culture, views on present-day life in the village and currently operating mining companies, and ways of spending free time. When talking to the informants in Buriatia, I also always started with the general questions about their families, childhood and youth years, and then moved towards more general themes such as the everyday activities and occupations, the attitudes towards the authorities and mining companies, the relations with nature, ways of employment or spending free time. As the life trajectories of the residents of Okinskii district were more diverse than in Prionezhskii district of Karelia (where a number of informants would work at one of the quarries for many years until retirement), the interviews were less structured.

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<sup>87</sup> Vepsian-speaking informants in Prionezhskii district were bilingual, and though I understand Vepsian as well, they preferred to speak to me in Russian. In Okinskii district, most of the middle-aged and older local residents are more proficient in Buriat language than in Russian. However, as I do not speak Buriat, we conducted the interviews in Russian. Younger residents of Okinskii district, especially those who studied in the universities in Ulan-Ude or Irkutsk, in most cases speak Russian and Buriat equally well.

The interviews in Karelia and Buriatia were semi-structured: I had a pre-arranged set of questions, but in many cases the interview would take a different direction, and I followed these directions in order to talk about the issues which seemed especially interesting and relevant for each interviewee. In many cases, the informants wanted to share their worries and problems, or even life tragedies with me. In such situations, I felt that it was important to listen and react, as I treated the interviews as an emotional exchange and a point of connecting to each other, instead of simply trying to gather the information which interested me.<sup>88</sup>

The majority of the interviews conducted in Karelia and Buriatia were recorded using digital devices and later transcribed. There were, however, several cases when the informants did not feel comfortable with the recording. In these cases, written notes were made. Even if digital recording was used, I also made short written notes during and after the interview to highlight the most important themes or record particular expression or way of speaking. Later, when transcribing the interview, I also added information from the written notes. In addition, I was taking notes of the informal conversations with the interlocutors when in the field. In several cases, I conducted two interviews with the same informant (for example, I spoke to the administration worker in Ulan-Ude twice, in 2016 and 2017).

When coding the interviews, I use “K” to mark those conducted in Karelia and “B” for the interviews conducted in Buriatia. The number following the letter indicates the consecutive number of the interview in my recordings. In Appendix 1 and 2, I provide additional information on all the recorded interviews. When preparing the full list of the interviews (Appendix 1 and 2), I divided them according the primary role of each interview

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<sup>88</sup> I tried to see the interviews not as the means of “gaining” something from the informants, but as a way to invest my emotions and empathy as well. This was important, as for middle-aged and older informants the conversations about the past of the villages would often bring the sad memories about the loss of their loved ones or the hardships they overcame. At the end of such emotionally loaded interviews, I felt exhausted and

participant (in Karelia – former/current mining worker, quarry management, administration, activists, local resident without any affiliation with mining). In Buriatia, these roles were less visible. Unlike in Karelia, the residents of Okinskii district of Buriatia in many cases do not have a steady employment (unless they work for state institution such as the administration, the school or the library). Therefore, for the list of the interviews conducted in Buriatia, when analyzing the, I added the occupations of local resident which were not official but would be connected to the themes of the interview (such as “engaged in hunting” or “engaged in jade mining”).

When coding the first interviews, I started with printing them out and highlighting the main recurrent themes which helped me during the next phase of the fieldwork. For more advanced coding, I used NVivo 11. For coding the interviews, I used the grounded theory method outlined by Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1996). The method of grounded theory allows the inclusive analysis of qualitative data in order to develop middle-range theories (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz, 2008). The analysis started from open coding when the data were separated into discrete parts, examined and compared for possible similarities and differences, and later grouped under more abstract concepts – “categories” (Strauss and Corbin, 1996). This process was followed by axial coding - relating codes (categories and concepts) to each other. The axial coding is used to outline the relationships between the codes and helps to give the concepts explanatory power (Strauss and Corbin, 1996: 124-125). At this stage, I tried to define whether the same themes occur more or less frequently for different groups and whether they are expressed differently. I recorded meaningful associations, but also the absence of associations, as both processes would prompt further questions valuable for the analysis (Bazeley, 2009). After that, selective coding was

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emptied; however, following Ingold (2014), I also felt I was becoming a different person through reflecting over a number of life trajectories.

conducted in order to move from descriptions to conceptualizations (Strauss and Corbin, 1996: 143). When doing the selective coding, I would figure out the core variable including all of the data, and then reread the transcripts and code the data which relate to the identified variable.

Alongside the transcripts of interviews, I also analyzed the notes I made when conducting the interviews. Before starting the analysis, I added notes to the word file of the transcript situating the particular interview in the larger context (way of reaching the informant, specific circumstances of the interview etc.) For the analysis of the relations between open codes and categories, I used mind maps (Wheeldon and Faubert, 2009) or free writing (Bazeley, 2009), as visual representations helped to refine my thinking and to look for deeper links and connections not only between codes, but between more general themes emerging from the research.

### ***3.2.3. Document analysis***

In order to analyze the influence of state discourses on mining development and indigeneity construction in Karelia and Buriatia, the fieldwork in both regions included the selection and analysis of local and regional newspaper publications.<sup>89</sup> Both Soviet-time and post-Soviet publications were selected for the analysis to study the development of mining industry and the establishment of indigenous identities in historical perspective. Newspapers were the primary medium for Soviet ideology alongside with radio and – later – cinematography (Zassoursky, 2004). The Soviet media system was closed to Western influences and had several main goals, first of all, to spread the information about the Soviet way of life and its supremacy (Salminen, 2009: 28). Soviet-time newspapers, therefore, were

used as the main arena for “instilling ideology in mass consciousness” (Zassoursky, 2004: 9). Western influences on the Soviet press became stronger in late 1980s and remained significant throughout the 1990s. However, the beginning of 2000s marked the monopolization of control over media (Zassoursky, 2004). Thus, both in the Soviet-time publications and in contemporary Russian press, state-approved discourses are actively transmitted.

When working in Karelia, I concentrated first of all on the main newspaper of Prionezhskii district, *Prionezh'e*<sup>90</sup> (until 1991, *Kommunist Prionezh'a*<sup>91</sup>). Prionezh'e is the leading local newspaper published biweekly since 1935 (weekly since 2004 till present). The articles from 1930s till 1980s were studied during the fieldwork, covering two or three years from each decade except for 1940s when mining stopped because of the war and post-war periods. From each decade, I selected the newspapers collections from the year of the anniversary of *Onezhskoe rudoupravlenie*, the first state mining enterprise in Prionezhskii district which started operating in 1924 (thus, I studied the publications from the years 1954, 1964, 1974, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2014), as I assumed that the issues related to mining would be covered more often during the anniversary years. I would then select one additional year from the 1950s (when mining was still at the early stages of development) and two additional non-consecutive years for the 1960s – 2010s. In addition, I studied the publications in the local newspaper *Krasnoe Sheltozero*<sup>92</sup> which was published between 1931 and 1956.

When reading through the yearly collections of newspapers, I primarily selected the publications which covered the issues related to stoneworking: technical reports from the

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<sup>89</sup> Strauss (1987: 26) brings interesting parallels between library research and ethnography: “In some kinds of library research, the researcher will even use the library much like an ethnographer, deciding upon which shelves to find the data sources (books, periodicals).”

<sup>90</sup> Both Soviet and post-Soviet newspapers of Karelia were accessed at the National Library of the Republic of Karelia located in Petrozavodsk. Contemporary publications are also available online.

<sup>91</sup> [R: The Kommunist of Prionezh'e]

<sup>92</sup> [R: Red Sheltozero]

quarries, biographies of well-known stoneworkers, comparisons between past and present of the quarries, descriptions of the miners' daily lives or celebrations. In addition, I selected all the publications which mentioned Veps, their language or traditions, cultural institutions, or their indigenous status. Moreover, the publications which could potentially contribute to the key themes of the dissertation (for example, the texts dealing with the ecological situation of the villages, transportation problems or migration and ethnic composition) were also selected for further analysis. During the fieldwork, I also selected publications in several regional Karelian newspapers, such as *Karelia*, *Moskovskii Komsomolets v Karelii*, *Pravda v Karelii*, *Respublika*, *Vse* and *Kodima* (the newspaper published partly in Vepsian).

When doing fieldwork in Buriatia, I relied on newspaper analysis even more than in Karelia, as I could spend less time in the field. I mostly concentrated in the publications in the newspaper of Okinskii district *Akha*<sup>93</sup> (until 1991, *Saianskaia nov*<sup>94</sup>). The newspaper is published since 1944 in Orlik. Between 1998 and 2004, the well-known journalist and Soiot activist from Okinskii district, Klim Tuluev, was the newspaper's editor. Tuluev published a number of materials on Soiot history and the process of indigenous status recognition, as well as the history of Okinskii district. When selecting the publications in Oka, I also selected the yearly collections from 2-3 years of each decade starting from the 1940s. In order to access the materials on local history published prior to the 1940s (such as the reports of B.E. Petri's ethnographic expedition), I also worked in the local archive of Okinskii district situated in Orlik. I selected the publications dealing with Soiot history and their indigenous status, as well as mining development in the district, the relations with nature, local beliefs and traditions.

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<sup>93</sup> The Buriat name of Okinskii district

<sup>94</sup> [R: New Soil of the Saians]

An important part of the research was the analysis of social media, primarily the online platform of Okinskii district *Okinskii anonym*. I started following the platform's updates in 2016, during the fieldwork, and continued reading the publications even when returning from the field. In addition, I followed several online groups initiated by Veps activists such as the group of Veps speaking club and the Society of Veps culture. The publications and comments in these groups complemented the data collection.

The fieldwork was also complemented with the analysis of legislative acts (concentrating on indigenous land and natural resource rights). As Scott (1998: 2) indicates, the standardization of legal discourse is one of the ways in which the government arranges its population and simplifies the classic state functions. At the same time, as Novikova (2008: 14) points out, law should not be considered in isolation, but rather as an element of cultural and social whole of each society, and it may be interpreted differently by various groups or actors. As a part of data collection, I analyzed the acts “On Guarantees of the Rights of Numerically Small Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Federation” (1999), “On General Principles of Organization of Communities of Numerically Small Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation” (2000), and “On Territories of Traditional Natural Resource Use of Numerically Small Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation” (2001) as well as the Constitutions of Karelia and Buriatia.

### **3.3. My presence in the field**

In both of my field sites, it was difficult for me to establish myself, though for different reasons. In Karelia, I needed to differentiate between my “informal” familiarity with the region and with the Vepsian organizations and my new role as a researcher. As I spent

most of my life in the region, and through studying Vepsian as a child and teenager I knew a lot of Vepsian activists at least by name, I was at the same time not well familiar with their recent work, as since I started university I have not had a lot of contact with Vepsian language and culture, and since 2010 I was living outside of Karelia. Therefore I needed to “re-establish” myself in the field which was once very familiar to me. I also did not know anybody living in the villages, though we visited them several times during my studies for language competitions and summer camps. While going to the villages in 2015, I felt that these places are at the same time familiar (as they were connected to many childhood memories) and unknown.

The people in the villages are quite used to researchers from Petrozavodsk coming to conduct interviews. However, most of the researchers are especially interested in Vepsian language and traditions, while my interest in mining history was sometimes met with surprise. My studies in Budapest were, on the contrary, not surprising, as Hungary has partnership relations with Finno-Ugrian people living in Russia as their kin-ethnicities, since 1990s there are scholarships for Vepsian students for continuing their education in Hungary or for exchange semesters in Budapest, and these scholarships are financed by the Hungarian government. However, my specialization was not clear for many informants. It was often hard for me to explain the interdisciplinary nature of the Environmental Sciences and Policy field, as I would automatically get associated with “ecology,” and then the informants would inquire why I ask questions about the village’s history. When I would say that I study mining and its effects on local population, I would get labeled as a geologist.

The fieldwork in Okinskii district was in many aspects different from my Karelian experience, as in Buriatia I was always perceived as an outsider. At times, it helped me, as the local residents were more interested in me and thus willing to communicate. Besides, as outsider, I could ask very “basic” questions about the local way of life, and sometimes

important interview themes would emerge through the explanations of everyday activities. However, this position also meant I needed more time to enter the community. Besides, while the villages in Karelia are situated next to Petrozavodsk, its capital, there is always a flow of people “from the city:” relatives, friends, people passing by, groups visiting local museum in Sheltozero. A lot of them are staying for a day only; some spend weekends in the villages in summer while working in Petrozavodsk. In Buriatia, the situation is different. Traveling to Okinskii district is a long and difficult trip which requires a lot of patience, so the people who come to visit Orlik or other villages in the district normally stay for some time with their relatives or friends. Another category is tourists. Though remote, Okinskii district is becoming more and more popular among tourists searching for wilderness: they are attracted by its “untouched nature.” Even the difficulties of getting to the district and travelling there (as most of its main natural attractions are not accessible by regular cars) are often treated as an additional adventure.<sup>95</sup> When I was checking tourists’ reviews of Okinskii district online, most of the authors mention the area’s remoteness as one of its distinctive features; one of the bloggers stated that the district “has very few human traces which is great.”<sup>96</sup>

In both of the field sites I experience the duality of feeling at the same time as “own” and “alien” (R: *svoi – chuzhoi*). In Karelian villages, I was a local to the region, but at the same “a city person,” and even in Paginklub I was often perceived as different from other residents of Petrozavodsk due to my studies in Budapest and resulting from that irregular (sometimes online) attendance. Due to a number of Finno-Ugrian conferences held in Hungary, some of the informants have been to Budapest and would share their impressions with me. In Buriatia, I was a co-citizen (and thus juxtaposed to foreign researchers who worked in the area previously), but not local. Thus, I was often asked about the ways of life in

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<sup>95</sup> During my fieldwork in Buriatia, I talked to tourists staying in the same guest house about the reasons for their visit.

Karelia, how indigenous peoples were treated there, what kind of berries or trees we had, how Petrozavodsk looked like. One of the informants even asked me to send her some photo album about Petrozavodsk when I would get back. I had several Karelian souvenirs with me and presented them to some of the interviewees, and they were always received with interest. For informants in Buriatia, my Karelian background seemed much more important than my institutional affiliation with a Budapest-based university. Budapest seemed too far away from Siberia, though sometimes I heard jokes about its hidden Buriat connections: Buda stands for “Buddha” in Buriat language.

My gender was also important for doing the fieldwork, especially in Prionezhskii district in Karelia where mining is always present in local life. Mining is perceived as a heavily masculinized industry, and it was difficult to get into the mining community being a woman. Initially I had an idea to stay at one of the quarries together with *vakhtoviki* (R: shift workers), but was explained that this would not be possible – there are no women staying at the mining sites at night, and there are simply no rooms for women. As for Okinskii district, the idea of a woman traveling large distances in an unknown area seemed peculiar for many of my informants. I was asked a number of times where “the rest of my group” was. In the middle of the fieldwork, my hosts in Okinskii district decided that I could possibly get acquainted with some decent man from the area, and therefore they actively disapproved my attempts to interview the men they considered “inappropriate.” At the same time, during the biographical interview conducted with women both in Karelia and Buriatia my gender was rather an advantage, as we could talk more freely about the personal issues such as family life, raising children, bodily issues or illnesses.

### 3.4. Ethical considerations

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<sup>96</sup> Huzhir, Okinskii raion, Buriatia: <https://foturist-ru.livejournal.com/292267.html>

As my research involves direct contact with people and listening to their life stories, ethical issues become especially important. As both communities I conducted my research at are rather closed, I understood well that most informants could easily be identified by other members of the communities based on their name and biographical details. To avoid such easy identifications, I used pseudonyms for all informants who appear in the text with their first names only. In the cases when the informant is speaking as a public person (for example, administration representative or the leader of a local NGO) I use their full name.

All the interviewees were informed about the purpose of my research prior to the interview. In Karelia, I would explain that I study the history of mining development in the villages of Prionezhskii district. In Buriatia, where mining is a less open and more sensitive subject, I would say that I conduct research about the local community and their way of life. In both cases I mentioned that the informants' anonymity would be ensured. I also asked for the permission to record the interview using voice recorder. In the majority of interview such permission was granted, but in cases the informant did not want to be recorded I took notes instead.

During the interviews, I also took pictures of the photos which many of my informants kept in their family albums, but I used them only as an instrument for analysis complementing the interview materials, and therefore do not publish any of them in the dissertation. The interviewees were informed that the photos I take would not be meant for publishing. I never took any pictures against the will of the interviewee. However, many of them were glad to talk to me about their lives and to show their family photos.

During the fieldwork in both regions I tried to be concrete, but not too specific when explaining the theme and purpose of my PhD project. I decided that too much specificity could impact my conversations with the informants, as I did not want the interviews to go towards any pre-designed narrative. At the same time, it was important to explain that my

project is involving historical issues and mining-related themes, though I am not a trained geologist and may not be able to grasp the explanations which are too technical.

### 3.5. Limitations

The primary limitation of this study is the uneven time spent conducting fieldwork in Karelia and Buriatia. One of the reasons for this difference was related to financial constraints, as I mentioned earlier in this section. The additional reasons which urged me to eventually limit the fieldwork time was the interest towards my research from Russian federal security service. As the district is situated close to Mongolian border and in order to get there the travelers need to pass the passport control, it is easy to identify the visitors who are not from Buriatia. The attention towards my research could also be caused by the fact that I was a student of a foreign university. Given the political situation in Russia at that time (and currently) and my affiliation with the university supported by George Soros (who is currently a persona non grata in Russia), I limited my second visit to Ulan-Ude, the capital of Buriatia.

Katherine Verdery reflects on multiple perceptions of anthropologists in the field in her book *My Life as a Spy*: “Anthropologists in the field play a variant of the role of “foreign visitor”... Sometimes we are seen as missionaries trying to convert the locals, sometimes as poachers on their sacred knowledge. In many places, we have been viewed as spies and kept under surveillance for that reason.” (Verdery, 2018: 23). Verdery notes that, while reading her secret police file resulting from her 1970s’ – 1980s’ fieldwork in Romania, she started wondering what would the similarities and differences between spying and ethnography be? Would it be fair, for example, to deny that she was “exploiting people for informative purposes” (Verdery, 2018)? Certainly, the researchers visiting an unknown area and trying to talk to people about (at times) very personal issues could quite fairly cause associations with “foreign agents.” Even though I was initially taken aback by this perception, after reflecting

on it I see that such encounters could add up to the overall fieldwork experiences by questioning our role and position in the field.<sup>97</sup>

Additional limitations of this study are related to inaccessibility of several possible fieldwork sites (such as former Botogol mine in Okinskii district) or not getting access to possible informants (e.g. representatives of mining companies). To partially compensate for this limitation, I invested a lot of time in preparations for the interviews with those representatives of mining companies I managed to get access to and conducted in-depth interviews which would cover a variety of themes relevant for the dissertation.

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<sup>97</sup> See also Anderson (2000a: 131): “although both common sense and the anthropologist’s code of ethics dictate strong and unconditional alliance between the fieldworker and the community... in the post-Soviet states, the act of writing ethnography is so politically charged that the student must apply his or her curiosity about culture with thoughtful caution.”

## Chapter 4. Negotiated and experienced indigeneity

### Introduction

Konstantin, a long-term resident of Shoksha village in Karelia, and Damba who lives in Sorok, an equally small village in Buriatia, were often referred to me as “true Veps” and “true Soiot” during my fieldwork. However, the reasons my informants used to justify this “genuine” ethnicity of their fellow villagers were different. Konstantin, a former blacksmith at raspberry quartzite quarry, speaks Vepsian very well, lives in a traditional Veps house which has been featured in local news, sings in Veps choir and is a frequent guest at various Veps cultural events. All these elements made him quite a model of Veps identity for my interviewees in Karelia. As for Damba, I was immediately told that he “looks like a real Soiot” and “has a true Soiot last name”; but, most importantly, he was good at hunting musk deer and elks<sup>98</sup> and spent most of his vacation days in the forest. Besides, as a former veterinary doctor, he used to be involved in the 1990s’ project of reindeer herding re-establishment in Okinskii district. Whereas in Karelia the features of “being a true Veps” are mostly related to the knowledge of Vepsian language and culture, in Buriatia they are very much connected with in-depth knowledge of land and animals, as well as the ease of dwelling in the landscape.

This chapter will concentrate on local experiences and perceptions of indigenous status and indigenous identity in Prionezhskii and Okinskii districts. Before I started fieldwork in both regions, I did not fully understand that these two notions – indigenous status and identity – have very different implications in the communities of Prionezhskii

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<sup>98</sup> Also translated as Manchurian wapiti (R: *iziubr*)

district of Karelia and Okinskii district of Buriatia. I was planning to hold interviews with “indigenous and non-indigenous citizens”: the task which proved impossible, as there was no dividing line between the two.

In Chapter 2, I discuss in more detail the evolution of the concept “indigenous peoples” in the Soviet Union and in Russia. The current definition of small-numbered indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation concentrates on four main elements: (1) the community should reside at the territories of their ancestors’ traditional settling; (2) they should preserve traditional ways of living and traditional occupations; (3) they should number less than 50,000 people in the whole Russian Federation; (4) they should recognize themselves as a distinct ethnic community. This definition is problematic, as it unavoidably creates dichotomies such as “small-numbered” vs. “non-small-numbered” or “traditional” vs. “modern” occupations. Additionally, in many cases indigenous citizens live in multi-ethnic communities, and while the inhabitants of a certain territory may share similar lifestyle and occupations and feel similarly attached to their land and resources, some of them are entitled for the indigenous status, while others are not (Thompson, 2003; Donahoe et al., 2008).

Because of state superiority and the weakness of indigenous legislation, when trying to establish their subjectivities indigenous groups in Russia apply the categories of “indigeneity” defined by the state, as it is the only way to receive recognition (Donahoe, 2011). Therefore, when positioning and articulating their identities, indigenous groups simultaneously realign their relations with the state (Li, 2000). This process is an example of multi-dimensionality of power and is subtle forms as discussed by Foucault (1982). These forms of power rely on management, participation, consultation and documentation rather than violence and control (Cameron, 2015). This chapter will focus on the process of re-shaping people’s negotiations with the state through the creation of state-approved indigenous identities in Karelia and

Buriatia. It will also analyze how the “official” and approved elements of indigenous identity are in line or, alternatively, in conflict with local perceptions of indigeneity.

Further, this chapter aims to demonstrate that mining development in Karelia and Buriatia played a crucial role in the formation of indigenous revitalization movements, and that the connections to stoneworking were important for the local perceptions of indigeneity. In both of the case studies, while trying to establish their indigenous identity, Veps and Sojots use the formal criteria of the state, to qualify for the established notion of “indigeneity” as a way to gain control over their land and resources. However, when local connections with resource extraction are stronger, as it happens in the case of Veps, the residents of Veps villages in Karelia do not perceive mining as something ultimately alien to their territory and as a threat to traditional lifestyle. Mining has existed at their territory for centuries, and most of the local residents work in the local quarried and stay connected to their resources. Therefore, their indigenous claims are less centered on land rights and instead focus strongly mostly on the revival of Veps language and culture. The residents of Okinskii district in Buriatia, on the contrary, have fewer opportunities to be legally involved in resource extraction at their territory. Mining in Okinskii district is less visible than in Karelia and is often viewed as a potential threat to the established lifestyle as well as a potential damage of the district’s natural environment. Indigenous claims of Sojots in Okinskii district, thus, in most cases focus on gaining larger control over the district’s land and resources.

## **4.1. Indigenous status in negotiations with the state**

### ***4.1.1. Indigenous status and the issue of “benefits”***

Chapter 2 provides a detailed overview of the history of indigenous status recognition for Veps and Sojot minorities. In this section, I will stress a number of focal points in the

post-Soviet history of Prionezhskii district of Karelia and Okinskii district of Buriatia in order to demonstrate the impacts of rapid mining development on the indigenous campaigns in both regions. I argue that the rapid development of mining had a strong influence on local identities and the willingness to receive indigenous status in both Karelia and Buriatia. However, in Prionezhskii district of Karelia mining is perceived as a long-term phenomenon (as discussed in the previous chapter), whereas in Okinskii district of Buriatia the rapid development of extractive industries was seen as a new and alien force.

Both Veps and Sojots have a history of rare stone extraction (gabbro-diabase and raspberry quartzite in Karelia, graphite in Buriatia) dating back to 18-19 century. In Prionezhskii district of Karelia, rapid development of quartzite and diabase quarries continued throughout the Soviet period. Okinskii district of Buriatia at that time was the site of active geological explorations: in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, several gold and jade deposits were discovered in this area. The residents of Prionezhskii and Okinskii districts were also influenced by post-Soviet changes in mining industry such as the start of illegal jade extraction in Buriatia and the closure of state quarries in Karelia. At the end of 1980s – beginning of 1990s, indigenous revitalization campaigns in Karelia and Buriatia coincided with active mining development in Buriatia and the loss of state mining enterprises in Karelia. Whereas indigenous revitalization campaigns in Karelia and Buriatia were a part of the general country-wide interest towards ethnic minorities in late Soviet – early post-Soviet period, they also reflected the changes which occurred to both regions.

In Karelia, previously successful enterprises lost state support and were either closed or sold to private owners, most of them being from other regions, some of them foreign or involving foreign partners. The bankruptcy of large state enterprises brought a lot of uncertainty, as many people were left without jobs. However, when state enterprises were experiencing financial problems and then getting closed, for the locals this meant much more

than the loss of job: they felt that “everything was collapsing” (Interview K14) or “everything got broken” (Interview K11). As the established way of life of the Soviet time was changing, the residents of Prionezhskii district in Karelia felt as if their work was not needed anymore (Interview K1). As a result, Veps activists became worried that the resources would be taken from the district without bringing any benefits to the community (Interview K61). Although linguistic and cultural revitalization remained the driving force of Veps indigenous campaign in Karelia, indigenous status was also viewed as means to secure the community’s position and their ties to their land and resources (Interview K61).

In Okinskii district of Buriatia, the period after 1985 was marked with fast development of gold extraction. At that time, the position of the region changed significantly due to improved transport connections. Until 1993, there was no automobile road connecting Okinskii district with the rest of the region, and therefore this area was only accessible by plane (Interview B22). The road which was finished in 1993 was financed by the gold mining company *Buriatzoloto*, as its construction eventually simplified the transfer of gold (Interview B24). The constructing of the road made the region much easier to reach, and even though better transport connections improved residents’ lives, they at the same time brought worries about possible changes in local lifestyle due to larger-scale resource development. Similarly to the case of Veps, Soiot revitalization campaign began in the late 1980s – early 1990s. While in late 1980s around 30 people stated their belonging to Soiot ethnicity, in 1995 2,047 people registered as Soiot (Pavlinskaya, 1999). Despite the overall process of escalating interest towards ethnic minorities in post-Soviet Russia, such a drastic difference is still surprising. Pavlinskaya (1999) argues that the driving force behind the increasing number of people registering as Soiot was the changing perception toward their ethnicity and higher prestige of being Soiot. However, the rapid increase of people registering as Soiot could also be related to the higher importance of land claims, as the 1990s marked the gold mining

boom in the region. Brian Donahoe quotes Natalia Samaeva, the first Chairperson of Association of Soiots: “It was, in the first place, connected to the hectic pace of industrial development in the district. We needed somehow to get special status and use it to protect ourselves, our lands, our ancestral homeland, and that’s why we started up this movement to resurrect the Soiots” (Donahoe 2011: 406). One of my interviewees similarly stated, “We created here special nature reserves so that these gold-miners, *burzhui*,<sup>99</sup> these capitalists could not take all our lands, the lands which are truly traditional for Soiots, for our yak breeders, for reindeer herders.” (Interview B2).

Therefore, in both regions the boost of indigenous campaign coincided with active mining development. However, as the residents of Veps villages in Karelia had a long history of stoneworking, they were especially worried that their stone would be taken away, to unknown destinations, and that they would eventually lose the connection they have with mining. In Buriatia, local worries centered on the notion that “outsiders” would come to Okinskii district and change the established way of life. This distinction may also be influenced by a different level of remoteness in my case studies. As the large-scale migration to Karelia started in the Soviet time, the locals of Prionezhskii district were used to living aside other ethnic groups. On the contrary, the residents of Okinskii district in Buriatia lived separately from the rest of the country until late 80s – early 90s. Therefore, the boost of mining development in Okinskii district meant a sudden and fast exposure to strong influence of private owners of the mines as well as the state policies.<sup>100</sup> The rapid development of extractive industries could also mean large migration to Okinskii district from other Russian

<sup>99</sup> *Burzhui* is a Soviet-era derogative term for a capitalist or a rich person (from French *bourgeois*).

<sup>100</sup> Remoteness is often directly associated with weak state influence. Thus, a recent publication devoted to the village Verkhni Potam in Sverdlovsk region of Russia (Ural Mountains) states, “Verkhni Potam is situated far from the regional and federal centers. The regional administration does not reach it... Verkhni Potam is at a stage when its remoteness guarantees the non-interference of the authorities in the local life” (*Takie Dela*, May 9, 2019: <https://takiedela.ru/2019/05/ural-mari-smerti-net/>. Accessed May 9, 2019).

regions, and therefore the issue of ownership over land arose among the district's activists (Interview B16).

Both in Karelia and in Buriatia, indigenous status is sometimes referred to as means to achieve certain goals or to receive privileges. This attitude to the status is especially visible in Okinskii district. When I asked those informants who were registered as Sojots in 1995 about the reasons behind their registration, in many cases the answer would depend on the informant's level of closeness to the activist circles or the administration. The people who used to be involved in the Soiot revitalization movement would generally speak about Soviet-time repressions and the time when they were prohibited to express their Soiot identity, but they "are waking up now" (Interview B16) or "got the right to be Sojots" (Interview B14).

However, people who were far from the indigenous movement gave different reasons. When I was travelling to Okinskii district for the first time, I asked one of my travel companions, deda Andrei (as he referred to himself, meaning granddad Andrei) about indigenous campaign, he promptly answered, "I have signed for the wood" (R: *zapisalsia za drova*). When I asked in surprise what he meant, the driver explained that indigenous status gives people in Buriatia the right to have larger logging quotas. Here the issue of benefits arises, and this is an important topic in the Russian context. Bogoyavlensky (2004) brings the example of twelve indigenous groups of Russia and suggests that the growth in their population between 1989 and 2002 was primarily caused by non-demographic reasons, such as massive re-registration as indigenous in the 1990s.<sup>101</sup> Bogoyavlensky estimates that the effect of non-demographic reasons on the growth of indigenous population was especially noticeable for larger groups such as Khanty, Evenki, and Mansi, - all of them live at resource-

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<sup>101</sup> In the Soviet Union, *natsional'nost'* (R: ethnicity) was indicated in every citizen's passport. In the post-Soviet years, however, this category was eliminated from official passport data, and the citizens have the right to change their "official" ethnicity.

rich territories.<sup>102</sup> Among the benefits related to indigenous status there are opportunities to receive stockpile firewood, construction timber for house reparation, free medicines, and privileged licensing for hunting. Other benefits following indigenous status may include education quotas for indigenous citizens in a number of universities (I met several people from the district who studied in Saint-Petersburg with this quota) as well as larger financing for schools. However, several informants expressed disappointment in the status of Soiot: “I got registered; I thought my son would not have to go to army, but no, he had to go! Then what is the point to be Soiot then?” Sometimes my interviewees expressed discrepancy between their official status and self-identification: “I am registered as Soiot, but really I am Buriat” (Interview B5).

In Karelia, the practical benefits of receiving indigenous status were mentioned in the interviews less often. This might be explained by the close linkages between the indigenous status of Veps and the Vepsian language. The indigenous status is mostly viewed as means to secure the preservation of the language, and the value of the language is in most cases not doubted in Prionezhskii district even by those who moved to the Veps villages during the Soviet period. Once, during an interview with a grandfather, his grandson, a schoolboy from Kvartsitnyi settlement, mentioned, “Our teacher says, the school’s roof is repaired because we study the Vepsian language.” The boy was referring to the financial support which the school in Shoksha<sup>103</sup> is receiving as a part of the federal program on the support of indigenous small-numbered peoples. The boy’s teacher was probably using the example of the financial support to motivate his students to pay extra attention to the language. This issue was never mentioned in the interview otherwise. At the same time, in Okinskii district of Buriatia the

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<sup>102</sup> However, for a number of indigenous groups assimilation processes continue in the post-Soviet period despite ethnic revitalization campaigns (Bogoyavlensky, 2004).

<sup>103</sup> There is no school in Kvartsitnyi, so the children attend school in the neighboring settlement of Shoksha (there is a daily school bus taking them to Shoksha and back).

difference in financing between the school in Orlik (which was considered “Buriat”) and the boarding school in Sorok (the “Soiot” school) was a widely discussed issue. The teacher of the Orlik school expressed that the distribution of financial support between schools was uneven and that the Orlik school was planning to introduce Soiot language classes in order to meet the criteria for better financing (Interview B2).

#### ***4.1.2. Indigeneity as an “invented tradition”***

“We always knew we were Soiot”, - Natalia Samaeva, the first president of Soiot Association, stated during our interview. Similarly, the former representative of Okinskii district’s administration explained to me when I asked about the Soiot revitalization campaign, “Soiot self-awareness always existed. They always knew that they were Soiot, just - they forgot, it all happened artificially” (Interview B2). This thought is often expressed by Soiot activists who stress that the self-awareness of Soiot was forcefully taken from them during the Soviet time and although people still remembered their true ethnic identity they needed to wait for a “good time” to express it. The change of the regime in the 1990s and the rise of ethnic movements in Russia influenced the start of the campaign for indigenous status for Soiot.

One of the aims of the indigenous revitalization campaigns in Karelia and Buriatia was the recognition of Veps and Soiot as indigenous small-numbered peoples of the Russian Federation. The definition of indigenous peoples in the Russian legislation is centered on following “tradition” (living at the traditional territories and engaged in traditional activities). Therefore, in order to better qualify for indigenous status, specific elements of the local lifestyle were emphasized as a part of revitalization campaigns. Both Veps and Soiot focused largely on language preservation and revitalization as a part of their indigenous campaigns, even though the Soiot language had not been used for decades prior to the campaign start. In

addition, the administration of Okinskii district attempted to re-introduce reindeer herding which used to be widespread in the region but was liquidated during the Soviet period. In the case of Veps, specific folklore elements (such as traditional costumes and dances) were emphasized, as well as the sacred connection to nature (hunting and fishing rituals). This chapter argues that the processes of emphasizing certain elements of indigenous identity in Karelia and Buriatia were examples of “the invention of tradition” viewed by Eric Hobsbawm as “a set of practices... which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (Hobsbawm 1983: 1). In effect, the invented traditions establish a sense of continuity with “a suitable historic past” (Hobsbawm 1983: 1). The emphasis on “continuity” and “preservation of tradition” shapes the subjectivities of Veps and Soiot in accordance with the definition of indigeneity set by the state. The formation of state-approved indigenous identities means that the community will be recognized by the authorities and receive the subsidies and guarantees coming with the indigenous status.<sup>104</sup>

In 2000, after several years of revival campaign, Oka Soiots were included on the list of Indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation. The local activist Klim Tuluev (2000: 46) wrote on this occasion: “This is only the beginning of a large work which needs to be done to comply with this status. The law only covers those who live at the land of their ancestors and engage in traditional occupations.” This quote represents a strangely reversed situation happening in Oka in the 1990s and the 2000s, when in order to better qualify for the

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<sup>104</sup> The rights of indigenous small-numbered minorities in Russia are regulated by several federal laws. The law “On the guarantees of the rights of indigenous small-numbered peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East of the Russian Federation” (30.04.1999) regulates the general provisions of indigenous traditional household. Hunting and fishing quotas for indigenous citizens are regulated by the federal laws “On hunting and the preservation of hunting resources” (24.07.2009) and “On fisheries and conservation of aquatic biological resources” (20.12.2004). Forest Code of the Russian Federation (article 30) regulates the right of indigenous citizens for “free harvesting of wood for own needs.” The rights to hunt and fish without obtaining specific permissions, as well as to harvest wood for own needs are restricted only to those representatives of indigenous communities who “lead a traditional lifestyle.”

definition of indigenous community the local activists and administration deliberately emphasized several elements which they considered crucial for being recognized as indigenous. In this situation, instead of legal provisions addressing the established practices, specific practices were modified in order to comply with legal provisions.

As an example of such “invented tradition,” this section will analyze the case of the Soiot language revitalization in Oka. Today, in Okinskii district the Buriat language is the most widespread form of communication though most of the local residents are also fluent in Russian. As for the Soiot language, it had not been used in the district since mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Interviewees growing up in Oka in the 1950s did not recall anybody speaking the Soiot language around them (Interview B14, B19, and B34). One of my interviewees in Sorok (born in 1955), former activist of the Soiot revitalization campaign, said: “Our parents and grandparents used to tell us we were Soiots. But even when I was little, only the elders knew the Soiot language... well, some words” (Interview B16). In the 1980s, the linguist Valentin Rassadin collected the words still remembered by Soiot elders and published the study as the compilation of Oka Buriat dialect words (Rassadin, 1987). In 2001, in consultation with Soiot activists from Okinskii district, Rassadin created a model of the Soiot language based on the words he had collected as well as the kindred Tofa language<sup>105</sup>’s vocabulary and grammar (Rassadin, 2006; 2012). In 2005, Rassadin and his colleagues also prepared a teacher from Oka to teach the Soiot language in the school in Sorok.

Today, the language is still taught, though the teacher prepared by Rassadin passed away several years ago. Language teaching is now carried on by another teacher who learned the language based on her late colleague’s notes (Interview B16). Therefore, the children in Sorok learn the language based on the notes of an artificially created model. There is no

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<sup>105</sup> Tofa language (also Tofalar language) – an endangered Turkic language spoken in Russia's Irkutsk region by the Tofalars (761 people in total in Russia according to the 2010 census).

opportunity for them to interact with the living language as it is not used anymore. Nevertheless, in press this story is often promoted as a proof that Soiets managed to revitalize their indigenous identity in post-Soviet period. For example, the film on Soiets which was created within the project “Rare people” for Russian federal television starts with a Soiot lesson at Sorok, and school books in Soiot form a part of local library exhibitions on indigenous culture.

Another example of the invention of tradition in Okinskii district would be the re-introduction of the reindeer herding. In the beginning of the 1990s, Okinskii district’s authorities decided that reindeer herding should be reintroduced in the area. Following that decision, in 1992 60 reindeer were transferred to Okinskii district from neighboring Tofalaria (Interview B21). Reindeer herding was treated as a marker of Soiot traditional culture (Kuklina, 2010), so its revitalization was related to the establishment of Soiot indigeneity. However, as the traditions of reindeer herding had been lost after it was liquidated in 1963, most of the reindeer died of various illnesses in the first years after reindeer herding was reintroduced (Pavlinskaya, 2002). Nevertheless, the idea of the reindeer as a symbol of indigeneity in Okinskii district is still persistent,<sup>106</sup> and it is considered as one of the most important pre-conditions for obtaining indigenous status in 2000. Although nowadays there are only 20 reindeer in the district and only one person (a former zoo technician from Sorok village) is involved in herding them, images and photographs of reindeer appear on almost all of the Soiets’ public relation materials (Donahoe, 2011).

Similarly to the situation with Soiot language, in the attempt to “qualify” for the formal criteria of indigeneity outlined in federal legislation, the activists and administration representatives of Okinskii district promote the “revitalized” reindeer herding as a marker of

traditional lifestyle, as it is supported and approved by the Russian state. In today's Okinskii district, the ability to work with reindeer is a mark of being "true Soiot." During the fieldwork I was often advised to visit the only reindeer herdsman: the locals seemed to be very proud of him for managing to keep the reindeer breeding afloat. Unfortunately, I could not meet him during my stay, as he was away at the summer pastures.

The examples of the Soiot language revitalization as well as the re-introduction of reindeer herding in Okinskii district demonstrate how specific elements of the local culture were emphasized in order to stress the continuity of the linguistic tradition as well as traditional occupations in the life of contemporary Oka Buriats and Soiets. Both language and reindeer herding are actively promoted in press, through photo- and video narratives, in the interviews with local administration. However, they do not play a vital role in the lives of the Okinskii district's residents. The children in Sorok do not use the language outside of the classroom. The Soiot language primer I briefly checked did not seem useful for independent language learning as it did not contain any translations to Buriat or Russian which would allow understanding the short dialogues presented there. Still, the administration of the school in Orlik bears a plan to introduce the Soiot language there, as otherwise the school would not receive additional financing (Interview B2). The linguist who used to work with Rassadin on collecting Oka Buriat expressions, originally from Okinskii district, stated that the Soiot language was in fact a local dialect, a mix of Buriat and Tofa languages, and as it had not been used in the community for years, there was little sense in re-creating it artificially (Interview B34). I would argue that the reason behind the language re-creation was precisely "the invention of tradition," or the attempt to qualify for the definitions of indigeneity set by the Russian state. The re-introduction of the reindeer herding followed the similar logics.

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<sup>106</sup> See Slepnev (2018) on painters' contest during the Soiot national holiday Ulug-Dag in Okinskii district: "It is interesting that the amateur painters chose reindeer as the main theme of their pictures, even though most of them

While certain elements of the local lifestyle were emphasized or even re-created in the course of the revitalization campaigns, others were omitted, as they were not in line with the state-approved notion of indigeneity. The next section will focus on stoneworking in Prionezhskii district as an example of “omitted tradition.”

#### ***4.1.3. Traditions omitted from the narrative***

While in the previous section I focused on the examples of “invented traditions,” there are also cases when a certain element of indigenous lifestyle is deliberately not emphasized, as it contradicts with the established state discourse on indigeneity. In Russia, there were cases when certain local practices were not considered “traditional” and thus, in the view of the court, would contradict the indigenous lifestyle. . Thus, in 2009, Primorskii court of the Russian Far East concluded that traditional subsistence rights of indigenous communities at the territory of Verkhnebikinskii natural reserve were not violated, as hunting and fishing were conducted using snowmobiles and motor boats; the court concluded that the usage of mechanical transport devices contradicts the notion of “traditional subsistence.”<sup>107</sup> Another well-known example is the story of *Dylacha* indigenous Evenki brigade discussed in the previous chapters.

Even though diabase and quartzite mining in Prionezh’e had been recognized as the “Veps occupation” starting from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the image of Veps as stoneworkers was rarely used in the indigenous revitalization campaigns. In the promotion materials on Veps as the indigenous people of Russia, mining is not presented as a marker of indigeneity in the same way as reindeer herding in the Okinskii district. It is impossible to see a Veps holding a mash hammer or standing next to a derrick-crane in the materials devoted to Veps

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saw them only in photos.”

<sup>107</sup>Primorskii district court decision 27.03.2009 N 3-24/09

indigeneity, even though such photos exist: a lot of local keep them in family albums as a reminder about the years of work. The documentary films on Vepsian traditions and culture created by Vladimir Slavov and Larisa Smolina deal with other forms of activities in Vepsian villages such as cattle breeding or fishing. Therefore, even though it is admitted that Veps have historical connections with stoneworking, in materials on their indigenous status this activity is often neglected (or just presented as a series of peculiar historical facts); instead the materials are focusing on Vepsian culture as well as the activities which are more in accordance with the formal definition of indigenous small-numbered peoples, such as fishing or dwelling in the forest.

It is interesting that during the Soviet period this narrative was different, and the engagement of Veps in the industry was seen as a sign of their fast development and becoming integrated in the Soviet state. Industry was directly associated with development; in the publications of Soviet period, Veps are often pictured as the previously backward community whose life was completely changed after the Revolution when mining started developing in the region (*Kommunist Prionezh'ia*, January 9, 1971). Therefore, the links between the Veps identity and stoneworking were often stressed in press or in popular culture. Therefore, in Soviet narratives Veps identity in Prionezh'e was symbolically linked to the stone they extracted. In the post-Soviet period, however, the narrative changed. As the case of *Dylacha* suggests, in post-Soviet Russia stoneworking was considered “too modern” to be directly associated with indigenous lifestyle.

## 4.2. The problem of “true indigeneity”

The previous section of the chapter focused on indigenous identity construction as a way of negotiation with the state. In order to qualify for state-approved notions of indigeneity, Veps and Soiot activists constructed and emphasized specific elements of their indigenous identity

while omitting other elements (such as historical ties with stoneworking in the case of Veps). However, even in the situations of strong presence of the state, identity narratives are constructed not only under the influence of dominant discourse, but also through interpersonal communication and under direct influence of dwelling in the landscape. While the previous section centered on the ways of constructing indigeneity “from above,” this section will look at informal markers of indigenous identity which may be as important for the community as state-produced markers (Polese, Morris, Pawlusz & Seliverstova, 2018). Therefore, this section will concentrate on identities produced and contested through everyday practices and interpersonal relations in Karelia and Buriatia. It will discuss how the residents of Prionezhskii and Okinskii districts as well as Veps and Soiot activists in Petrozavodsk (Karelia) and Ulan-Ude (Buriatia) talk about indigenous identity: what becomes important in their narrative, what is omitted, and why the issue of “made-up” and “artificial” indigenesness becomes often articulated. The first part of the section will focus on the situation in Karelia where indigenous identity is mostly centered on the Veps language knowledge (or the desire to learn it). In Buriatia, as I will demonstrate in the second part of the section, the notion of indigeneity is different: it is strongly connected to the feeling of “belonging” to the land and having connections to specific territory.

#### ***4.2.1. Indigeneity as linguistic capacity***

Unlike the situation in Okinskii district of Buriatia where Soiot language is not used at all and was not even used 40-50 years ago (Interview B16), Veps language in Karelia, however in decline, is still preserved. Most of middle-aged or older residents of Shoksha, Rybreka and Kvartsitnyi I talked to, said that they can speak Vepsian or at least understand it, even the people aged 20-30 years old claimed they understand something, as Vepsian was

present in their childhood in families. When I asked one of the interviewees if she spoke Vepsian, she answered promptly, “Ka! El’gendam!” (V: *Yes! I understand!*), and the tone of her voice changed, she looked more relaxed than when the interview started. Another informant had a friend visiting her during our interview, and when I left to the kitchen to put the kettle on, they switched to Vepsian, though when I returned we started speaking Russian again. All Veps are nowadays bilingual, and whereas Russian is perceived as official language of communication outside the closest circle, for those who were raised speaking Vepsian it remains the language of their family and close friends.

In the Soviet time Vepsian families followed different models: whereas some parents spoke Vepsian to their children, others chose Russian as the language of communication with children believing that there is little use for them to learn a minority language. In many cases, though parents continued speaking Vepsian between themselves, with children they switched to Russian,<sup>108</sup> and sometimes even used this bilingual situation to discuss matters they did not want to share with their children.<sup>109</sup> Today the children living in the villages also speak some Vepsian now as it is a mandatory class in local schools.

The informants who arrived to Karelia to start working in the quarries in 1950s – 1970s often recall the difficulties they faced as most population in the villages spoke Vepsian and how hard it was to adapt. Olga, who moved to the region in the 1970, describes that it was difficult to get accustomed to Vepsian everywhere: “And even in Russian they spoke differently, for example they said “on” (he) for both men and women, because in Vepsian it is one word” (Interview K25). Pavel, whose wife moved to Rybreka and started worked at a local shop, recalls how after the first day of work she came home sad, as every customer was

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<sup>108</sup> In the interview with the Veps residents of Piazhzero village in Vologda region (*Semnasem*, April 29, 2019) one of the informants, Galina Nikolaevna, explains, “When my son got married, they started speaking Russian with the children to make everything easier for them. But I continued speaking my language. And the girls know and understand Vepsian!” (<https://semnasem.ru/vepsy/>, accessed May 2, 2019).

speaking Vepsian to her and she did not understand anything. He explained, “So I taught her a Vepsian phrase to say to *babushkas* next time, and I promised: they would stop teasing you. Next day she came home happy: she told them that phrase and they immediately stopped!” (Interview K55). In this story, the way to be accepted in the Vepsian-speaking community was to learn a Vepsian phrase with strong effect, as if to prove that from now on Pavel’s wife was not alien to the community. To learn the Vepsian language meant to become integrated into the community. Similarly, knowing the nature and the way of living in the villages influenced the integration process. As Alevtina formulated it, “I didn’t know the berries here, but now I know everything, it’s all *svoio* (R: my own)” (Interview K35). Thus, learning or understanding the Vepsian language is connected for informants to the knowledge of landscape and understanding the place.

Alevtina (Interview K35) moved to Rybreka from Ukraine in 1970s to start working in a gabbro-diabase quarry. At that time, Vepsian language still dominated at working sites, and she remembers feeling excluded from many conversations. She recalls a case when “...the loaders were talking in Vepsian, roaring with laughter, I started laughing with them. They said jokingly: “Why are you laughing? We were talking about you! Come on, learn the language!” So, I learned it little by little”. The story of Alevtina is not unique; many people who moved to Vepsian villages in the Soviet time from other parts of the country, first and foremost associated local ethnicity with Vepsian language.

Today, in Karelia there is still a strong connection between the knowledge or understanding of Vepsian language and being Veps. This connection is illustrated in Arukask and Raudalainen’s chapter (2014) devoted to Maria, an informant from Yashezzero, a Vepsian village where only several houses remain nowadays. Maria would not consider herself

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<sup>109</sup> Siragusa (2017) discusses the perceptions of Vepsian language as a “secret code” among elderly and younger Veps.

unambiguously a Vepsian, and she connects her “Vepsianness” mainly with her mother tongue and childhood. However, she does not feel a real Russian as well, as despite being bilingual and using Russian most of the time in everyday communication, she still regards Vepsian as her mother tongue and feels sorry that nowadays there is almost no one around she can talk to in Vepsian (Arukask and Raudalainen, 2014: 112). Some of my informants also lamented that they cannot use Vepsian that often anymore: “I still understand it [Vepsian language], but I don’t know how to speak anymore, because there is nobody to speak to” (Interview K45). Vepsian language is often treated as a symbol of relation to parents, older relatives, for many people this is the language of childhood, their “roots.” The theme of language knowledge as a sign of “rootedness” will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

#### ***4.2.2. Indigeneity as belonging to the land***

The question of the difference between Sojots and Buriats is an ongoing debate in Oka. At different circumstances I was told that Sojot are thinner and taller than Buriats, or shorter than Mongols, or that “true” Sojot have green eyes and red hair (Interview B21). Some of the residents believe that “true” Sojots look different as their ancestors were French entrepreneurs working for Jean-Pierre Alibert’s graphite mine (Interview B16). It is hard to estimate how these stories are related, whether the legend about Sojot women marrying French gave start to the belief that all Sojot look different from Buriats, or whether the difference in looks influenced the legend. One of the residents of Sorok, Damba, was referred to by his colleagues at local administration as a “real Sojot”: “Look how tall and skinny he is.” Looking like a Sojot as well as engaging in traditional occupations such as hunting and working with reindeer, in their opinion, made him a real representative of the people, and thus

it was logical that he was dealing with indigenous affairs at administration. Damba himself, when showing me photos of a local celebration, referred to a picture of two children: “Look, this one is Buriat, and this one is Soiot” (Interview B15). When I asked, how he understood it, he just replied that it was visible from the way both boys looked.

Another difference between Buriats and Soiots the locals often mention is their last names, though this division is not strict. Still, some of the informants refer to a number of last names as Soiot. The most well-known example is the last name Putunkeev: it is considered “true Soiot”, and it goes back to the kindred of a powerful shaman Chimit Putunkeev who was arrested in 1930s but miraculously escaped from his guards by turning into an eagle (Interview B15). Certain place names (including Sorok and Orlik, the names of two largest villages in the area) are also considered Soiot, as the contemporary inhabitants do not see them related to Buriat language. This is often used as an argument that in the past Soiots used to occupy the territory of the whole Okinskii district in the past.

The area which Soiots or Buriats used to occupy in the past is also nowadays referred to as a marker of differentiation. Soiots are believed to traditionally reside in Nizhnii Kust (several settlements around Sorok village). In the past, people coming from the settlements of Nizhnii Kust were sometimes mockingly called “Soiots,” i.e. the name was used as a derogatory term. One of my interviewees from Sorok, Tatiana, told me, “We were mocked when we visited Orlik, they said that we had reindeer hair falling from us” (Interview B16). Another respondent from Sorok mentioned: “When I visited Orlik, they called me “Soiot”; I returned home all upset and asked my mother: why are they calling me that?” (Interview B14). Today, certain places inside the district are still treated as being “more Soiot” than others. For example, when I arrived to Orlik, the main settlement of the district, I was immediately told at the administration: “You should go to Sorok, which is where Soiots live!” Later, when I was talking to two women in Orlik, one of them said about the other one, “She

is the real Soiot here. I am from Orlik, but she is from Sorok!” Formally speaking, almost half of Orlik’s residents are registered as Soiot, but they are still supposed to be “less Soiot” than those coming from Sorok and neighboring villages. Such notions represent the difference between official indigenous status and traditional beliefs of locals; while “on paper” people from Orlik and Sorok have the same status, traditionally some of them are believed to have more connections with the Soiot culture.

Most of the local residents notice the discrepancy between “being registered as Soiot” and “being a true Soiot.” While for the residents of Okinskii district it is considered normal to be registered as a Soiot but to call themselves Buriat, those from outside of the district who may get registered as Soiot are mocked. Several times during my fieldwork I heard the story about Vladislav, a resident of Orlik who “is Russian, he came here from Novosibirsk, but imagine, he was the first to register as Soiot!” This story was told to me as an evidence of Vladislav’s desire to get benefits from indigenous status even without any formal grounds for “indigenouness”. Later, when I mentioned this story to Zinaida, a local activist, she got very upset and said that, in her opinion, this was not a desire of benefits, but rather a gesture of help towards the place which became home to Vladislav. When the administration needed people to register as Soiot, it was important to express support, so that they could reach a certain number of registered indigenous residents. Thus, she saw this as a patriotic deed rather than an act of selfish interests, and she also said that as Vladislav was useful for the community (as a doctor) he deserved the right to be indigenous to this place (Interview B12). After listening to different interpretations, I was interested in Vladislav’s position. When I had an interview with him, he mentioned the gossips and stated firmly that he was not even registered as a Soiot, though his wife (whose family was from the district) was (Interview B13).

This story illustrates how various understandings of “having the right to be indigenous” may get entangled and intertwined in the community. While for the people born in Okinskii district it is considered tolerable to state openly that they are not considering themselves Sojots despite being registered as ones, those from outside of the region do not have such an option. Whereas in Karelia Alevtina expressed that she sometimes thought of herself as “Ukrainized Veps” as she spoke the language, in Okinskii district of Buriatia it is hardly possible for people coming from other parts of the country to be considered indigenous. Even though Zinaida, a friend of Vladislav, claimed that he “earned” his right to be indigenous, this claim could hardly be supported by many others. To be truly indigenous in Buriatia, one needs to come from the land and to have one’s ancestors coming from the land as well.

The debates about being a “true Soiot” are united by common references to indigeneity being connected to place as well as to historical ties to a certain territory. The ones who are believed to be “true Sojots” in Okinskii district have generations of ancestors living there and are closely related to specific villages. Therefore, while the notion of indigeneity in Karelia focuses mostly on the linguistic capacities, in Buriatia it is centered on belonging to the land. These differences in the understanding of “true indigeneity” had influence on the post-Soviet indigenous campaign in both regions. It is also possible to suggest that the difference in the notion of indigeneity impacted the perception of the mining development in Karelia and Buriatia. As the understanding of indigeneity in Okinskii district is focused on the sense of belonging and, consequently, having the rights to the land and resources, mining companies expanding their activities in the region are viewed as invaders appropriating the local resources. In contrast, for Veps in Karelia, as their indigeneity understanding lies mostly in the area of linguistic and cultural revitalization, mining companies are seen less as violators of their indigenous rights.

### 4.2.3. *“Made-up indigeneity” and “indigenous Others”*

During my second trip to Ulan-Ude, the capital city of Buriatia, in summer 2017, I was especially willing to finally reach the poet and researcher Bulad who was born in Okinskii district and was well-known there as a famous compatriot. Before leaving for Ulan-Ude, I sent Bulad an email introducing myself and my research, leaving my contact details and asking whether it would be possible to schedule a meeting. When I was already in Buriatia, he called me and said that he could not meet me as he did not want to speak about Soiets. “How is it possible to compare Veps and Soiets? – He asked rather angrily. – Veps are a really existing ethnicity, and Soiets are made up.”

In fact, both Veps and Soiets activists sometimes hear the accusations of being “made up” or “artificial.” The administration worker in Ulan-Ude expressed that there are sometimes tensions between Evenki and Soiot activists. Both Evenki and Soiets residing in Buriatia are recognized as indigenous peoples of Russia. However, there may be open claims that while Evenki are “truly indigenous,” Soiets are “made up.” I encountered similar perceptions of Soiets earlier as well. In summer 2016, before starting fieldwork in Okinskii district, I spent several days in Irkutsk (capital of the neighboring Irkutsk region) working in the local library. The librarian who was helping me to find materials on history noted: “We always welcome Soiot musical or dance collectives to perform here in Irkutsk... I know that there in Buriatia they don’t like Soiets very much, they call them an artificial people, but we welcome them.” Later, the representative of the administration in Ulan-Ude referred to the tensions which may rise between Evenki<sup>110</sup> and Soiot activists: “You know, some Evenki believe Soiets are not truly indigenous...”

As Said (1993: 52) notes, no identity can ever exist without an array of oppositions and the notion of “otherness.” According to Said’s famous example, the creation of a sharp

contrast between “the rational West” and “the irrational Other” played its role in the creation of a European identity (Said, 1993). This chapter argues that the perceptions of indigeneity in contemporary Russian society follow a similar pattern. The notions of indigeneity in Russian legislation, policies, and mass media are constructed in accordance with the “exotic other” vision of aboriginal communities. Sokolovskiy (1998) points out several features of indigenous peoples as perceived by a typical resident of industrialized Russian surrounding: these features are ultimately rooted in the archetype of “the Other.” The representatives of indigenous communities are seen as living at the periphery of the state, speaking a different language, having a different religion, possessing different values and following a different lifestyle. In order to be recognized as “indigenous” in Russia, one needs to possess these features of “otherness” to some extent. Those who do not qualify to the “exotic Other” representation may be labeled as “artificial” or “not truly” indigenous. These views are reinforced by state policies which often focus on “traditional” elements of indigenous culture such as the revival of historical dances, costumes, or crafts (Potashov, 2018). At the same time, the representation of indigenous communities as modern-day residents of Russia or, for example, as workers involved in industrial labor are rare, as such an image would contradict the established vision of “indigenous Others.”

Even though my interviewee Bulad juxtaposed Veps and Sojots as “true” and “made up” indigenous peoples, the informants in Karelia whom I spoke to in several cases also referred to suspicions towards Veps as being “artificial.” One of such references was made by Margarita, a Veps activist and PhD student from Petrozavodsk, Karelia. Margarita often takes part in various all-Russian forums and seminars, and there was a case when during one of such forums she was accused of not being “truly indigenous” as a Veps. As she explained,

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<sup>110</sup> The Evenki are the ethnic minority residing in several regions of Russia including Buriatia. They have the status of indigenous small-numbered people of the Russian Federation (since 1926).

There are people in the villages who are probably more Veps than me, but they are calling themselves Russian. We are so assimilated with Russians that it is even weird to say that we are Veps... And they [other indigenous groups] often live remotely... There are a lot of differences between us. When I went to the [indigenous] forum in Moscow and Geneva, people would approach me and ask: “What are you doing here?” (...) One woman got agitated and started saying I am not really indigenous, we had an argument about who is indigenous... (Interview K63)

The status of indigenous person currently brings a number of benefits such as hunting or fishing quotas for the members of indigenous communities. In several Russian regions there have been concerns that the status will be used by “outsiders” purely for the benefits. As an example, the article on the Nanai<sup>111</sup> people in Khabarovsk region of Russia<sup>112</sup> published in March 2019 states that the indigenous status is used by “Georgians and Ukrainians” in order to receive fishing quotas. As a solution, the article offers to start checking those registered as Nanai if they actually “look Nanai” and have Nanai last names. The suspicion towards Vepsian representatives during all-Russian indigenous forums originates from a similar concern: they do not look “indigenous enough” (according to the state definition of indigenusness).

A popular belief in Russia is that indigenous peoples should be to a certain degree “exotic,” different from the Russian majority based on their looks or behavior. Therefore, the representatives of an indigenous community are expected to be different from the rest of the population (based on their looks, clothes, behavior, last names). These expectations of exoticism are related to the state definition incarcerating the communities in a vaguely defined “traditional lifestyle.” Therefore, those leading a “modern lifestyle” are considered less entitled to indigenous status. I encountered a good example of “expectation of exoticism”

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<sup>111</sup> The Nanai are a Tungusic people living in the Far East of Russia

in the report discussing the field trip of Moscow Pedagogical University students to Karelia (Zaiats, 2001). The author of the report notes that the Veps whom the students met in Sheltozero “turned out to be quite usual people, and thus did not meet the expectations of some of our co-travelers who had prepared for something more exotic... The surnames of Veps also turned out to be quite usual, Russian”

Therefore, Veps are sometimes believed by outsiders to be “too modern” to be considered properly indigenous. However, during several interviews I had with the Veps activists it turned out they also believe that Veps are more modern than other indigenous groups, but do not see it as a contradiction for being considered indigenous. My informants linked modernity and development claiming that while other indigenous group remained at the same place, for Veps their environment was constantly changing because of industrialization. A Veps activist from Petrozavodsk, Renata, also a participant of several all-Russian indigenous forums and a person actively involved in local politics in Prionezh’e, stated that in her opinion industry was helping the Veps to develop:

Many ethnic communities lived in isolation. They only had their everyday activities which were continuing, this was their life. Everyday activities and traditional household does not imply development. The Veps are stoneworkers... They were traveling with their stone, saw various things in other regions; they wanted and demanded more, their work required them to get new knowledge and skills. This is normal for them, they are not afraid of new work... So we can say that the traditional Veps way of living is connected to industrialization... The Veps studied, got education, climbed one more step higher, and became a part of the industry (Interview K64).

As this quote demonstrates, my interviewee did not perceive “tradition” and “industrialization” as contradicting elements, recognizing that mining may be closely linked

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<sup>112</sup> *Khabarovskii Krai Segodnia*, March 23, 2019: <https://todaykhv.ru/news/in-areas-of-the-province/19173/> (Accessed March 25, 2019).

with traditional lifestyle. At the same time, Renata also constructs the notion of “indigenous other” in relation to other indigenous communities, seeing them as non-developing or limited by everyday activities. Similar references to other indigenous groups were made by Margarita during our conversation. When talking about not being accepted by the representatives of other indigenous minorities as “truly indigenous,” she added:

We [the Veps] are very different, especially young people. They [representatives of other indigenous groups] are naïve, maybe really children of nature, more sensitive, but more cunning as well in some aspects -well, you know, there are quotas for indigenous peoples... All that we have is the development of language and culture. They do not have that, it is more about industry, mining. We don't have the issue of industry discussed here at all. (Interview K63)

Therefore, the construction of one's identity in relation to “the Other” is present not simply in the interactions between the Russian majority and indigenous minorities, but also in the interactions between different indigenous actors. The representatives of Siberian aboriginal communities at all-Russian forum accused Margarita in being “artificial indigenous,” thus constructing their “true” indigeneity in opposition to the “false” Veps indigenous identity.<sup>113</sup> Similar processes happen in Buriatia where Evenki representatives accuse Sojots in being “artificial,” simultaneously reinforcing their own indigenous identity as “true.” However, Veps activists also construct their identity in relation to “indigenous Others” viewing other indigenous groups as “children of nature,” “naïve,” lacking development and bound by everyday activities. When comparing Veps to other indigenous minorities, the activists construct the image of “indigenous Others” in accordance with the dominant discourses of the state. Even though they go beyond the established paradigms when discussing Veps identity (for example, linking mining and tradition), when speaking

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<sup>113</sup> See de la Cadena and Starn (2007: 4) on indigeneity acquiring its meaning not from essential properties of its own but in relation to what is not considered indigenous in particular social formations.

about other indigenous groups, they adopt the definitions and references of state legislation and policies.

## Conclusion

Post-Soviet establishment of indigenous identities and the development of mining in Karelia and Buriatia are the processes that went alongside. As the regime was changing, more opportunities for ethnic identity articulation emerged, but at the same time the rapid growth of private investors acquiring the land and natural resources created a threat for the residents of Prionezhskii and Okinskii districts. The rapid development of mining in Buriatia as well as the transfer of former state enterprises to private owners in Karelia were seen by indigenous activists as a sign that consolidation is needed to protect the community's land.

The tradition of linking ethnicity and traditional subsistence which is present in contemporary Russian legislation leads to the situation when, in order to retain control over their land and resources, community members need to find a state-approved way of positioning themselves. One of the ways to do so is the construction of indigenous identity in the firm terms defined by law: with the elements of traditional culture, traditional ways of living, self-perception as indigenous and link to territory. The example of Soicts shows how the local activists constructed the post-Soviet version of Soiot identity: even though there is only one teacher of Soiot language and only one reindeer herd manager in the district, both Soiot language and reindeer herding are actively promoted as the markers of indigeneity in the region and as a sign that the people “qualify” for the status granted to them. As for Veps, whereas their historical and present engagement in mining is recognized in the Republic, stone extraction is never promoted as a part of their indigenous identity. Instead, the focus is on cultural rights as well as more “traditional” activities such as fishing or cattle breeding. Therefore, whereas in the 1990s indigenous peoples got the opportunity to establish their

subjectivities, because of traditionally strong role of the state. Sojots and Veps still constructed their ethnic identities in accordance to the rules defined by the state. The compliance with the state-promoted discourses of indigeneity leads to the situation when those who do not correspond to the established vision of “traditional” indigenous community are labeled as “artificial” or “made up” groups. When labeling a neighboring ethnic minority “artificially indigenous,” as it happens with Evenki and Sojots, the representatives of the group simultaneously construct their own, “true” indigenous identity in accordance to the rules defined by the state’s policies and legal acts.

In the case of Veps, since the late 1980s there has been a strong emphasis of linking their indigeneity to the issues of language and culture. Vepsian activists did not need to construct the post-Soviet notion of indigeneity in the same way as Sojots in Buriatia, as Vepsian language still existed, there were several thousand speakers of Vepsian, and the links of Veps with their land and resources were perceived as an established fact – as already in the Soviet period Veps were often symbolically linked with stoneworking. The importance of stone extraction for Veps influenced those who moved to the villages during the Soviet time. Even though not Veps by ethnicity, many of them started working in the quarries, had close contacts with nature, and their lifestyles became similar to those who lived in the area for a longer time; they also started identifying themselves with local population and sharing the sense of pride over local stone.

For the residents of Vepsian villages, stone quarries are not something alien. Most of them used to work in the quarries, are employed there now or at have close relatives working there; stone is visible and audible in the villages, people use mining vocabulary in daily conversations, pieces of diabase and quartzite often form a part of a fence or become elements of garden design. This connection is reinforced through museum exhibitions, publications, so local people in Vepsian villages are used to stone being a part of their daily

routines. Veps activists even state that stoneworking is closely linked to Veps identity and in many ways helped them to develop. Because of these strong links with mining, Veps activists did not have a strong need to prove their right to land in the same way Sojots did, so their indigeneity claims were (and still are) mostly centered around the development of Vepsian language and culture. As Veps activist Margarita mentioned, the issue of industry is not discussed in the community at all, probably because this is not a new phenomenon in Prionezhskii district.

Sojots represent a different story. There the stone is not visible at all, and although many residents are engaged in illegal jade extraction, this fact is normally silenced. Whereas gold mining companies are more visible, as *Buriatzoloto* is the main taxpayers in the region and finances social initiatives, the locals are not directly involved in mining and do not know much about the extraction activities happening at their land. The residents of Oka feel detached from the decisions taken “from above”, and whereas they do not possess strong ties with mining in the area, they are willing to participate in decision making. Thus, their indigeneity claims are mostly centered on land and privileges including larger control over resource extraction. Their revitalization campaign did involve cultural aspects, but today reindeer herding and “revitalized Sojot language” are used mainly as a “showcase” to demonstrate that Sojots are indeed a separate people, so that their claims for land and resources would be grounded.

## Chapter 5. Material and symbolic meanings of stone

### Introduction

In Prionezhskii district of Karelia and Okinskii district of Buriatia, it is possible to hear seemingly opposing stone-related narratives in the course of one day. In Rybreka, a village of Prionezhskii district, I recorded statements like “we are being suffocated by this stone” and “without the stone, the village would not even exist”. In Okinskii district, the representative of local administration stated, “jade is our pain” (Interview B9), while several young men residing in Orlik told me happily, “jade is our life!” In both regions people talk about stone influencing their bodies and their well-being (either causing pain, or, on the contrary, providing life). The difference is that in Karelia diabase and quartzite are very visible, audible, and tangible. They form an essential part of people’s daily lives. In contrast, in Okinskii district both gold and jade are seemingly excluded from the conversations and from everyday realities. Nevertheless, both the vivid presence of stone in one of the case studies and its equally striking absence in the second one illustrate the importance of natural resources in the lives of local residents of Prionezhskii and Okinskii districts.

This chapter will analyze how stone-related narratives help to establish the sense of continuity in both communities and to articulate local claims to resources. It will discuss how the different role of the state in Prionezhskii district of Karelia and Okinskii district of Buriatia influenced the symbolic meanings of stone as well as the creation of new stone-related narratives. The chapter will also focus on the impact of local connections with resource extraction on the relations with the state as well as local identity formation. It will analyze various stone-related narratives and mythologies which were identified during my fieldwork in Karelia and Buriatia. I argue that it is crucial to analyze the role of state in both cases in order to assess the changes in the meanings natural resources produce.

The first part of the chapter will analyze the influence of state-promoted narratives on people's attitudes to resource and industry. I take Foucault's definition of power relations as "not localized in the relations between the state and its citizens" (Foucault, 1977: 27) as a starting point and view power dispositions in Karelia and Buriatia as multi-sided process with various actors involved. In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault discusses "micro-powers" which define "points of confrontation, focuses of instability, each of which has its own risks of conflict, of struggles, and of at least temporary inversion of the power relations" (Foucault, 1977: 27). In Karelia and Buriatia, such focal points of temporary power relation inversions in relation to stoneworking will be analyzed. Following Foucault's argument on mutual co-creation of power and knowledge, this chapter will discuss how the shifts in power relations in Karelia and Buriatia influenced the production of new stone related narratives.

While new narratives on taming nature and the importance of stone for industry were produced, at the same time the intimate connections with the stone and the land also influenced the shaping of local identities and local views on stoneworking. The connections local residents have with natural resources as well as with the land in general influenced their understandings of ownership over the resource. Local attitudes to stone were shaped by the power of state (viewing state as a variety of actors with different agendas, not as a single entity). At the same time, working directly to stone also influenced not only the residents' perceptions of the resource, but also their relations with the state and their views on the existing power dispositions. As Tim Ingold (2007) argues, engaging directly with materials could enrich our understanding of their properties and qualities. Foucault mentions profound influence of objects and materials on subjectivities when discussing architectures of control: "stones can make people docile and knowable" (Foucault, 1977: 172). Materials therefore become an important part of power dispositions and may impact temporary shifts in power distribution. To address the second question, I will analyze the narratives of pride over the

local stone as well as the issue of symbolic ownership over natural resources. I will also discuss the issue of illegal jade mining as an attempt to question the existing power relations and the overarching role of state.

The first section of the chapter will discuss the notion of disrupted landscapes (Dorondel, 2016) to analyze how the bonds connecting local residents with the landscape are being reshaped as the communities get more integrated into the state. It will concentrate on historical connections to land and resource in Karelia and Buriatia and the gradual replacement of previously existing mythologies with new ones or their mutual integration. The second part will discuss the new Soviet and post-Soviet narratives in Karelia and Buriatia in more detail in order to trace the influence of state policies on human – resource relations. In particular I will focus on the creation and catastrophe narrative in Karelia and the taming of nature (or being tamed by it) motive which is common in both cases. The third part of the chapter will focus on local identity formation under the influence of dwellers' connections with stone and land.

## **5.1. Natural resource narratives, landscape and industry**

Barthes (1972) views myth as a form of speech which symbolically organizes reality making it clear and simple. Myths may also be viewed as sets of instructions to community members indicating local values and ways of behaving (Kittredge, 1987). This section focuses on various stone-related mythologies of Karelia and Buriatia. In both regions, stone had a variety of symbolic meanings historically. While in Okinskii district of Buriatia the landscape is still widely perceived as a sacred animated entity governed by spirits, in Prionezhskii district of Karelia the beliefs in forest or lake spirits and the magic powers of stone were gradually replaced by new Soviet-time mythologies proclaiming the advancement of industry and the triumph of people over empty and meaningless nature.

### 5.1.1. “Our parents did not teach us”: disruptions of meanings

Veps’ relations with the natural world are often described in academic literature as “animistic communication with nature” (Arukask, 2014:324). As Vinokurova (1994) points out, various landscape features such as, forests, lakes, and rivers, were believed to have their “masters” (V: *ižand*). The Earth in general also had its own master (V: *maižand*). Forests, rivers and lakes were perceived with ambivalence. They were viewed as a source of well-being, but at the same time as places of dangers which may cause harm for hunters or fishermen or even kidnap children (Vinokurova, 1994). Stones also had sacred meanings in Vepsian culture and were a part of various rituals partly because of their physical characteristics such as weight, coldness, immobility (Vinokurova, 2015). Arukask (2014) mentions *Ristkivi* (V: Cross stone) situated in the deep forest near Nemzha village in the Leningrad region. The local dwellers use the stone for prayers and appeals to God and, possibly, also to the forest masters (as they often leave some food near the stone “for forest spirit”). Stones similar to *Ristkivi* can be found near other Vepsian villages in the Leningrad region. There was a belief among northern Veps that Lake Onega gets warm in June as D’umal (the god of thunder and lightning) places a warm stone in the water (Vinokurova 2010: 70). Gravel stones (*čuurkivi*) used to be a part of several Vepsian rituals related to weddings or funerals (Vinokurova, 2010; 2012). The name of the village which is now a part of Rybreka — Čuurušk — comes from the Vepsian name for this stone (Strogal’shchikova, 2015). Stones often served as a connecting point between a person and the master of the forest, as in the case of *Ristkivi*.

In the interviews I conducted with the residents of Veps villages in Karelia in 2015 – 2018, it was almost impossible to find traces of the traditional beliefs described by the ethnographers working with Veps in late 1980s. “Our parents did not teach us about that,” –

an older informant from Rybreka told me with an apologetic expression when I asked her about the forest master (Interview K56). Another informant, a middle-aged man also residing in Rybreka, when asked the same question, briskly replied: “I don’t believe in such things! Oh wait; there is a forest master – the bear! And you know, I would not want to meet him for sure” (Interview K54). In general during the fieldwork I never heard references to forest or lake masters, although when asked directly, some informants would share that when going hunting or fishing they leave some treatment for the spirits. Nevertheless, they still framed these stories as a joke (Interview K52). A middle-aged male informant, when asked about forest or lake masters, told me a story about *barabashka* – a Russian-language mocking reference to a poltergeist:

I actually have *barabashka* walking around my house. Have you heard about that from grannies? Every house has its own *barabashka*, the master of the house. Sometimes there is nothing, nothing, and then – boom! – a sound, like a crack. Or footsteps from the attic. But we are not afraid...

(Interview K55)

Even though this quote contains a clear reference to the house master, at the same time the story is rather told as an anecdote, and the usage of the mocking word *barabashka* itself signals that the informant does not want to take the references to masters very seriously.

Similar narratives of mockery appear in the interviews in relation to the attempts to see anything “supernatural” about the local stone. In 2013, a Moscow TV channel chose Karelia as one of the spots for The Mysterious Russia documentary. A short section of the film is devoted to raspberry quartzite deposit presented as “a piece of Mars on Earth”; it includes the interview with a former mining worker from Kvartsitnyi. Several people mentioned this story and mostly referred to it as a funny episode. One of my informants, a worker of the quartzite quarry, asked, “Have you met Vladimir?” and added,

He is our TV-star! Those Moscow TV-people asked him to say

something unusual and he did. This is a magical stone, - he said, - and when it is raining everywhere, it is never raining above the deposit. This is nonsense, of course!

(Interview K44).

This absence of a master- and spirit-related narrative in the interviews was surprising for me during fieldwork, as most of the literature on Veps I read prior to going to the field contained references to their deep connections to animated nature. I would assume that as I was considered an outsider, the informants were reluctant to share these deep aspects of their mythology. However, in other aspects of the interviews many informants were open to me, so why would they suddenly hide all the references to the spirits of nature? And could I actually be seen as an outsider when coming from Petrozavodsk, the closest city to the villages where most of locals traveled regularly? Several recent publications on fieldwork among Veps and Karelians in Karelia indicated the striking difference between the fieldwork they conducted in 1980s –1990s and today’s fieldwork: it was much harder now to find an informant with the knowledge of the local beliefs, as most of those who shared their knowledge twenty or thirty years ago passed away, and next generations did not have this knowledge anymore (Vinokurova, 2014; Rodionova, 2017). I therefore assume that the silence regarding the spirits could also indicate that many previously existing beliefs did not get reflected in the lives of contemporary inhabitants of Veps villages in Karelia. This discontinuity could partly be explained by the closeness of Prionezhskii district to Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelia. Besides, in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century many Karelian Veps migrated to Petrozavodsk due to the state policy of “Liquidation of Villages without Prospects” which was carried out by the Soviet state in 1960s – 1970s (it was discussed in more details in Chapter 2). At the same time, a lot of people from other regions moved to Prionezh’e to work in the mining industry. During this period, the ethnic composition of the area changed rapidly. The existing local beliefs, which

were deeply rooted in landscape features, were not necessarily shared to newcomers. Some of the residents who moved to Veps villages in this period recall the feeling of rupture existing between long-time residents and those migrating recently:

At first, Veps did not welcome us, did not respect us. The local guys, hooligans, teased me. But then they had to stop, as more people started arriving, the builders, some of them from Moscow...

(Interview K36)

At the same time, the previously existing connections with the landscape were in many aspects reshaped or even broken. Dorondel (2016) discusses the notion of “disrupted landscapes” in relation to post-socialist transformations in Romania and argues that changes in landscape may directly impact the construction of new social relations. This process, however, may also be reversed: the changes in social relations influence people’s perceptions of the landscape. In the case of Prionezhskii district, as the local community became more diverse and more largely involved in state industry enterprises, local symbolic connections to landscape were drastically changed and in many aspects replaced by new relations with the Soviet industry.

For the people migrating to Prionezh’e in Karelia to work in the mines, the district became a sort of non-place,<sup>114</sup> using Augé’s term (1995) based on the crisis of meanings. Augé uses the concept of non-place to focus on those places in relation to which it is not possible to build identities and decode symbols (mostly transit places such as airports, subways or hotel lobbies, but I argue that this concept may be applied to other places as well). In the situation when the unfamiliar landscape fails to generate meanings, other entities may become producers of meanings. In Veps villages of Prionezhskii district, industry enterprises

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<sup>114</sup> Initially, many of the people coming to Karelia to work in the mining quarries did not plan to stay there for long: as fresh graduates of geological departments, they treated Karelia as a temporary work place, though later, as they started families, a number of them stayed in Prionezhskii district. Therefore, initially the district was seen as a “transit point,” it was not filled with deeper meanings yet, and industry became the link connecting the Soviet-time migrants and local residents.

(stoneworking and logging) became unifying elements bringing together people coming from different parts of the country.<sup>115</sup> The relations with industry shaped the connections people formed with the landscape. The newly formed community needed new narratives, and those were readily provided by the Soviet state: this process will be discussed further in the next section of the chapter.

### ***5.1.2. Modern myths as a part of local belief system in Oka***

In the case of Okinskii district of Buriatia, however, the situation was different. The state did not play such a strong role there as it happened in Karelia. Okinskii district was also far more remote than Prionezhskii district and its residents traditionally lived in relative isolation from the rest of Buriatia. The connections with the landscape in Okinskii district of Buriatia are much more sacralized than in Karelia. Contemporary stone-related mythologies became embedded into the previously existing models of relations with nature.

The high dependence on nature in Okinskii district created a special connection of local residents with the land which merges Buddhism and shamanism. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2004: 468) sees shamanism as crossing of ontological borders “to adopt the perspectives of nonhuman subjectivities in order to administer the relations between humans and nonhumans.” Shamanism creates certain types of knowledge based on direct interactions with the landscape. Oka Buriat and Soiot shamanist beliefs view the landscape as a sacred entity various parts of which – including subsurface resources – are animated and governed by spirit masters. The presence of spirit masters creates intersubjective relations between people and objects even when the object itself is not perceived as animated (de Castro, 2004).

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<sup>115</sup> This process was common for many northern regions, as the economic and industrialization projects of the Soviet period resulted in large migration to the Russian North from other parts of the state (Bolotova and Stammner, 2010).

Oka Buriat and Soiot beliefs focus on a pantheon of celestial beings (B: *tengri*) where each god or spirit is associated with a specific natural force or a part of landscape (such as a river or a mountain). The sky is seen as a masculine force which gives life, whereas the earth is associated with a feminine force which shapes elements. The heaven and the underground world are governed by strong spirits: *Erlen khan* is presented as the master of the underground world, including natural resources. Therefore, when extracting resources from the earth, one is at the same time negotiating with the spirit masters who may allow or prohibit the extraction. The sacred views on stones are represented in the cult of *oboo* – stone pyramids which are used for leaving sacrifices for spirit masters governing the particular territory.

An interesting metaphoric description of human-resource relations is present in Buriat epos *Gesar* (in other versions *Geser*). The events of the epos are believed to take place at the territory of contemporary Okinskii district. Gesar is the celestial being that descended to Earth in order to bring people them well-being. In the Fifth song of the epos, Gesar is fighting with four evils which he aims to turn into four riches to help people. Out of the four evils which are defeated by Gesar, one (river) represents natural forces, and three others represent different sorts of natural resources (silver, gold, other subsoil resources). With his power and wisdom Gesar turns them from destructive forces into helpful substances: instead of dangers, river offers healing, whereas silver, gold and subsoil minerals become riches. Therefore, natural resources are presented by the Buriat epos as a help and a danger at the same time, just as the spirits of lakes or forests in Vepsian mythology may help or harm people depending on the situation.

Today, mining conducted in Okinskii district of Buriatia still generates mythologies. Local residents know little on the gold extraction which is going on in the region, as most of them are not involved in gold mining and it is separated from the villages they reside in. For

example, Zun-Kholba gold deposit and the village surrounding it are formally a part of Soiot village settlement (a group of villages with the center in Sorok). However, there are no permanent residents in Zun-Kholba normally around 500 temporary workers stay there at a time. The residents from Sorok do not interact with the temporary workers and know little about gold mining in Zun-Kholba.

During my fieldwork in Okinskii district, when I asked about gold mining, in most cases the informants would reply that they did not know anything as the gold mines were situated far away. Unlike Karelia, where the quarries are situated next to the Veps villages, the gold mining in Buriatia is not visible, but at the same time present indirectly. As an example, the main company *Buriatzoloto* supports local youth initiatives financially (Interview B6) and sometimes sponsors local schools. Therefore, gold mining becomes present and absent at the same time. Jade mining in Buriatia may be similarly viewed as a myth, as people rarely speak about it openly, and the trips are also often kept secret even from relatives. As my informant Andrei explained, “I did not tell anyone at home that I went for jade. I said that we just went to the forest to fell timber. So that my mum and dad would not worry” (Interview B8). The pathways of Buriat jade also become a secret and are not widely spoken about: several of my informants disclosed briefly that they transfer jade pieces to Irkutsk or Ulan-Ude and sell them to Chinese buyers; many of them are married to Buriat women (Interview B4).

In Buriatia, the local residents do not see much value in jade per se. Some villagers have pieces of jade at home; jade pieces could also be found at the local *datsan* (Buddhist temple) in Orlik. However, when these pieces of jade are kept at homes, they are seen more like a "hunting trophy" and thus not kept for their visual appeal. This rather practical attitude to jade may be related to the fact that jade extraction in Okinskii district is quite a recent

phenomenon; where the stone was extracted in the 19th century, later it stopped, and started again only in early 2000s, as the demand grew in China.

At the same time, close connections of local residents with the land influences their perceptions of jade extraction. As various parts of landscape, including the underground, are animated and connected to spirit masters, illegal extraction of jade becomes not just a business-related enterprise, but a spiritual journey. As my informants articulated, it is considered important to follow a set of rules when extracting jade, and these rules are similar to those held by hunters (Interview B4). “Jade does not like those who are greedy,” – one of the informants told me indicating that the stone may bring bad luck to those who do not respect it and take too large amounts at once (Interview B7). Another informant was worried about the level of illegal jade extraction and trade: “This greed would not bring anything good to the community” (Interview B25). Therefore, the informal rules of extracting jade reflect the general attitudes of local residents to land and resources.

Even the local narratives on the destinations of local stone are perceived differently. In the case of Karelia, many of the famous destinations of diabase and quartzite are reachable. Many of my informants have been to Moscow or Saint Petersburg and seen the Karelian stone. The only mythological destination is probably Paris, but nevertheless one may see a photo of Napoleon’s quartzite sarcophagus on a photo placed in the local Veps museum in Sheltozero. In the case of Buriatia, the narratives on the high-quality “Siberian graphite” exist only as legends, and local residents cannot rely to them directly unlike the residents of Prionezh’e who only need a trip to Moscow or Saint-Petersburg (where most of them need to go for various reasons from time to time) to see the Lenin’s Mausoleum or St. Isaac’s Cathedral. The former graphite mine is difficult to reach: I had to abandon the idea to have a trip there, as part of the trip had to be done by horse and the whole journey would take several days.

Even if jade is not present in the villages of Okinskii district as obviously as diabase and quartzite in Karelia, it is still there – though indirectly. “Look at the amount of expensive cars here, - an informant in Ulan-Ude who formerly worked in Okinskii district told me. – Where do you think they all come from?” (Interview B25). He was certain that the expensive cars were most probably related to illegal jade extraction. Another informant, Andrei from Orlik (Okinskii district), told me directly that his jeep was the result of a successful jade hunting trip (Interview B8). During the fieldwork I was also told that it was possible to differentiate between fences surrounding the houses in Orlik: the men from the households with expensive-looking fences were most probably engaged in illegal jade mining.

Therefore, the attitudes towards natural resources in Vepsian and Soiot villages differ and reflect their general perceptions of the land. The residents of Prionezhskii district present the sacred relations with the land mostly as a thing of the past, and though a lot of them speak positively about the local stone, this attitude follows utilitarian logic: the quartzite and diabase are valued as rare and beautiful minerals which are important for the state. As for the local residents of Okinskii district, there jade seems to be not valued for its visual appeal at all. People recognize it as a source of income, but are not eager to discuss jade’s physical characteristics or any other qualities. The gold which is mined in the region is also perceived by locals without noticeable interest towards its qualities or its role for the state. At the same time, the spiritual relations with the land are influencing the relations with the resource. Thus, jade is viewed as an animated entity which may bring good or bad luck to its miners depending on their behavior. The extraction of gold also becomes related to local spiritual relations with the land, and the development of gold extraction in Oka is viewed as a possible danger for the land as well as an offence towards its spirits.

## 5.2. Shaping new stone narratives: the role of state

Myth making was an important part of the Soviet propaganda tradition, and the construction of historical continuities and new idols was used by Soviet leaders for power legitimacy and the validation of current policies (Gerovitch, 2015). Following Gerovitch, I use the term “myth” in this section not to imply the falsity of certain historical claims, but to stress their foundational characters and their influence on identity construction.

In this section I will discuss two narratives which frequently appear in the interviews conducted in Karelia and Buriatia. The first narrative (creation and catastrophe story) is very common for the interviews conducted in Veps villages of Karelia where mining industry is often viewed as the pillar holding the whole area together. Consequently, people’s relations with the landscape are viewed through the prism of extractivism, when the land is seen as useful and worthwhile when it is used for the needs of the country and for industrial advancement. The second narrative of struggling with stone and nature is common for both Karelia and Buriatia. Whereas the official Soviet discourse proclaimed the taming of wild nature by humans, the informants in both of my case studies often express the feeling of powerlessness, as if they are in fact tamed by the mining industry instead of taming it.

Both these narratives reflect the influence of the state on human – resource relations, through from different angles. The first sub-section illustrates the deep integration of state’s discourses into the local narratives in Karelia. At the same time, the second sub-section demonstrates that the influence of the state is not omnipotent, and direct experiences of working with stone or extracting and smuggling it informally also shape local perceptions of resource extraction. While the influence of state-promoted narratives is important, people also tend to resist it by “microscopic actions... producing social order in their own way” (Bolotova, 2005: 49). I view the alternative narratives contradicting the widespread Soviet

discourses as these microscopic actions of protest and as attempts to temporarily switch the power relations stating that those who work directly with stone know it the most. The counter-narratives of being “tamed” by stone demonstrate that dominant discourses of the Soviet time were not fully shared by the citizens, and their direct experiences in working with stones produced alternative discourses questioning the role of the state as the sole knowledge producer.

### ***5.2.1. Creation myths in Karelia: the case of Kvartsitnyi***

New stone-related mythologies emerged during the Soviet period, and they were reinforced by newspaper publications and communication with regional administration. The creation of collective myths creates the basis for establishing dominant narratives and the shaping of social identities (Gerovitch, 2015). The period after the end of the Second World War in the Soviet Union was the time of science cult and strong belief in technical innovations (Orlova, 2014). Influential Soviet-time mythologies were related to space history (Gerovitch, 2015, Siddiqi 2011), Arctic explorations (McCannon, 1997) or large-scale industrial projects such as Baikal – Amur Mainline which was proclaimed “the construction site of the century” by the Soviet state in the 1970s (Schweitzer, Povoroznyuk & Schiesser, 2017). In the 1960s, geologists became cult figures in the USSR; they were viewed in popular culture as brave, persistent adventurers whose discoveries advance the whole Soviet state (Bolotova, 2005). In Soviet-time newspapers and literature, geologists were often seen as conquerors of the “empty” and taiga giving value and meaning to nature with the discoveries of the new deposits and infrastructural developments (Bolotova, 2006).

These newly created Soviet myths on the empty and meaningless nature which needs to be explored, the vital role of industry advancement, and the importance of labor for the country were much more present in the interview data I collected in Karelia than the stories

about forest and lake masters I initially expected to hear. Whereas my informants did not talk much about traditional beliefs in relation to nature, they readily shared stories about their stone's and their labor's high demand:

There was a case once: so there is a plant in Kazakhstan, and its engineers came to Petrozavodsk by plane: we need your stone, or our plant will stop working. They flew to Petrozavodsk by plane just to get the stone! And now - nobody needs it!

(Interview K1)

Our stone goes everywhere, to Estonia, to the Latvia, to the Caucasus. Now there is even some contract that the stone from Karelia will go to China. I saw it on TV the other day.

(Interview K18)

This is the only quarry with black diabase, and there is one more... I saw it in the main office building on the quarry... Somewhere in South Africa. Hell if I know where, at the end of the world. There is similar stone in Ukraine, but it rusts, and our stone does not rust, it never rusts.

(Interview K45)

Through working in state-operated industries, the residents of Prionezhskii district of Karelia gradually adopted new state-promoted narratives related to stone extraction. In these narratives, stone and nature gain meaning when used for the development of the state and industrial growth. I will focus specifically on one of these narratives related to the building of Kvartsitnyi, the settlement situated next to the Veps village Shoksha in Prionezhskii district.

The settlement of Kvartsitnyi was built in the 1970s near the newly opened quarry of quartzite gravel stones (from which the settlement received its name). The new quarry was operated by a Moscow-based state enterprise *Mosoblstroimaterialy* and provided building materials for Moscow region. The settlement was built on the shore of Lake Onega, between the village of Shoksha and the quarries producing raspberry quartzite and diabase gravel. The

first cottage-type houses in Kvartsitnyi were built according to Moscow designs and technologies and were perceived as a wonder by locals as they had heating and sewage systems (Interview K6). Soon after it was built, Kvartsitnyi became a symbol of a modern, progressive settlement, a place for enthusiasts overcoming the hardships of northern climate. Young people from different parts of the country moved to Kvartsitnyi in the 1970s-1980s. They were attracted by the beauty of Karelian nature, as well as the opportunities to receive comfortable housing when working for the quarry. Many of my informants based in Kvartsitnyi expressed deep nostalgia for the 1970s-1980s when the quarry's administration had ambitious plans for the settlement's future:

“Still, we believed at that time that we had interesting perspectives, that the settlement would be developing, that a fancy kindergarten and school would be built, and ambulance station as well. The quarry's development plan was great. And we hoped it would be real, we hoped till perestroika and after it as well...” (Interview K25).

However, in the 1990s the quarry went bankrupt and closed, and today's residents of Kvartsitnyi live in the permanent state of uncertainty. After the years of state control and care, in post-Soviet period Kvartsitnyi was left to struggle on its own. A lot of permanent dwellers had to leave the settlement; the system of public heating was stopped as it was provided by the quarry. Without stable heating it soon became clear that modern “Moscow-style” cottages built in Kvartsitnyi were unsuitable for harsh Karelian winters, and each household had to arrange their own heating in order to manage through the winter period. The residents hoped that the gravel stone quarry would be re-opened, but it never happened, probably as the stone was now considered unprofitable (Interview K9). The raspberry quartzite quarry which is situated nearby is working small-scale with around twenty employees (Interview K44). Kvartsitnyi is now struggling with unemployment, and most of its male residents have to work in shifts in nearby Rybreka or in other Karelian quarries, leaving the settlements for the periods from two weeks to several months (Interview K37). My informants from Kvartsitnyi

often talked about the deep contrast between the past and the present in the life of the settlement. In such narratives the past was often idealized and viewed as the time when young active people from different parts of the country were developing the quarry together (Interview K36, K39). In contrast, the present was seen as the time when “everything got destroyed” (Interview K25).

Several of my informants in Karelia, when speaking about Kvartsitnyi, used similar expressions contradicting the time before the settlement was built and “there was nothing” with the period after the construction works started:

Q: How did the settlement look like when you started working?

A: How? Oh, but *there was nothing there, simply nothing*. Later they started transporting blocks for houses... and people started arriving.  
(Interview K39)

«When I arrived, the settlement was not there yet. There was one unfinished cottage, but besides that *there was nothing*”. (Interview K36).

«This place [Kvartsitnyi] was called Ust’e, *there was nothing here*. Just a cliff and a swamp – back in our childhood” (Interview K43).

Two of the informants quoted above (Interviews K29 and K43) were born in the Veps villages in Karelia, while the third informant (Interview K36) is from the Leningrad region and arrived in Karelia to work in Kvartsitnyi. However, all of them present similar narratives contrasting the time “before” and “after” the settlement. The time “before” is presented as “nothingness” or emptiness, and then out of this “nothingness” a brand new settlement appears. When I heard this expression for the first time, it contradicted my expectations from the field. I expected that a person dwelling in a particular landscape for years would not call this landscape “nothing”. One of the informants quoted, Lada, a local resident born in Shoksha, even mentions such landscape features as “a cliff” and “a swamp”, but for her they still do not constitute “something”, e.g. this landscape does not have a separate meaning. Its

meaning is given to it by people, and when the construction of Kvartsitnyi starts, the landscape gets a purpose.

Similar messages are transmitted by Soviet-time newspapers published in Karelia. An article published in *Kommunist Prionezh'a* tells about the student construction brigade<sup>116</sup> helping to build the first buildings in Kvartsitnyi. The name of the brigade was Vikings, and the publication obviously plays with this name presenting the construction brigade members as the discoverers of a previously empty land:

“In 1980, the first "Vikings" from the student construction brigade of Moscow builders landed on the land of Shoksha. They arrived to transform this region, to build new powerful sections of the Shoksha quarry management, to build a new well-designed and well-equipped settlement instead of the remote village Ust'e.”

(KP, January 10, 1984, p.3)

It seems from the interviews as if the settlement was created “from nothing”, even though technically it would be hard to say that the area where Kvartsitnyi was established in early 1970s was “nothing” before that. It was the forested area on the shore of Lake Onega between Shoksha village and the miner’s settlement near the raspberry quartzite quarry, and local residents used to go there in the past to pick mushrooms or berries. However, in the interview narratives the landscape gained purpose only when it became used for the needs of the state.

Whereas the construction of the quarry and the settlement of Kvartsitnyi gave meaning to the landscape near Shoksha village, the closure of the quarry in the 1990s resulted in returning to “nothing.” As one of the informants expressed it:

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<sup>116</sup> Student construction brigades are temporary construction teams composed of students in universities and other institutions of higher education to work, usually during vacations. This form originated under the control of Komsomol of the Soviet Union. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student\\_construction\\_brigade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student_construction_brigade)

“We used to have a cafeteria, and a kindergarten, and the industrial complex where the women worked,<sup>117</sup> then the faraway quarry was operating too... There was a lot, and now there is nothing...” (Interview K43)

Thus, the narratives about Kvartsitnyi resemble mythological creation stories when a whole new world appears out of nothing.<sup>118</sup> The perceptions of “nothingness” are related to the issue of meaning-making. For many of my informants in Prionezh’e, mining gave a new meaning and a purpose to previously empty landscape, but when mining ended, this purpose got lost as well, and therefore the settlement returned to its symbolic “nothingness.” This narrative illustrates how people working at state enterprises are gradually accepting the widespread narratives and start viewing the land from the position of its “usefulness” for the country.

### 5.2.2. *Taming the stone or tamed by it*

In the interviews with local residents in Prionezhskii district, stone is often pictured as the source of both troubles and positive experiences. In contrast with the Soviet discourse of “mastering” the stone and nature, it seems that the village residents often picture the stone as the force which ultimately influences their life. They talk about stone “taking health away”, mention that “people get ill because of the stone”, but at the same time often stress that the village “would not exist without the stone” or that they did not leave the village or moved there from other places because of the stone.

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<sup>117</sup> As the settlements’ facilities, including the boiler house, the cafeteria, and industrial complex (R: *promkombinat*) were financed by the quarry, as it got bankrupt, they stopped working. There is still a kindergarten in Kvartsitnyi, but no school, so schoolchildren go to the neighboring Shoksha village. In the late 1980s, there was a plan to build a school, a swimming pool and a shopping center in Kvartsitnyi, but there projects were never realized because of the quarry’s financial constraints.

<sup>118</sup> One of possible points of reference could be the Karelian-Finnish epic poem *Kalevala* which most of the residents of Karelia study at school. In the poem, the world of Kalevala was created from “nowhere” by Väinämöinen, the epic hero, who at the very end of the story leaves the world he created to leave it for Christianity. The creation story of Kvartsitnyi quarry and the interview narratives dealing with its long-time director, Yurii Koren’kov, who was leading the quarry since it started working and left the settlement in the 1990s (shortly before the quarry gets bankrupt), resembles the mythological story of Kalevala.

One of the local legends in Vepsian villages is related to the episode from the 1970s when several scenes of the Lithuanian film *Flowering of Unsown Rye* portraying prison were produced at the quarry in Kvartsitnyi. This story causes many jokes: “So we were filmed as prisoners, and we did not even have to change for that” (Interview K2), “When the filmmakers came here, they were surprised: what kind of labor is that? Therefore, they asked the workers, “How many years do you have?” thinking they were prisoners” (Interview K43). This story is related to the general motive of “imprisonment” which often appears in the interviews, especially with former mining workers who were employed in the Soviet time. Whereas many respondents recall that stone working was a hard occupation, especially for women (Interview K2, K37, K60), they often emphasize that they had no choice: “Where else could I go? There was no other production in the village, just *promkombinat* [R: consumer goods manufacturing], *sovkhos* [R: state farm], and our mine” (Interview K43), “There was no other job for me, except for stone loading (Interview K33), “A work is a work, you know” (Interview K9).

In the interviews conducted with the current mining workers in Prionezhskii district, the narrative of “imprisonment” is also present, though less often. One of the informants stated: “Now we do whatever a private owner tells us to do. If he tells you not to come the next day – that is it, you are not coming” (Interview K4). This motive may source from the respondents’ dissatisfaction with their past or present work, and by stressing that they had no choice they justify the necessity of hard labor in the quarries. Similar narratives appear in the interviews with the local residents of Oka: “What else can we do? There are no jobs here” (Interview B27). As in the case of Karelia, the informants often stress that illegal mining is not their choice; the situation is “imposed” on them, as they need to earn money, and job possibilities in the district are limited.

The popularity of illegal jade extraction is high due to the fact that most of young residents of Okinskii district are unemployed; as the options for getting a job are very limited, especially in small settlements, most of them are rely on hunting, fishing, cattle breeding, and jade. Besides, the jade trade is “fast money”, and if one is lucky, in the course of several days it is possible to earn enough to buy a car or make some other financial investment (Interview B8). His car, as he implied, was also an outcome of a successful trip to get jade. However, not all the trips result in new cars or houses: there is always a danger to be caught by police, or one may simply be unlucky and return empty-handed (Interview B5).

The possible changes in legislation regarding jade extraction are widely discussed in Okinskii district. The possible future change of jade status will directly affect its illegal extraction. Currently jade is classified as ornamental stone, so its illegal extraction may only lead to paying fine; however, if it is recognized as semi-precious stone, the illegal extraction of jade may lead to imprisonment. These possible changes will undoubtedly change the life in the villages, as nowadays many families' well-being depends on jade. Currently, as they admit, the illegal extraction of jade is still becoming more dangerous; however, it does not stop many of them. The jade trips are often perceived as risky and dangerous, especially after August 2015 when a young resident of Orlik was killed while trying to steal pieces of jade from the warehouse owned by one of the private mining companies<sup>119</sup>. After that, as my informants note, the jade trips became rarer, but never stopped, as many of the residents see them as an additional source of income in unstable economic conditions. “Our boys are walking under bullets for it [jade]”, - Tatiana from Sorok told me illustrating the dangers of the jade business (Interview B16). Even though in Karelia local residents are involved in mining legally and openly, there are still feelings that their influence on the resource development is very limited, and mining is controlled by the outsiders. Whereas the Soviet-

time newspapers proclaimed “taming the stone”, the residents of Pronezhskii district in Karelia and Okinskii district in Buriatia rather express that they are tamed by the resource extraction. In my view, this example illustrates that though state-promoted narratives were widely promoted and accepted, other counter-narratives could emerge from direct experiences of working with stone or dwelling in the landscape. The theme of local narratives emerging from direct connections with stone will be discussed further in the next section.

### 5.3. Stone narratives and symbolic ownership

This section concentrates on the relations between stone extraction and local identity formation as well as the issue of symbolic ownership over the resource. In the previous sections of the chapter I discussed the influence of state-promoted discourses on stone-related narratives and mythologies. The sections demonstrated how the state discourses became a vital part of human – landscape relations in both regions of study, though to a different extent (as the role of the state in Karelia and Buriatia was in many aspects different). This section, however, will discuss stone narratives from a different starting point: not on macro-level of state – citizens’ relations, but on micro-level of links forming between people and stone. I argue that the connections people form with resource extraction may lead to them questioning the omnipotent role of the state and developing alternative strategies asserting their own right to extract the stone. In the first part of the section I will focus on the expressions of pride over the local stone in Karelia and Buriatia, while the second part will concentrate more specifically on the issues of ownership and deprivation in relation to resource extraction.

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<sup>119</sup> *Baikalkvattssamotsvety* with the main office in Irkutsk

### 5.3.1. *Pride over stone as identification with the resource or the land*

Both in Karelia and Buriatia, local stone is often perceived as a link leading from Vepsian or Soiot villages to the world around. In both cases, the stone has travelled or still travels to faraway destinations. The raspberry quartzite from Karelia was used for the construction of Napoleon's sarcophagus in Paris and Lenin's Mausoleum in Moscow. The "Siberian graphite" from Okinskii district in Buriatia was famous in Europe and was widely used for the production of pencils. Jade from Okinskii district is now valued in China, even though the district's residents are not sure about the reasons for such popularity. The narratives on the local stone and its famous destinations are still popular in Karelia and Buriatia are often used to impress the newcomers. The legend about the local graphite mine and Jean-Pierre Alibert was one of the first stories which I heard from the driver on my way to Orlik from Irkutsk. Similarly, when I was hitchhiking from Shoksha to Kvartsitnyi, the driver understood that I was not local and told me jokingly, "I will tell you a story. Just don't say it didn't happen! When Napoleon was in Russia, he saw our stone and liked it so much that he ordered it for his future tombstone. That's how famous our stone is". It was obviously pleasant for him to imagine Napoleon admiring Karelia and its stone, even as a joke.

However, the stone-related narratives in Karelia and Buriatia are different. In Karelia, the value of the local stone is directly related to it being produced by the miners' "own hands" similarly to the case of silver miners in Guanajuato analyzed by Elizabeth Ferry (2005). In the interview conducted for *Kommunist Prionezh'a* the stoneworker Aleksandr Ryboretskii stated, "When we are in Moscow, Leningrad, Petrozavodsk or other cities, we do not part with our Rybreka. We are proud that monument details in those cities are made with our own hands." (*KP*, November 4, 1967) Unique stone which was extracted in their villages made them feel that they were engaged into important and valuable activity. Besides, as the stone

was used for many well-known monuments around the country, the stoneworkers' hard labor ultimately connected them symbolically to the whole state. A resident of Rybreka, a former mining worker, recalled similarly how during his studies in Moscow he proudly told to other students when they visited the Red Square: "This is our stone!" (Interview K8). Another former miner remembered his trip to Saint Petersburg where he saw raspberry quartzite as a part of St. Isaac's Cathedral's decoration, and stated, "I can recognize this stone everywhere" (Interview K13). Several informants mentioned that the stone extracted in Karelia is better than any similar mineral in other parts of the world (Interview K13, Interview K19). Therefore, diabase and quartzite often serve as the source of pride and patriotic feelings towards the region; it also symbolically connects the villagers to famous places and events and thus makes their hard work valuable.

At the same time, identifying with "our stone" in Karelia was important for the miners' feeling of belonging and the construction of collective memory. The feeling of belonging to mining was strong already in the beginning of the XX century when Veps stoneworkers were saying proudly: "Our oldsters were building Petersburg" (Kuznetsov, 1905: 106). But in the Soviet time the pride for the unique and valuable stone was especially cultivated. In the office of the main mining company of Prionezhskii region there was a map showing all the destinations where Veps stone was going (Kostin, 1977: 14). The workers were aware of the destination of each new order, and they felt they were doing an important work. The Soviet-time Karelian newspapers published reports about every noticeable destination the local stone was travelling to. Such reports were probably designed as motivational messages which would impact the workers and persuade them to achieve better results.

The pride over Karelian stone also comes from its physical characteristics. A lot of informants referred to the rarity and durability of local stone, stated that quartzite and diabase

are especially firm and thus suitable for both construction and decoration. Both raspberry quartzite and gabbro-diabase have an interesting dual status: on the one hand, they are a resource and were used in Soviet time for industrial needs or building pavements. On the other hand, due to their rarity and beauty they are also used in decorations, and thus perceived as precious stones. This dual status is reflected in the interviews with local residents who often mention the value of stones as a material resource, as it is an especially hard material (Interview K37). "If you pass a knife over a piece of stone, you will see a line on it - but it is not a line on stone, it is the knife being grinded" (Interview K44), - as Vitalii, the current managing director of the raspberry quartzite quarry, told me as a proof of the unusual firmness of raspberry quartzite. At the same time, the informants perceive the symbolic value of stone as a beautiful and rare object, especially in the case of quartzite due to its unusual color and glorious history: "It is amazing, what a color it is. The color of ripe raspberry, over ripen berries... It is such a beautiful color." (Interview K24).

While expressing pride in the stone's firmness, durability, and famous destinations, many informants were upset about private companies wasting "our stone" for graveyard monuments and its less important status than it was in the past. One of the informants told me with the mixed expression of mock and regret, "Attitudes to stone? You mean, are we proud of our stone? Of course, if you come to the cemetery and look around, and you see... well, beautiful monuments [laughing]. And you know they are ours" (Interview K49). Another informant reflected,

"We were making rounds out of quartzite; they were used by plants all around the country to produce glass. It was impossible to replace them with anything else. I don't know what is going on now, when the quarry is closed. Maybe they have finally replaced these stone rounds..." (Interview K1)

The worker was sad about the fact that the unique product they were previously making is not needed in contemporary world, and that the locals did not even know the reasons for such a change.

In Buriatia, stone narratives seem to serve a different purpose. Graphite-related legends and narratives are popular in the villages, but through praising the qualities of Siberian graphite the local residents indirectly refer to the uniqueness of their region per se. The mineral richness of Okinskii district is often used as a marker of its value as a land. The locals often say that they have “all Mendeleev’s table<sup>120</sup> under their feet” (Interview B15, B17) referring to the richness of natural resources, but also to the richness of the district in general. The claims on Okinskii district’s mineral richness are often followed by the informant’s regret that these mineral resources are not used “in the right way”. One of the informants stated, “Everybody here [in Okinskii district] is surprised, we live in such a rich area but we do not know how to manage these riches” (Interview B17). “The right way” of managing the resources, as the informants see it, would be to leave more control on gold and graphite mines for the local administration and to involve local population instead of fly-in-fly-out workers (Interview B5).

The story of French entrepreneur Jean-Pierre Alibert and his 19<sup>th</sup> century graphite mine is also often mentioned in the interviews; local residents refer to it as one of the proofs of the uniqueness of their region and its resources (Interview B5, B15). There are even legends that some residents of the district descend from French entrepreneurs who were working with Alibert: one of my informants told me that her relative did not look Buriat or Soiot at all having fair hair and blue eyes, and that was a sign that he was the descendant of a French entrepreneur who worked for Alibert (Interview B16). Therefore, Alibert’s mine for

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<sup>120</sup> In Russian, Periodic table of elements first published by Dmitri Mendeleev is commonly referred to as “Mendeleev’s table” (R: *tablitsa Mendeleeva*)

local residents served as a proof of their region's uniqueness, but it also made it even more special through popularizing the graphite, but also leaving French descendants.

The attitudes to jade extracted in Buriatia are complex. The locals often claim that they see no value in jade per se and do not understand why it is that valued in China (Interview B4). Some of them use it for saunas, as jade steam is considered pure (Interview B10), but otherwise I could not trace any examples of using jade in the community. The informants state that until early 2000s when the demand for jade in China increased nobody needed the stone (Interview B5). At the same time, many of them keep small pieces of jade at home and are ready and proud to demonstrate them to the guests (Interview B11, B30). These pieces are the ones they found or extracted when organizing a jade trip, but not valuable enough to be sold. I had the impression that these pieces are kept at homes similarly to hunting trophies or souvenirs, to demonstrate the owner's courage and luck. As the jade trips are often linked to risk taking, keeping the pieces of jade at home signifies the owner of the jade managed to overcome all the risks and challenges and did not return empty-handed. The readiness of my male informants to demonstrate the jade could also be related to my gender. Okinskii district is a very conservative community with strictly established gender roles. Thus, it was important to local men to show the jade symbolizing traditionally masculine features such as bravery and risk taking to a woman.

The possible loss of demand for jade worries the local residents, but it seems to be less connected to the regret over the stone per se than in Karelia, but more to the possible loss of income. As illegal jade extraction is currently one of the main source of income for male residents, its loss would mean that they would have to leave the region searching for job opportunities. The opportunities for jade extraction keep them in Okinskii district, and thus strengthen their connection to the region.

Therefore, though stone-related narratives praising the local resources are present in both case studies, their nature is different. The informants in Karelia have a stronger identity related to stoneworking, and thus the value of the local stone is directly connected to their value as miners. The popularity of the stone means that their work is appreciated; the loss of demand, however, symbolizes that their labor is also less valued and needed. In Buriatia, stone is viewed as something separate from the people, and the locals rarely talk about its physical qualities, color or other characteristics. In both cases, the stone is seen as the result of the region's natural richness. But while my informants in Karelia feel that they produce the stone, for my informants in Buriatia the stone was – and still is - taken from them. The only active engagement with stone they have is through illegal jade extraction. Despite overall lack of local value of jade, the extracted pieces of stone are still kept at homes, as they demonstrate the informant's ability to take risk and to overcome difficulties, as well as his bravery and luck.

### ***5.3.2. Ownership, deprivation, and questioning the state's role***

As the mining deposits in Karelia and Buriatia are managed by private companies, the issues of ownership over resource (or deprivation of this ownership right) are present in the interviews in both case studies. The local residents in Prionezhskii district of Karelia and Okinskii district of Buriatia often mention in the interviews that natural the companies managing the resource extraction do not invest in the districts' well-being. During my fieldwork in Rybreka village (Prionezhskii district) I met two middle-aged women who complained about the dust the quarries produce and about other dangers for health. "They just take [the stone] from us, take it away, and nobody is interested in us" – one of them said. Similarly, my informants in Okinskii district are claiming that the gold mining companies do not invest enough in the region and do not employ local residents (Interview B5, B9).

However, in Karelia the narratives of deprivation are mostly related to the post-Soviet period and are contrasted with the stability of Soviet-time employment (Interview K4, K52). During the Soviet time, as many informants recall, the quarries were on the contrary taking care of the villages investing in their development (Interview K25, K65). In Oka, on the contrary, the narratives of deprivation and loss seem to pass throughout history. One of the informants told me that graphite deposits were in fact discovered by Soiot hunters, but after that appropriated by the bureaucrats based in Irkutsk, and later by Alibert (Interview B15). Another informant stated:

“It always happens like that. Our guys find these stones, and then it all starts, sharing, legalizing the land, owners appear, investors appear... But the locals find it first. Otherwise who would know that we have such a jade?”

(Interview B27)

In the interviews conducted in Karelia this stress on “we were here first” does not appear. This probably happens because the Vepsian stoneworking history in Karelia was never questioned, and the locals have been involved in mining for generations. In the case of Buriatia, resource boom is perceived as something recent, though having roots in history. In Karelia, the development of mining is not viewed as a problem, but the work style of private companies is criticized. The locals feel that their symbolic ownership over the local stone is disappearing, as they used to know their employer and feel safe about the future; currently the stone is managed by small, often unknown companies and carried to unknown destinations. The respondents feel that the currently operating mining companies do not have interest in the villages and needs of their residents; they simply need the final product – i.e. the stone.

In the case of Buriatia, however, this symbolic ownership was never formally claimed by locals, and this is a common source of concern: “Our guys are illegal, and they [jade mine owners] are sort of legal.” The usage of the word “sort of” demonstrates the discrepancy

between the perceptions of legality and illegality which the informant is trying to express. The informants of Okinskii district often question the right of mining companies, most of which are from outside the region, to extract the resources at their territory. On the contrary, they see that local residents have the right to extract the resources, as they belong to those who reside on a particular land (Interview B15). They claim that many local residents had to become illegal miners because this is the way to survive when there are no opportunities to become legally involved in jade extraction (Interview B5). One of informants, when recalling his experience in illegal mining, said: “Oh, why not to take something that belongs to you anyway” (Interview B4). This theme of ownership “by law” contradicting the symbolic ownership related to territorial rights often appears in the interviews. In this sense, the informal jade mining in Oka becomes a way to question the established ownership schemes and to demonstrate the right of local residents to extract the resources.

The current perspectives on the state’s role are, nevertheless, similar in Karelia and Buriatia. In both cases, people express inability to change the existing order in the long run: “Don’t you know the present time? Everybody has their own enterprise now, where would one go to complain?” (Interview K22), “Anyway big companies, those who have money buy everything” (Interview B15). In Buriatia, several of my informants stressed that illegal mining would be liquidated fast “if only Putin decides so.” Even though they question the existing schemes of ownership over the resources by engaging in illegal mining, they are nevertheless sure that they may be stopped by the state at any time, and if this has not happened yet, this only means that the state has not been interested in the resource enough so far.

## Conclusion

In the case studies of Karelia and Buriatia, the issues of ownership over the resource and entitlements to it become actualized at the time of economic transformations and

changing patterns of resource development. In such conditions, natural resources become associated with multiple layers of symbolism. Quartzite, diabase, and jade are valued for their physical qualities or for the economic benefit they bring. But at the same time they may be admired due to their beauty and rarity, as it happens to diabase and quartzite, or treated as an animated being bringing good or back luck to its possessors, as in the case of jade. Even the gold mining which happens outside of Soiot villages without the involvement of local communities may be viewed as a symbolic action of disturbing the earth and the spirits governing it.

The attitudes towards diabase and quartzite in Karelia as well as towards jade in Buriatia are complex and in many aspects contradictory. The stone may be viewed as a force influencing people's lives: the informants feel that they must preserve their connection to stone as they have limited options in case they want to keep employment and to stay in the region. At the same time, in both case studies the narratives of pride which are related to local stone's rarity and famous destinations are important, as they help to connect the villages to well-known places, justify the hard labor or prove the rootedness to the territory.

It may seem that the connections to stone in the two regions are completely different: while Veps in Karelia have a long history of stoneworking, in Okinskii district of Buriatia mining is a recent phenomenon, and there is little historical continuity in jade extraction. The discrepancies in resource perception may be related to different role of the state in the regions of study. The local residents of Prionezhskii district of Karelia have been involved in large state-owned mining enterprises since 1924, and this long-term involvement made them more prone to accepting state discourses on nature and generating new accepted knowledges on resource management, forming new beliefs and habits related to stone. As a result, new knowledges on resource extraction were generated; promoted by the state through media and local administration; they were co-created by the residents of Prionezhskii district. Another

reason for the easy acquisition of state-promoted discourses could be the large in- and out-migration in the district starting from mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. A lot of local Veps left to Petrozavodsk or other cities while a number of workers from different parts of the country moved to the villages to work in the mine. When the population became so heterogeneous, Soviet state discourses helped to unite people and form a sense of community among otherwise disjointed residents. In Okinskii district of Buriatia, on the contrary, state was less present, and its dwellers lived as a rather closed community. Therefore, the state is often viewed there as an alien force, its discourses are not necessarily shared, and the resource are not valued based on their role for the state, but rather based on their economic value or their connection to the land.

The close interaction with the state and its policies as well as large in- and out-migration in the case of Karelia resulted in de-mythologization of local stone, and previously existing beliefs in forest spirits and sacred stones were gradually replaced by new Soviet-time narratives about settlements created “from nothing” and stone being essentially important for the state. At the same time, close interactions with quartzite and diabase influenced their perception as beautiful, firm, unique stones. Such feelings were also promoted by state institutions through a set of tactics – such as newspaper publications, public events and celebrations, trips to Moscow and Saint Petersburg – when the role of quartzite and diabase in industry and architecture was emphasized. In Okinskii district of Buriatia, the spiritual relations with the land are still an important part of everyday life, and people project the general perception of animated and sacred landscape on their attitudes towards gold and jade.

In both cases, the state is perceived as a strong entity with almost limitless power (the creation myths of Kvartsitnyi in Karelia or the strong belief “Putin just has no interest in our jade – yet” in Buriatia may serve as examples). At the same time, in both Karelia and Buriatia local residents find ways to exercise their agency and to establish their symbolic ownership

over the stone. The alternative narratives of being tamed or imprisoned by resource extraction serve as an attempt to question the established state narratives. At the same time, the expressions of pride over local stone and long-term connections to it are used as a proof of symbolic ownership relations which originate from knowing the stone well. Informal jade extraction activities in Buriatia are also perceived as a realization of this symbolic right to extract resources “from one’s own land.” Even though the power of the state is well recognized in both Karelia and Buriatia, people find ways to temporarily shift the power relations. It is realized through micro-actions such as promoting one’s special connection to stoneworking or through more noticeable activities such as informal jade extraction and transportation. These examples illustrate the multi-dimensionality of Foucauldian power as well as the connections between human – object relations and the attempts to shift or reshape the existing forms of power.

In both case studies the changes in the mining industry relate to the feelings of loss and alienation. Indigenous and local miners in Karelia feel that they are now less connected to their stone and, therefore, to their place, as the quarries are currently managed by private owners, most of whom are from outside the region. The issue of disrupted landscape reappears, though in different form: first, due to migration and industry development people got alienated from the landscape and connected to industry. In the post-Soviet period, however, they got separated from the industry too, and now this connection, meticulously formed by the Soviet state, is disrupted, and people feel disconnected from both their land and their industry. In the situation when the established social and economic relations get broken, the previously well-known quarries become unfamiliar, as they are now owned by strangers and transfer stone to unknown destinations.

In Buriatia, the development of mining is perceived as an opportunity, but at the same time as a threat to the established lifestyle and a possible loss of symbolic ownership over the

territory Sojots and Oka Buriats inhabit – the ownership they gain from knowing the land. The residents of Prionezhskii district of Karelia and Okinskii district of Buriatia express longing for past stability and worries about the unpredictable future, and in this situation stone-related legends become a way to establish their rootedness at the territory and to justify their connection to land and its resources.

## Chapter 6. Mining temporalities and (dis)continuities

### Introduction

Both in Prionezhskii district in Karelia and Okinskii district of Buriatia, mining pasts and futures are a vital part of everyday life. In 2016, I listened to the stories about Alibert's paradise-like graphite mine on the way to Orlik, and thought of similar stories about Napoleon and his love towards the raspberry quartzite told to me a year before on the way to Kvartsitnyi in the opposite corner of Russia. The separation of past and present, which used to be seen as an essential feature of historiography (de Certeau, 1988) is in fact not as clear as it may seem, and partly due to the presence of material objects. The items produced in the past, but existing in the present connect the two notions and blur possible divisions (Gonzalez-Ruibal, 2006). In my case studies in Karelia and Buriatia, mining pasts and presents are deeply intertwined, and it is not possible to speak about "now" in mining industry without mentioning "then." Mining futures also form an important part of local narratives. Stoneworking may be presented as the activity with an almost eternal future, but simultaneously private mining enterprises are viewed with suspicion, as something deeply unstable.

Following the spatial turn of the 1970s, since the 1990s academic literature is experiencing a "temporal turn" (Bear, 2016; Hassan, 2010). This temporal turn is manifested in the new emphasis on the nature of temporality in scholarly literature. Robert Hassan reflects on the complex nature of time, especially in contemporary digitalized world: while being everything and everywhere, time at the same time is characterized with the "slippery quality" (Hassan 2010: 99) which makes this category especially difficult to analyze. For Foucault, temporality is linked to the projects of modernity and totalitarianism.

Resource-making is a process which rarely follows a simple linear trajectory (D'Angelo & Pijpers, 2018). The production of resource subsequently produces multiple temporalities which are often intertwined. The present state of resource may at the same time be related to the past (e.g. through colonial histories) and to the future (e.g. anticipations of mine's closure). Resources also produce parallel temporalities, e.g. the biographies of extractive waste products which go alongside the primary product (D'Angelo & Pijpers, 2018).

This chapter will focus on temporal dimensions of stoneworking in Prionezhskii district of Karelia and Okinskii district of Buriatia. Both districts have a history of stone extraction (diabase and quartzite mining in Karelia, graphite and gold mining in Buriatia), but at the same time there are relatively recent changes in mining practices – such as the “jade rush” in Buriatia since the early 2000s as well as the privatization and closure of state quarries in Karelia in the 1990s.<sup>121</sup> In both case studies, historical connections with mining still play a role in the contemporary life of the residents of Prionezhskii and Okinskii districts. They are manifested in different forms: stone narratives, monuments, rhythms of the settlements, even in the illnesses people share. Stoneworking futures are also an important issue: possible continuity and discontinuity of mining are widely discussed in both communities. The chapter will analyze how multiple temporalities including rhythms and cycles, as well as the entanglements of past, present and future are manifested in Karelia and Buriatia in relation to mining development. Using the case of Prionezhskii district in Karelia, the chapter will also discuss how industrialization changes local temporalities and how the standardization of time became a part of a strong state presence (Verdery, 1996; Verdesio,

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<sup>121</sup> In Chapter 1, I cite Alexander Etkind on the importance of Soviet-time narratives in contemporary Russian society and the perception of the country as “post-Soviet” which is still relevant today. Although the privatization and closure of state mining enterprises in Karelia happened more than twenty years ago, in the interview narratives it was described vividly, and the informants were emotionally connected to this process as if it was a very recent event.

2013). Foucault sees the formation of timetables and the general structuring of time as a way to gain control through “adjusting the body to temporal imperatives” (Foucault 1977: 151). A well-known example of spatiotemporal surveillance and control is the panoptical organization of the prison in Foucault’s example (1977: 203). The principle on which Panopticon is based implies that the people would never know when they would be viewed, but they knew it could happen at any time, and this inevitability of supervising allowed the exercise of power by the prison administration.

For the analysis of the temporal dimensions of stoneworking in Prionezhskii district of Karelia and Okinskii district of Buriatia, I use Giddens’ (1984) categories of time as belonging to “day-to-day experience,” “the span of the individual’s lifetime,” and supra-individual “longue dureé” of institutions. Giddens refers to day-to-day time and “longue dureé” as “reversible time,” whereas an individual’s life, by contrast, is “finite and irreversible” (Giddens, 1984: 35). This division would be helpful when conceptualizing mining temporalities in Karelia and Buriatia which are indeed multi-layered phenomena. In Prionezhskii and Okinskii districts, industry shapes local daily life or becomes embedded in interactions with the land. At the same time, it forms an important part of people’s biographies, especially in Karelia, where the lives of many residents and their families were – and still are – organized around the local quarries. Moreover, it should be stressed that mining temporalities go far beyond individual biographies, forming and shaping the communities by keeping memories of mining pasts or offering prospects for mining futures.

Following this argument, the chapter will be divided according the everyday – individual – community layers. The first section concentrates on mining embedded in the “day-to-day” life in Karelia and Buriatia, following the rhythms and cycles of industry or nature. It explores how the state is controlling and establishing the rhythms of stoneworking, and how these rhythms get accepted or questioned in the mining communities. The second

section focuses on lifetimes (mining as reflected in the informants' biographies as well as in traces left on their own bodies). The final section analyzes mining temporalities at the supra-individual level focusing on mining pasts and futures reflected in the landscape and people – state relations.

## **6.1. Day-to-day time: rhythms of mining and nature**

This part of the chapter is based on Anthony Giddens' notion of time as a part of day-to-day experience (Giddens, 1984). It focuses on the theme of synchronization with the rhythms and cycles of industry and nature in Pronezhskii district of Karelia and Okinskii district of Buriatia. It demonstrates how the local residents of Pronezhskii district form their daily routines in accordance with various industrial rhythms such as working shifts (8-hour shifts in the Soviet period of contemporary 15-day shifts) as well as the timetables of stone transportation and stone loading. In the case of Okinskii district, I discuss how the local dwellers adapt to the changes in nature and modify their plans accordingly.

When discussing rhythms, I base my analysis on the works of Henri Lefebvre (2004) who views rhythm through interactions of place, time, and energy. As Lefebvre (2004: 9) notes, "rhythm appears as regulated time, governed by rational laws, but in contact with what is least rational in human being: the lived, the carnal, the body." In the analysis of rhythm as a regulation of time, I also follow Foucault's references to rhythm as a way of achieving discipline through the formation of regular activities (Foucault, 1979: 150). Rhythmic organizations of time, therefore, are ultimately connected to power relations.

The notions of rhythm in many cases create associations with the work of machines and technical equipment, while the organic world is often left out (Lefebvre, 2004). In this chapter, however, my aim is to concentrate both on the rhythms created by industry and the

rhythms formed by the changes happening in the natural world. The seasonal movements of yak herders and the fluctuations of the level of water in the river in Buriatia are as rhythmical as the work of stone polishing equipment or the changes of working shifts in Karelia. Following Foucault's argument, I relate the creation of rhythms and the creation of power relations and concentrate on the process of people's synchronization with the power dynamics in the area: industry in Karelia and land in Buriatia. The first part of this section concentrates on the rhythms created and mediated by industry and is based on the materials collected in Karelia. The second part, based on the fieldwork in Buriatia, focuses on local ways of adjustment to the rhythms of nature.

### ***6.1.1. Industry-based rhythms in Karelia***

The work of the quarries in Prionezhskii district of Karelia is in many aspects governed by specific rhythms: the cycles of stone transportation, working shifts, regular buses delivering the workers to and from the quarries, and stone loading schedules for transportation by water. These rhythms are well established in the villages and have become a part of the everyday routine.

The trucks carrying stone from the quarries to Petrozavodsk pass through the villages approximately every half an hour during the day. As the trucks are taking the only automobile road in each village, and normally this road passes through the center, the presence of the trucks is always noticed by passers-by and to those living in the nearby houses. Once while I was conducting an interview in Rybreka the table we sat at started shaking lightly. "Oh, it happens each time the truck passes by", my informant said nonchalantly. Quite often, however, the trucks get more negative comments from the villagers. In my fieldnotes I reflect on an episode when I was waiting for the bus to Petrozavodsk together with several locals in the village of Sheltozero in the darkness of late autumn (although it was just around 6 pm, in

Karelia it gets dark early at this time of the year). Several times we noticed the lights of a larger vehicle approaching thinking the bus was finally here, but it was another truck carrying diabase rocks. The locals were not surprised. “These trucks are passing by all the time,” one of the men said angrily. “It was not like this in the Soviet time, but now – constantly!”<sup>122</sup> “Taking our stones away,” commented an older woman sadly (in Russian, she used the word *kamushki* which is a diminutive form of *kamni* – stones). The rhythmic passage of the trucks, therefore, becomes a visual and audial reminder of the activities of private mining enterprises which are often viewed with mixed feelings (as job providers, but also as outsiders taking the local resources from the villages). The current situation also resonates with the general nostalgia which many villagers express. In the Soviet period, quartzite and diabase were mostly transferred by water directly to Moscow or St. Petersburg,<sup>123</sup> but today, as the majority of the quarries are rather small, it is cheaper to use trucks. Due to this change in the transportation method, the transfer of stone is now carried out in smaller quantities (4-5 large blocks per truck) and, therefore, becomes more frequent and more visible to the locals. The state quarries during Soviet time normally transferred the stone in large quantities by barges, and thus the process of stone loading and transportation was less visible. Today, due to the constant presence of trucks, it looks like the stones are being continuously taken away from Veps villages. This example illustrates how a change in rhythm is manifested in local perception of the industry. The constant flow of loaded trucks going through all the villages in Prionezhskii district (as there is only one automobile road connecting them to Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelia) adds up to the general public perception of the negative changes happening to the mining industry since the 1990s.

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<sup>122</sup> Similar complaints are expressed by the Veps resident of Vologda region in the interview with *Semnasem* newspaper in April 2019, relating the quality of the village road to the activities of private logging companies: “The road was good while there was kolkhoz here, but now, after wood transportation started, it got broken” (Semnasem, April 29, 2019: <https://semnasem.ru/vepsy/>, accessed May 2, 2019).

Another change accompanying the switch towards privatization in the 1990s was in the working shifts. In the Soviet period, the quarries were operating according to 8-hour shifts. Today's quarries are mostly working according to 15-day shifts,<sup>124</sup> with the exception of the small raspberry quartzite quarry in Shoksha village which only employs around twenty people. During the shifts, the employees are working 12 hours a day and, if they are not from Rybreka, stay for the night in the quarry's dormitory just near the pit. Both 8-hour and 15-day shifts created specific dwelling rhythms in the settlements.

The Soviet-time shifts were divided in the following way: 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., 4 p.m. – 12 a.m., and 12 a.m. – 8 a.m. When the work was organized this way, the quarry was operating non-stop. In quieter periods with less of a workload, the night shift could be canceled. However, when the quarry had a short deadline, night shifts would be returned, though mostly for men or for women without small children (Interview K30). The life of almost all local families was governed by the work shifts.<sup>125</sup> The rhythms of the shifts arranged and formed other day-to-day responsibilities such as taking children to kindergarten or bringing them home, household duties or gardening. Other activities, such as fishing or berry picking, were also arranged in accordance with the shifts, for example in the early morning, so that it would be possible to be at work by 8 a.m. (Interview K40). My interviewee, Zhanna, who used to work at the diabase quarry in Rybreka recalls how her daily routine was organized in accordance with night work shifts at work. Even though she had small children, she sometimes did night shifts as her mother-in-law was living with them and helping with the household. During the interview, Zhanna described her daily schedule cyclically: from the

<sup>123</sup> From Rybreka and Kvartsitnyi settlements, situated next to the Onega Lake coast. Today, stone is still transported in Rybreka by water, but mostly by the largest company operating there, Karelkamen'.

<sup>124</sup> With this organization of work, each team of workers is at the quarry for 15 days being replaced by another team at the end of the shift. The quarry then is operating non-stop.

<sup>125</sup> For example, the village *iasli* (R: day nursery) was organized by the quarries, and the women went to feed the children during the mid-shift lunch break. The leisure time (cinema, concerts and dances in the local *dom kul'tury* (R: workers' club for social and cultural activities)) was also organized in accordance with the shifts.

end of a night shift at 8 a.m. to the beginning of the next one, and then a similar routine is repeated. She coordinated her activities not only with the timetable of the working shifts, but also with the regular bus that took workers up the hill to the quarry. As Zhanna described a typical work day,

Night shifts – well, one gets used to them, and then they are not hard... When I returned home in the morning, the kids were already in the kindergarten, my mother-in-law was helping me with that. Then I had to cook, and after that I would go to sleep a bit. Before work in the evening I would also sleep for an hour or two. Then I would walk to work, being all sleepy. There was a bus, but I always walked later. The bus was early, at half past eleven, and I would leave home at a quarter to twelve and would be at work by twelve (Interview K30).

Similarly, Svetlana who used to work at the quarry in Kvartsitnyi recalled the time when she needed to take care of her mother's house in Shoksha (five kilometers from Kvartsitnyi) in addition to working in the quarry's boiler house:

I had to look after my mother's cattle, five kilometers from here. So I would wake up at 5 a.m., would walk there, take care of the cows, then by 8 I had to be at work. I was never late! The same would happen in the evening, I finished the work at 4, then went to Shoksha, fed the cattle, then went home, cooked for the next day and so on (Interview K13).

Just as in the case of Zhanna, Svetlana organizes the narrative around the working shifts which symbolically govern the rest of her day and her activities. She ends the story with "and so on" which, as for Zhanna, implies the notion of a cycle, a rhythmic repetition of similar activities organized around the repeated working shifts. The central role of the shifts in her narrative is highlighted with "I was never late!" exclamation. By adding this detail, Svetlana symbolically arranges her daily activities into primary (work) and secondary (managing the cattle, cooking) activities. Whereas household activities are important, the 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. shift forms the center of the day, and other obligations should not be a reason to be late (i.e. to neglect the primary task).

Currently most of the work in the quarries in Rybreka is based on 15-day shifts. During the shifts, the miners work twelve hours a day, so the workers from the neighboring villages normally stay there in the dormitories, and then leave for the 15-day periods of vacation. The shift-based work regulates the life in the villages in general: for example, trips to the city or important household work are planned during the 15-day rest period. My interviews with the mining workers were also sometimes planned in advance for the time when they are at home for the 15-day rest.

In Kvartsitnyi and Shoksha, the current scheme of shift organization is mostly perceived negatively, as the workers need to stay in Rybreka for the whole duration of their shifts and thus spend less time with their families (Interview K10, K37). My interviewee, Raisa, who works at the local musical school in Kvartsitnyi described working in shifts as common among the families of her young students:

So, the dads – if they work in Rybreka, they normally live there and come home for the weekend... And the mums are with children. So they all try to manage... The women are bringing up children. They learn how to work with technical equipment; they try to use the cars, as they often need to go to the city with children or alone, to the doctors or to the shops. People need to be away from their families for half a month (Interview K24).

Similar to the Soviet period, the life of the residents in Vepsian villages is organized around the working shifts timetable. The 15-day shifts, despite the problems they bring, are perceived as being easier than the Soviet-time 8-hour shifts, especially when one needed to work at night or to shift between different schedules (Interview K51, K52). However, the Soviet-time work organization is commonly viewed as more stable and more secure.<sup>126</sup> Today's work brings instability: as one of the current workers framed it, "they tell you not to come to work the next day – that is it, you are not coming" (Interview K4). While in Okinskii

district of Buriatia informal jade mining is openly unstable and insecure, in Prionezhskii district of Karelia the seemingly repetitive rhythms of the working timetables may get disrupted at any moment (for example, if one of the quarries gets closed).

The rhythmic organization of industry is directly related to the level of state control in both Prionezhskii and Okinskii districts. In the Soviet-time Karelia, when several large state quarries were operating in Prionezhskii district, the local life was explicitly governed by stoneworking schedules. In today's villages, life is still organized around the working shifts, but this organization is perceived as unstable. In addition, as every private quarry in Rybreka is operating according to its own schedule, there is now much more diversity in shift organization than before in the Soviet period. Previously, 8-hour shifts largely organized life in the whole settlement. Today, 15-day shifts vary from one quarry to another one and rather govern the lives of each concrete household. Therefore, the industrial rhythms of Prionezhskii district have become discordant as the state control over mining activities lessened due to privatization.

In Buriatia, on the contrary, illegal jade mining is often presented as chaotic and disorganized. As my interviewees described, it is rarely planned much in advance (Interview B8). When looking for jade, the locals need to avoid possible police checks. These checks, however, are hard to predict, and thus intentionally arrhythmic. As I will demonstrate in the next section of the chapter, the life in Okinskii district of Buriatia is rather synchronized with the rhythms and cycles of nature, and local activities, including jade extraction, become a part of this synchronization.

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<sup>126</sup> See Yurchak (2013) on the perceptions of Soviet socialism as eternal and stagnating at the same time. Due to these mixed perceptions, the Soviet Union's collapse became simultaneously surprising and expected for many of its citizens.

### **6.1.2. Nature-based rhythms in Buriatia**

The local population of Okinskii district in Buriatia is often characterized as people living in harmony with natural cycles (Shodorova and Iur'eva, 2010). The herders who engage with yaks or reindeer follow the animals' routes and move together with them to the mountains for summer and then back to the valleys for winter. In general, daily routines in Okinskii district are planned in accordance with the changes in nature. Thus, February-March is the time for preparing wood for the next winter, as frozen trees are easier to cut, and after cutting there is plenty of time for them to dry over the summer. In August, the main settlement Orlik and other larger villages become empty, as most of locals leave for haymaking (if the grass is cut on time, it is believed to be more filling for the cattle). In autumn, hunting season starts, and in winter, locals make trips to cities to sell the meat of wild animals and cattle, and this is also the time to expect animal yield (Interview B27). As the local residents of Okinskii district largely depend on nature, it is important to follow nature's rhythms to sustain their daily lives. In an interview with the former Head of Okinskii district, Bair Baldanov,<sup>127</sup> this practice of adjusting daily routines with the natural cycles was called "synchronization,"<sup>128</sup> and this term works better for the situation in Okinskii district than "adaptation" or "adjustment." While both adaptation and adjustment imply a direct hierarchy between the actors, synchronization is more focused on the result of the common process, the co-existence which improves the overall performance. In Okinskii district of Buriatia, synchronization with the rhythms of nature is crucial for the livelihoods, as the natural conditions may be rather harsh. In their daily routines, the residents of Okinskii district encounter floods and rock falls, extremely cold winters or rainy summers, fast

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<sup>127</sup> Bair Baldanov was the Head of Okinskii district at the time of my first fieldwork in Buriatia in summer 2016. In autumn of 2016, he resigned and moved to Ulan-Ude to take the post of the editor of Buriad Unen newspaper. The former deputy head Matvei Madasov became the Head of Okinskii district and is currently holding this position (as of April 2019). Baldanov is also an activist for Soiot rights and the author of several publications devoted to indigenous land rights in Okinskii district (Baldanov, 2000).

changes of weather. In these conditions, it becomes especially important to be attentive to the changes in nature.

While the industry rhythms in Karelia are pre-defined and well-known to all the residents, both in case of 8-hour and 15-day shifts, the natural rhythms in Buriatia are uneven.<sup>129</sup> Everybody in Okinskii district of Buriatia expects that due to heavy summer rains the level of water in the river will rise for several days and possibly wash out parts of the Mondy – Orlik road which follows the route of the river, but it is hard to predict when exactly this happens. The impacts of the flood may also vary: one may expect electricity cuts, transportation problems, stoppage of mobile connection or everything at the same time. As it is not possible to plan the changes in advance, one needs to be extremely flexible when dwelling in the landscape of Okinskii district of Buriatia.

Several cases from my fieldwork in Buriatia illustrate this flexibility. During the drive from Orlik to Huzhir, a small settlement in the northern part of the district, our car needed to pass a narrow road next to the mountain. Our guide Aleksandr announced cheerfully, “This is quite a dangerous part; the stones may fall to the road at any moment.” The car stopped, and Aleksandr asked us to join the ritual of treating the masters of the territory with rice and drops of vodka. As this was the only road connecting Huzhir with other settlements in Oka, I asked Aleksandr how the locals manage to pass here every day without being afraid of the possible rock falls. “Well, you just need to be prepared to take risk,” – he answered.

In situations like this, leaving treats for the spirits is seen as a way of negotiating with the spirits of territory (and, therefore, with nature in general). As it is not possible to predict

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<sup>128</sup> Interview with Bair Baldanov, *Selo Rodnoe*, January 13, 2016: <http://selorodnoe.ru/projects/show/id3694542/> (Accessed March 20, 2019).

<sup>129</sup> As Ingold (2000: 325) points out, “in traditional societies time is intrinsic to tasks” and the rhythmic arrangement of time emerges from the way human movements resonate with the non-human environment. Industrial capitalism, however, transforms task-oriented time into objective and impersonal time; temporal and rhythmic arrangements are “governed by laws of mechanical functioning.”

the rock fall and it can happen in any moment, the synchronization is about searching for cooperation with the forces of nature. The difference with the case of Prionezh'e is that the rhythms of natural forces are not pre-defined and pre-organized. In Karelia, working shifts or stone loading timetables function as central pillars, and other activities are largely organized around them. On the contrary, in Okinskii district the actions of people and nonhuman entities are not organized in hierarchical order, but rather complement each other. While by bringing treats to the spirits people acknowledge their power, they are at the same time exercising their agency and looking for room to negotiate the future.

Another example of synchronization with nature concerns the several-day flood I witnessed while in Oka in July 2016. After the heavy rain, the level of water in the river rose, and several parts of the Mondy – Orlik road were washed out. Transportation across the river by boat was also not possible, and therefore several villages situated on the other side of the river became inaccessible. At that time I was in the village of Sorok and met there with Irina who visited the village for a wedding of her relatives. Irina lived in Bokson, the settlement on the other side of the river from Sorok. She planned to return to Bokson the next day after the wedding took place, but at that time the level of water rose, and she could not travel by boat. Irina then easily modified her plans and decided to visit her daughter who lived in Orlik. The same evening we traveled to Orlik together catching the minibus at the last moment. The next morning it became clear that the road was partly washed out, and Irina could not travel back for several days. Several days later I met Irina again, this time in Orlik. As the weather was not improving, she extended her unplanned visit. Every time, when modifying her plans, she did not show any impatience and was willing to act accordingly to the changes in nature. This patience when dealing with the uneven rhythms of nature is, in my view, a distinctive feature of Oka residents, and I encountered similar behavior on several other occasions during the fieldwork.

Jade extraction trips also largely depend on natural conditions. As my interviewees shared, sometimes the trip cannot be finished as the snow is too high and the truck cannot pass through it and gets stuck (Interview B5). Therefore, when planning a jade extraction trip, it is crucial to take natural forces into account as a powerful actor. At the same time, as I will show in more detail in Chapter 7, local way of searching for co-existence with the natural forces has its implications on informal jade extraction which becomes a part of negotiations between human and nonhuman entities. The process of jade extraction is seen as taking something from the land and from its spirits, and thus has to be performed carefully and with respect towards the territory masters.

While the rhythmic nature of human – industry relations in Karelia may be viewed as a result of strong presence of the state (especially in the Soviet period), in Buriatia the situation is different. The rhythms of local dwelling are not organized by state-operated industries as a form of control and a prerequisite for better productivity. Instead, these rhythms are formed in direct cooperation and negotiation between humans and the forces of nature. These rhythms are uneven and unplanned, they are constantly changing, and the locals are adjusting their movements and routines to these changes. At the same time, they are not passive and obedient followers of nature, as they exercise their agency by direct negotiating (e.g. bringing treats, performing rituals, following the established traditions when hunting). Resource extraction becomes an important part of this flexible cooperation between humans and nature. In Karelia, life is largely organized around the temporalities dictated by industry, and other activities including gardening, hunting or fishing follow this organization. In Buriatia, on the contrary, daily routines are centered on constant cooperation with the rhythms of nature, and the extraction of jade becomes integrated into this process.

## 6.2. Lifetime: stoneworking reflected in bodies

In this section of the chapter I will focus on the notion of time as belonging to “the span of the individual’s lifetime” (Giddens, 1984: 35). The section will concentrate on the materials connected in Prionezhskii district of Karelia, as there it is possible to track the locals’ histories of encounters with the mining industry since their youth (some of my interviewees started working in the quarries at the age of 17-18) and until the old age, after the retirement. I will also discuss the themes appearing in the interviews with younger informants who are just starting their work in the quarries. This section will concentrate on the physical traces which mining past leaves on people engaged in industrial work, as well as the embodied perceptions of human – industry interactions.

As Merleau-Ponty argues in *Phenomenology of Perception*, the notion of time is profoundly connected to human perspectives: there is no time and no event “without someone to whom they happen” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945: 477). Merleau-Ponty therefore strongly connects the perception of time with the actual existence of bodies which inhere in the world. He defines body as “the vehicle of being in the world,” stating that having a body means “...to be involved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and be continually committed to them.” As the vehicles of our existence, our bodies and the changes happening in them and to them become indicators of the time passing by. As many of my interviews were conducted with middle-aged and older people, while listening to their life narratives I sometimes felt I could visualize the images from the past replacing each other and illustrating the constant movement of time. This section, focusing on the entanglements of mining past and the changes in human bodies, will be based on the materials from Prionezh’e. As the residents of Oka do not have this almost uninterrupted history of involvement in stoneworking, this theme was not present in the interviews conducted in Buriatia. However, as in Karelian narratives the theme of bodies, illnesses and (early) death was so prominent, it

is important to concentrate on it, as it will also explain the complex attitudes of local residents to stoneworking further analyzed in Chapter 6.

As many residents of Vepsian villages in Prionezh'e have been involved in mining industry for years, various ways of direct contact with the stone – including stone cutting and loading, polishing works, as well as breathing stone dust and noise from the instruments – left traces on their bodies. These traces of mining past in many cases became actualized during the interviews I conducted. On the one hand, when appearing as interview subjects, they may serve as evidences of the hard labor in the quarries. However, at the same time they often indicate a certain sense of pride over the levels of endurance and various strategies of overcoming the challenges work offered.

The traces of the mining past may take the form of illnesses which people bear as the result of their labor. The most common illness which results from working with stone is silicosis – a lung disease caused by rock dust (Interview K31). Silicosis was widespread at both diabase and quartzite quarries in the Soviet period, as the level of knowledge about this disease was low at that time, and many workers did not use protective masks or other equipment. In the quote below, the informant is jokingly referring to the protective mask as “muzzle” for dogs or “barnacle” for horses indicating that wearing this equipment made the workers think of domesticated animals. However, she also referred to more practical problems related to the usage of protective masks and glasses:

“We were told to wear “muzzles” and glasses at work, but we wore them rarely. It was hard to work in them, you would sweat more, and the glasses would mist over, so we took them off” (Interview K2).

Even though the older informants generally spoke about low level of awareness about the problem in the Soviet times, similar themes appeared in the interviews with younger informants who currently work in the quarries. The workers of one of diabase quarries in

Rybreka noted that even though respirators were available for workers, they were rarely used at the mining sites (Interview K49, K52). They gave the same reasons as the older informants: it was more difficult to work when wearing respirators. Even though the quarry's administration makes protective equipment available for workers, its wearing is not specifically promoted and possible consequences of working without the equipment are not openly communicated. And thus most of the people prefer not to use the respirators at all.

The theme of silicosis is so common that the informants sometimes call it simply “the disease” (R: *bolezn'*) (Interview K41) or, more emotionally “this terrible disease” (Interview K6). As in the Soviet period the silicosis was often diagnosed late, when it could hardly be treated, this theme is often related to the motive of dying early. Many older informants reflect that a lot of their former colleagues from the quarry died early because of silicosis or other illnesses caused by stoneworking:

“It is a wonder that I will turn 80 the day after tomorrow. When I got ill, I thought: that is it. A lot of women here died when being under 50, some of them even died at 38, they died early. Well, from the disease. The matter was that when people started getting ill, they [the doctors] did not recognize it as silicosis. They treated it as tuberculosis. But silicosis cannot be treated like that. And when I got ill I was not sent to the Republican tuberculosis dispensary; that is why I am still alive.” (Interview K41).

There were other mining-related issues and diseases mentioned, such as hand-arm vibration syndrome which one may get from working with the stone-cutting machines<sup>130</sup> (Interview K52). During one of the visits to *Interkamen*'s diabase quarry in Rybreka, I had a special excursion conducted for me by Artem, a 24-years old master of a brigade of miners. Artem is from a Vepsian mining family: his grandparents and father were engaged in stoneworking. During our excursion Artem was reflecting on the past and present of working

in the quarries, and noted that though in some cases the work conditions got better (for example, good soundproofing system was installed), other problematic issues, such as working with heavy weights, remain. As he stated, “I can show you how much a hammer weights – sixteen kilos. And we carry these sixteen kilos every day getting low salaries... What would you say, is it becoming better or worse?.. I just feel this grievance: they are damaging people’s health, and it is not compensated at all.”

The influences of working in the mine on people’s bodies in Prionezh’e are in many aspects related to their gender and, subsequently, the specificities of labor. As men were much more involved in working with machinery, my male informants in many cases complained on problems with hands (such as vibration syndrome or general pain). At the same time, as women were more often working directly with stone when cutting, polishing or loading it, they especially suffered from the diseases related to stone dust. There were other gender-specific diseases: one of the informants from Rybreka, Zhanna, shared that she got descent of womb while working in the quarry and lifting heavy stones (Interview K30).

The issues related to gendered divisions of labor in stoneworking and specific body traces originating from it are very prominent in my fieldwork data. Many respondents were mentioning how especially hard stoneworking was for women (Interview K2, Interview K30). Once I encountered an especially difficult fieldwork situation when an older male interviewee suddenly started crying when thinking about his mother “and how hard she worked there, with these stones, poor she” (Interview K60). At the same times, the narratives related to women in mining also involve expressions of pride over one’s endurance and capabilities:

“I was working since fifteen at stone loading and cutting. That’s why my hands and legs hurt. We had to load everything manually... Some older people could not do that, and they would run to me, as if I am some horse. I was also

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<sup>130</sup> Hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS), or dead finger, is a secondary form of Raynaud's syndrome, an industrial injury triggered by continuous use of vibrating hand-held machinery ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vibration\\_white\\_finger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vibration_white_finger))

told: don't load so much! But I said: doesn't matter! So we would put these "barnacles" and gloves to our pockets and would load everything with bare hands!.. Oh, it's a terrifying thing to remember" (Interview K34)

This short piece of the interview represents a mixture of feelings over one's hard labor. The informant, Alena (born in 1936), reflects on direct influences of mining labor on her body (hands and legs hurt). She describes her experiences at stone loading as "terrifying," but at the same mentions with pride that while others would not manage the loading, she would, and she would even help others. Alena refers to her (and others') refusal to wear protective equipment ("barnacles" and gloves), on the one hand, with astonishment over the limits they took while loading ("everything with bare hands!"), but then again, it is possible to sense certain pride about her capacities as a stone loader: even with limited means available to her she managed to work effectively.

Alena's story of not wearing gloves during stone loading resonates well with the narratives of not wearing protective equipment which other mining workers shared. Engagement in stoneworking involved a high level of risk taking, and many older respondents acknowledge that they did not always follow the instructions on protecting themselves against the negative impacts of stone dust. The avoidance of protective masks, to which the respondents often refer derogatively as "muzzles" or "barnacles," could be caused by several reasons. As many former workers reminisce, the masks were uncomfortable to wear, it was too hot to work when having them on. Besides, the information on the dangers of stone dust was not properly communicated to the workers until silicosis became a widespread local disease. Therefore, people chose easier working conditions over vaguely formulated possible risks for health.

Nevertheless, I assume that there are deeper reasons for this deliberate risk-taking at workplace. When telling about avoiding "muzzles" and glasses or loading stone "with bare

hands,” the former workers express certain pride in their endurance, physical power, or their bodies’ abilities to sustain hardships. The decision not to wear protective masks or gloves could also be viewed as exercising the workers’ agency. Even though, as I discussed in the previous part of the chapter, they largely adapted to the rhythms and cycles of the industry, non-compliance with the working guidelines could become an example of counter-conduct, an expression of the respondents’ will.

This section illustrates the direct effects of close interactions between people and industry in past and present: these effects leave marks on their bodies and thus stay with them for the lifetime. The embodied interaction between people and industry is twofold: whereas people change and shape the stone and the equipment, the industry transforms and shapes them as well. This mutual transformation, in dialogue with the previous section of the chapter, could be seen as a rhythm, if we consider its definition by Lefebvre (2004: 9) as “a regulated time, governed by rational laws, but in contact with what is least rational in human being: the lived, the carnal, the body.”

### **6.3. Longue durée: mining pasts and futures**

Stone is often viewed as the link connecting people to the past but also as an asset for the future. It is perceived as a durable thing, and is connecting people through different times and epochs. The *Ballad on Vepsian Stone* by the Karelian poet Taisto Summanen<sup>131</sup> illustrates the perception of stone as a durable, solid substance, and connects these qualities of stone with the issue of memory or remembering. The poem is based on the historical fact: the raspberry quartzite from Shoksha village in Karelia was used for the construction of Lenin’s Mausoleum on the Red Square in Moscow. In the poem, after the death of Lenin Vepsian stoneworkers wish to commemorate him in order to thank Lenin for all the positive changes he brought into their lives. Initially they want to write a song about Lenin, but then discard

this idea saying that: “We will not manage find the right words; moreover, a song’s life is short”. After discussing the problem, they come to ultimate conclusion – which also serves as the climatic point of Summanen’s poem:

We will not compose our song out of words,  
We will build it out of stone – for centuries.<sup>132</sup>

This section of the chapter will focus on the *longue-durée* temporality of mining. Both in Oka and Prionezh’e, the span of mining past and futures goes beyond the lifetime of its current residents. In their narratives, the informants from both regions navigate between 18th - 19th centuries when the extraction of quartzite, diabase and graphite began, to centuries ahead, trying to predict the future of mining industry. Through these narratives, past, present and future become mutually entangled.

### ***6.3.1. Mining as a long-term phenomenon***

In Prionezh’e, mining is presented as an established long-term phenomenon with rich history. The permanent exhibition of the Veps ethnographic museum in Sheltozero includes a stand devoted to the history of stoneworking in the area. The photos demonstrating well-known destinations of the Vepsian stone, such as Napoleon’s sarcophagus in Paris, are also part of the exhibition. The long history of stoneworking is also remembered during the annual celebrations of the Miner’s Day which is held in Rybreka village on the last Saturday of August. I attended Miner’s Day celebrations held in 2015, 2016 and 2017, and each time the introductory speeches at the celebrations included mentions of “stoneworking roots” in Vepsian villages. As Miner’s Day is sponsored by the management of the local quarries, I see the historical references as a way to establish the sense of mining continuity and tradition. When the leadership of the local quarries present themselves as the successors of the

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<sup>131</sup> The poem is written in Finnish and then translated to Russian.

<sup>132</sup> In Russian: Не из слов мы песню нашу сложим, / Выложим из камня – на века.

centuries-long tradition, they aim to be viewed as insiders, as a part of the community. In a similar way, the representative of *Karelkamen*’, the largest stoneworking company in Rybreka with a fancy office in the center of Petrozavodsk, mentioned several times during our interview that the company presents itself as the successor of the Soviet-time quarries (Interview K15). Proclaiming the rootedness of stoneworking in Prionezh’e helps to present mining activities in the region as a continuous work which dates back more than a hundred years and will be carried on in future as well. At the same time, when stressing local connections with mining, its positive image is being built in the community.

The stoneworking past is also closely connected with the settlements’ landscapes, and for people who have lived there for many years the features of landscape may bear the traces of mining histories. One of my informants mentioned, pointing at the hill just behind her house “My husband used to work there on the mountain, and I worked on the narrow-gauge railway (R: *uzkokoleika*) which went to the lake” (Interview K22). In Okinskii district, the traces of mining past are much less visible than in Prionezh’e: the former Botogol mine is located far from the settlements, and it takes around three days to reach it (as a part of the trip has to be done by horse or on foot). However, every summer the school in Orlik is organizing a hiking trip to Botogol for high school students. During the trip, the students study the history of the Botogol mine as well as local plants and trees. Sometimes local guides also organize trips for tourists, but such occasions are rare, as the mine is hard to reach, and the trip is expensive (Interview B14).

Even though the traces of the mining past in Oka are hidden, the signs of the possible mining futures are more visible. One of the examples is the building of Huzhir Enterprise, the company which owns a gold deposit situated near Huzhir settlement in Okinskii district. Huzhir Enterprise was extracting gold in Oka since 2010, and at the time of my fieldwork in 2016 the company was building a gold ore processing factory near Huzhir. The plan of

factory construction was perceived by locals negatively, mostly because of its possible impact towards the surrounding nature. The factory would be built close to several popular recreation places such as Sailak waterfall. Besides, its closeness to the settlement of Huzhir also generated worries.

When I visited Huzhir, local residents explained that the building of the factory was stopped due to financial difficulties the company was experiencing. However, the main premises were already built, and as they were situated on a hill, they were seen from far away. “Look! – my informant Aleksandr said dramatically. – You see this? This is the cancerous tumor of our district!” (Interview B28). Later during the interview he returned to this metaphor several times.

This comparison of mining development with a dangerous illness could be connected to the motives of early death “from stone” appearing in the interviews conducted in Karelia. Although for my informants in Karelia the negative impact of working in the mine was related to individual experiences, here, according to Aleksandr, the whole district could potentially get “ill” if mining development near Huzhir continues. In general, temporalities of landscape in Prionezh’e are very often personalized: my informants reflect on the changes in the landscape through the prism of their past or present work at the quarries. In Oka, on the contrary, the narratives related to mining past and future are rarely personal (with the exception of working as guides for the geologists or meeting them accidentally). Mining past and future are influencing the whole district: while Alibert’s mine in Botogol made it well-known, possible mining futures might bring harm to the area in general. While in Karelia even *longue dureé* mining temporalities are perceived as a part of family history, the informants in Oka in most cases distant themselves from mining when telling stories about its past or predicting its futures.

### 6.3.2. *(Dis)continuity of mining*

In Taisto Summanen's poem quoted earlier in this chapter, there is an assumption that stone will be there forever. Similar assumptions are often shared by the workers in Prionezh'e I talked to. When comparing the diabase from Rybreka to its analogues in Ukraine, the informants mention that the local stone is better due to its extreme durability:

There is a similar stone in Ukraine, but it becomes rusty, and our stone does not, not at all. We have gravestones which are fifty, sixty years old, and nothing happens to them... (Interview K55)

Another informant in Rybreka, while showing me the diabase quarry, said: "Our drillers were estimating and estimating [the amount of stone left], but they never finished their estimations. They told us: you have enough stone here for three thousand years, so just keep working" (Interview K52). Therefore, in addition to the notable stoneworking past going back to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mining in Prionezh'e gets an enormous future span: three thousand years. This notion of the long-term future of mining is, however, somehow in contradiction with the residents' narratives related to their own future. As I mentioned in the previous section, the motive related to early death is widespread in Prionezh'e: elderly informants in many cases say that all their friends have passed away and it is a wonder they are still alive bearing in mind the hardships of their youth and middle-aged years. Even the middle-aged informants mention that they have already prepared their future gravestone (Interview K55) or that they are now "living out their days" (Interview K41). I see this contradiction as a reflection of the turbulent changes of the past 30 years: the privatization of state quarries, their closure and re-opening, hopes and uncertainties local residents experience. Their personal accounts of "living out their days" are in fact expressions of the worries and uncertainties about the nearby future many of them share. Nevertheless, there is also hope that ultimately the situation will get better or at least continue at the same level (the villages will

exist and people will have work), and the belief in the long-term future of the industry is the manifestation of this hope.

As mining industry is viewed as being closely connected to the villages' past and present, its bright future is seen as a prerequisite for the development of the area. In this sense mining and the land are entangled: stoneworking is the result of the natural richness of Prionezh'e, but its mere existence in the future is depending on whether there will be enough diabase in three thousand years. "Look at other villages in the area! – one of my informants in Rybreka said. – They are destroyed, total poverty. Here it is different because we have the quarries. Without the stone, there would be nothing here" (Interview K20). Therefore, the possibility of mining's non-continuation in Karelia would mean the discontinuation of the whole established way of living, and this is the future the locals do not wish for. The future-oriented approach towards mining may be connected to the vision of the mining industry as a "pathway out of hardship" (Hilson, 2010: 297). Pijpers (2017) demonstrates how artisanal diamond mining in Sierra Leone could be viewed through the lens of expectations and dreams. In Vepsian villages, in line with these arguments, mining continuity is viewed as a symbol of hope.

In Okinskii region, however, the situation is different. Here, the history of mining is presented as a series of dots on the region's timeline. These dots may be roughly divided into three categories: (1) Alibert's graphite mine which made Oka's "Siberian graphite" well-known in Europe; (2) 20<sup>th</sup> century interactions with the geologists, working as guides; (3) post-Soviet mining boost and associated dangers. The fourth category, illegal jade mining, is the theme which is rarely mentioned unless the informants are asked about it directly. All these categories are presented as separate pieces of history. It is not possible to hear about Alibert's mine as a sign of Oka's "mining tradition" – on the contrary, the contemporary mining is presented in narratives as appearing "from nowhere" (Interview B28).

The establishment of mining tradition in Karelia and stressing mining discontinuities in Buriatia reflect the level of closeness of local residents to the industry. As many residents of Vepsian villages have personal histories of stoneworking, the industry becomes so embedded into the local life that it is viewed as “being here forever.” In Oka, at the same time, despite the history of stone and gold extraction, most of the locals are not formally involved in mining industry. Therefore, despite the dependence of Okinskii district’s budget on mining taxes, mining companies are perceived as alien force: mining past in Botogol is the legend which is not present in the actual everyday environment of Oka’s residents. Mining futures, on the contrary, are visible (e.g. the new processing plant near Huzhir), but the information about them is scarce. The lack of information makes them look especially threatening.

## Conclusion

The temporalities of natural resource extraction in Karelia and Buriatia constitute an important part of this research. In both case studies, mining pasts (such as the legends about Napoleon or Jean-Pierre Alibert) influence the construction of local identity and the pride over the natural richness of Pronezhskii and Okinskii districts. In Karelia, mining past is also the source of deep nostalgia, although stone extraction is viewed as a difficult and dangerous occupation which left marks on peoples’ bodies and carries the threat of illnesses in future. Mining futures generate different meanings: the residents of Pronezhskii district in Karelia hope that mining would continue, while in Okinskii district of Buriatia mining is viewed as a threat (possibly harming nature and impacting the local lifestyle), while its economic benefits are also acknowledged.

This chapter analyzed several dimensions of mining temporalities in Karelia and Buriatia: day-to-day time, lifetime, and *longue-durée* perspectives. In the section devoted to day-to-day time, I primarily focus on local rhythms and cycles being constructed or disrupted by mining. In Soviet-time, the daily lives of the residents of Veps villages in Karelia were built around the rhythms and cycles of mining such as working shifts or stone loading timetables. In contemporary Prionezhskii district, mining remains an important element organizing other parts of daily lives, although the rhythms changed from 8-hour to 14-day shifts. Whereas mining in Karelia is presented as ordered and shaped, in Okinskii district of Buriatia it follows the uneven rhythms of nature. Jade extraction is presented in interview narratives in Buriatia as irregular activity: it is rarely planned well ahead and depends on natural conditions such as the level of snow or the level of water in the River Oka. Thus, while in Karelia mining becomes a founding pillar around which the settlements' lives are organized, in Buriatia the development of industry is viewed either as embedded in the rhythms of human – nature relations (as in the case of jade mining), or as a rupture of these relations (as with the processing plant near Huzhir which is seen as a threat towards nature).

Within the lifetime perspective, I analyze the influence of mining on local residents' health and bodies in Karelia and on the ethnic composition of the area in both case studies. I demonstrate that in Veps villages of Karelia, due to long-term close contacts of locals with stoneworking industry, mining past leaves noticeable traces such as the illnesses people bear. For younger residents, starting working in the quarries means the risk of receiving similar work-related illnesses in future. Therefore, mining past and future in Prionezhskii district are not abstract notions, but become embodied, and therefore are experienced as deeply personal issues. When one's health has been damaged by the hard work, it becomes important to reflect about the specificities of this work. In this sense the pride over stone discussed in the previous chapter may serve as a way to justify the sacrifices made to the industry.

The *longue-durée* perspectives of mining development in Karelia and Buriatia differ. Mining narratives in Karelia focus on continuity: stoneworking is seen as the industry which has been present for a long time and will stay for even longer. This continuity is promoted through cultural institutions such as Veps ethnographic museum in Sheltozero village, or public celebrations such as Miner's Day in Rybreka. There, mining is presented as the ongoing tradition which should be preserved for future generations. Even though mining discourses of the museum and Miner's Day focus on mining as a continuous phenomenon, it may also be viewed as a series of discontinuities. Small-scale artisanal mining and stoneworking brigades existing at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century became a part of large state-managed enterprises. Mining stopped during the Second World War and was re-established after it ended. Completely new stoneworking quarry started operating since 1971, and the modern settlement of Kvartsitnyi was built next to centuries-old Shoksha village. Formerly state enterprises got privatized in the early 1990s, and then some of them closed and new ones opened. Thus, mining in Karelia is a far more complicated process than the steady line of development as it is presented at the introductory speeches during Miner's Day.

Following Foucault's argument on the blurred border between continuity and discontinuity, mining in both regions of study may be viewed as a continuous process or, on the contrary, as a set of disparate events. It becomes important, therefore, to analyze why the interviewees in Karelia tend to present mining as a non-interrupted process with a long past and an even longer future, while at the same time mining in Buriatia is rather viewed as a set of separate activities. A possible reason for this difference may be the level of attachment towards mining industry in Karelia and Buriatia as well as the level of identification with the stoneworking. In Karelia, stoneworking quarries remain the central pillars holding the settlements together despite the changes happening in the state. Local residents follow the rhythms created and supported by the industry development. They form and shape the stone,

but the industry remains a powerful actor leaving traces on their bodies and impacting their longevity. Mining development also brought drastic changes to the ethnic composition of Prionezhskii district of Karelia, and therefore its role as the founding pillar of the community became even stronger. As for many locals their lives are so closely entangled with the industrial development in Prionezhskii district, bright future prospects of stoneworking mean that their work was not in vain, and that the development of their region will continue.

In Buriatia, however, despite the local pride in the Siberian graphite from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the rapid development of gold mining and the possibilities of informal jade extraction, mining nevertheless is not deeply rooted in the communities. It has always been developing somewhere “outside,” at the background of local experiences. Mining past is presented through legends and anecdotes, mining present and future are discussed as rumors, but mining is never “here and now.” It may become a part of the previously existing connections to landscape and its rhythms, as in the case of jade extraction, or may threaten to disrupt these connections, as it happens to the Huzhir processing plant. Nevertheless, people and industry rarely enter in a separate set of relations, as it happens often in Karelia. When little is known about mining and as it is never fully present in the community, its future becomes a threat rather than an opportunity.

The differences in mining temporalities in Karelia and Buriatia are related to the diverse modernization and industrialization paths of both regions of study. In Karelia, industrial development introduced new notions of time in the form of shifts and timetables which became accepted by the local community. Due to the large-scale migration to Karelia from other parts of the country the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the rigid nature of mining rhythms and cycles helped to form the new community united by the common labor and commonly shared shifts and timetables. In Buriatia, local perceptions of time are not formed

by the industrial development, but grounded in deep relations with nature, and jade extraction trips follow the natural rhythms.

At the same time, close encounters with the stone which people experience may lead to questioning the omnipotent role of the state. Through their everyday work with gabbro-diabase and raspberry quartzite, the residents of Veps villages in Karelia acquire the deep understanding of the work's specificity which may lead to risk taking when neglecting the rules imposed by the state. When the workers in Karelia refuse to wear the protective equipment, this action may have multiple meanings: they do not trust the state and the norms directed "from above", or they see that the work could be performed better without the masks or gloves, believing that they know their job better than the management. I view the refusal to wear the protective equipment as an example of silent protest expressed by the workers who are not ready to passively follow every directive imposed on them by the quarries. This example highlights the difference in accommodating to the rhythms of industry in Karelia and to the rhythms of nature in Buriatia. The relations with nature in Okinskii district of Buriatia are based on negotiations between non-hierarchical actors. In Karelia, however, adaptation to the rhythms of industry means adapting to the state policies and involves hierarchical relations which can be questioned only by hidden and silent forms of counter-conduct.

## Chapter 7. Resourcescapes and attachment to place

### Introduction

Although places exist as specific locations, people construct them according to their own subjectivity. Places therefore become sites of collective memory and political identities (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013). This chapter concentrates on various manifestations of place in Karelia and Buriatia: I will focus specifically on the entanglements between place and identity construction as well as between place and mining development. The chapter will demonstrate how indigeneity as “rootedness” at a certain territory is at the same time promoted by the state and shaped by human connections to the landscape.

Indigeneity discourses in many cases assert an essential connection between place and identity (Dahl, 2012). The notion of indigenusness in Russia has for a long time been related to specific ties with a certain territory. The Russian word for “indigenous” – *korennoi* – literally means “rooted”, and through this word the connection of indigenous communities to their land is emphasized. Linguistically, indigenous peoples are perceived as “rooted” in a certain territory, having strong links to place through ancestors (“roots”) and depending on this place as a prerequisite for their development.

The emphasis of strong connection between indigeneity and land is important for both Veps and Sojots. In Karelia, various cultural institutions such as Veps museum, Veps speaking club, Center of National Cultures of Karelia, stress the connection to landscape and traditional occupations (fishing and hunting) as one of the pillars of Vepsian identity. Most of my informants in Karelia indeed reflected that they spend a lot of time in the forest or at the lake, in many cases combining these activities with working in the quarries. Mining therefore becomes embedded into the relations between people and landscape (Bridge & Frederiksen,

2012). In the previous chapter, I discuss how these relations became disrupted during the Soviet time, and many traditions and rituals related to the sacrality of Vepsian landscape are now not maintained in the community of Prionezh'e. At the same time, new narratives, now connected to the importance of industry, appeared. While human relations to the place changed as a result of rapid industrialization of the region, they are still significant in the community: I will demonstrate this with the example of Veps speaking club (*Paginklub*) and the importance of discussing one's "roots" as a sign of belonging.

In Okinskii district, as I discuss in Chapter 6, local connections to landscape are extremely important in daily life: the residents adapt their mobility patterns and plans to the changes in nature, follow natural cycles in their activities, and ask permission from the masters of territory before starting an important trip or engaging in a new project. The concept of rootedness is also important in Oka and is expressed through the notion of *toonto* – one's place of birth towards which the person holds an eternal connection. Whereas in Prionezh'e the concept of rootedness is closely related to language revitalization and the work of cultural institutions, in Oka it is rather connected to religious beliefs and rituals such as the activities of Buddhist monasteries – *datsans* – as well as shamanist practices.

As theoretical framework, I rely on Foucault's discussion on the role of space as the generator of knowledge and, subsequently, power. For Foucault, space appears as the mode of articulation of power/knowledge and the discourse. In his works he especially focuses on the relations between the space, the discourses dominating there and the knowledges produced there, or spatial dimensions as exercises of power. Foucault's notion of heterotopia may serve as an example of power manifestation through space. The term "heterotopia" (literally meaning "other place" was introduced by Foucault in his lecture for architects (Foucault, [1967] 1984) referring to institutions and places loaded with multiple references to other spaces and times. Heterotopias as places have characteristics which go beyond their material

qualities or physical essences. The concept is vast, and the examples given by Foucault include such diverse places/institutions as schools, cemeteries, prisons, hospitals, the honeymoon, libraries and museums, theatres and cinemas, saunas and motels. By using the concept of heterotopia as a unifying concept for several disparate places such as Veps museum in Sheltozero village (Prionezhskii district), Veps speaking club in Petrozavodsk, and Buddhist *datsan* in Okinskii district, in this chapter I aim to analyze the multiple meanings they bring to the communities. Serving as focal points connecting various time periods and spaces, they shape the local identity and ground it in a particular place. Due to the complex entanglements of time and space they embrace, these places serve as meeting platforms and crossroads for community members, but also as reference points and guiding principles for individual identities.

In the first part of the chapter, I discuss several places – heterotopias – of Prionezhskii and Okinskii districts and focus on their role in the community as symbolic representations of “rootedness.” The chapter demonstrates the differences in the notions of rootedness in both regions. While in Karelia the main focus is on the activities of cultural institutions and the importance of connecting back to the “roots” of language and traditions, in Buriatia this concept is very much embedded in the syncretism of Buddhist and shamanist traditions and strong connections to the land and nature.

The second part of the chapter will relate the manifestations of rootedness in Karelia and Buriatia to the concept of minescapescapes (Ey and Sherval, 2015), and, drawn from that, resourcescapescapes as an overarching notion for the entanglements of various modes of resource extraction in Karelia and Buriatia. The notion of minescapescapes stresses the connections between the resource extraction site and its physical terrain as well as its socio-economic surrounding. As Chapter 5 demonstrated, while mineral resources are influenced by discourses of power, they are also able to impact community relations and power dispositions, as well as to create

alternative discourses of “counter-conduct.” This chapter will serve as the continuation of this analysis and will emphasize the embeddedness of resource extraction into human – landscape relations and the blurred borders between different forms of extraction such as mining, hunting, fishing, or tourism.

## 7.1. People and place: indigeneity as rootedness

The word *korennoi* – rooted – in the Russian language is used not only in reference to indigenous peoples, but also as an indication of being born at a certain territory, for example *korennoi moskvich* – “a native of Moscow.” This double-usage creates ambiguities: for example, in Karelian official documents and newspaper publications the word “indigenous peoples” is sometimes used for just Veps people (as the indigenous small-numbered people of Russia), but may also include Karelians and Finns (due to long-term residence at the territory of Karelia), or in some cases Russians and Pomors (also due to their long-term establishment in Karelia). In the interviews, the informants were also mixing up the meanings of “indigeneity” as “rootedness” and “indigenous small-numbered” as an official definition of the state:

“Q: Are you originally from here?

A: Of course, from here, I’m indigenous here.” (Interview K47)

The concept of rootedness is related to state policies and discourses, as by the word usage itself the emphasis on indigeneity’s connection to land is declared and promoted.<sup>133</sup> However, it is also manifested through the close connections the residents have to their land and nature. In Russian discourse, the concept of “small homeland” – the town or village where the person originates from and where her/his true home is – become popularized in Russian literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Buriatia, this “small homeland” [B: *toonto niutag*] is

related to the concept of *toonto* as the concrete place where the person was born and where his/her afterbirth was traditionally buried. *Toonto* and *niutag* are often used as synonyms to relate to motherland.<sup>134</sup> *Toonto* symbolizes a strong connection between a person and a place. In Buriat culture, is recommended to visit one's *toonto* from time to time to gain strength and support of place spirits. In Karelia, one of the symbolic expressions of the "rootedness" concept in relation to Veps is the annual celebration of *Elonpu* - "The Tree of Life" in Sheltozero village in Prionezhskii district which started in the early 1990s and still continues. The tree was chosen as the symbol of the celebration serving two purposes: remembering the roots of the Veps people, but at the same time growing and looking into future.

In this section, I will focus on several focal points, or places as heterotopias in Foucault's understanding, which shape and form the notion of rootedness (and, consequently, the notion of local identity) in Karelia and Buriatia. When analyzing indigeneity and local identity in both cases, it is hardly possible for the researcher to avoid specific "places of identity" which serve as meeting and discussion points, as points of reference, as spaces filled with multiple meanings and histories and as links connecting the community to other places and historical periods. In Karelia, as I argue, these "focal points" are mostly connected with the activities of various cultural institutions and organizations. For a deeper analysis, I have selected two spaces of identity and community formation: Veps ethnographic museum in Sheltozero village and *Paginklub*, or, translated from Vepsian, Speaking club, organized monthly at the Center for National Cultures in Petrozavodsk. *Paginklub* may be viewed as a heterotopia and heterochronia, as the speaking club becomes a meeting point for the people of different ages, backgrounds, and interests, for the sole purpose of speaking the language and

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<sup>133</sup> See also Donahoe et al. (2008: 997) on the word "korennoi" (R: rooted) as an implication of autochrony and primordial right to belonging.

<sup>134</sup> The difference between the two words is that *toonto* is more precise, it refers to the exact place where the person was born, while *niutag* is used more generally as "motherland."

sharing culture. Whereas I view the contemporary Veps museum as primarily a state institution following state's policies, *Paginklub* may be seen more like a people's initiative. In this chapter I argue that *Paginklub* serves as a counter-narrative to the established state discourse which focuses on Veps language and culture as elements of the past. *Paginklub*, on the contrary, creates the image of Veps as a living language shared by different generations.

### **7.1.1. Veps museum and state narratives**

Veps ethnographic museum in Sheltozero village in Prionezhskii district is the only museum in Russia representing Veps culture. It was founded in 1967 as an initiative of Ryurik Lonin (1930 – 2009), the worker of the collective farm in Sheltozero who got interested in collecting the artifacts of Veps culture. Since mid-1950s, Lonin was collecting Vepsian folklore, but later he also started collecting various items from Veps houses of the past: household items, pieces of furniture, clothes, and agricultural implements. In 1967, Lonin started exhibiting the collected items forming a small private museum. In the 1980s, the new museum became a branch of Karelian state museum of local history, and all the items were donated to the state. At that period, the Veps museum moved to a new building: the so-called Mel'kin House in Sheltozero, where it is now located (see Fig.22). This house was built in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century by Ivan Mel'kin, who was the manager of a Vepsian stoneworking brigade. Mel'kin was known for his constructions made of raspberry quartzite in St. Petersburg.



**FIGURE 22. THE BUILDING OF VEPS ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM IN SHELTOZERO (JULY 2015)**

Today, the museum occupies several buildings: Mel'kin House is used for permanent and temporary exhibitions, as well as conferences, seminars and other meetings. There is also another building that belongs to the museum (called Tuchin's House) which is presented as an example of Vepsian architectural heritage, but also as a historical building connected to the Second World War in Prionezh'e and partisan struggle.

As the museum is situated next to the road connecting Petrozavodsk and St. Petersburg, it attracts a lot of tourists who visit Karelia. There are also tourist groups coming from Petrozavodsk and other places in Karelia. But probably the most important mission of the museum is to connect the members of local community and to promote the Vepsian culture in Karelia and beyond. They hold the rehearsals of Vepsian choir, activities for schoolchildren and meetings for elderly residents of Sheltozero. The museum also acts as a local library and archive, as its administrators collect books and articles in Vepsian language or focusing on Veps people, and the museum also holds a collection of publications in local newspapers devoted to various aspects of life in Veps villages in Soviet and post-Soviet years

(starting from the 1960s). In addition, the museum serves as a meeting point for activists, researchers, filmmakers, and community members.

I visited the museum several times during my fieldwork: in summers of 2015 and 2016 I was working there with newspapers and other published materials, and in November 2018 I returned there to take a look at the updated permanent exhibition. The museum is divided into three parts: one of the room is organized as a traditional Veps house with a large oven, wooden dining table, and various household items which filled everyday lives of local families. The museum booklet offers the visitors to imagine they entered a Vepsian house and met the whole extended family having dinner, while the children are playing around and the baby sleeps in its wooden bassinet. The second part of the House taking the rest of the ground floor is the actual exhibition. The viewers are guided through the hall starting from the early history of Veps, following with the symbolism of animals, fishes and forest in Veps mythology, descriptions of traditional weddings and funerals, occupations of local residents, and finishing with the language revitalization campaign and the establishment of Veps ethnographic museum. The exhibition stands mostly consist of various artifacts connected to a certain topic (for example, traditional wedding dress or the Vepsian-language newspaper from the 1930s) which are accompanys by the illustrations prepared by one of the museum workers, Evgenii Foteev. The upper floor is reserved for temporary exhibitions and a meeting room.

In the permanent exhibition of the museum, Veps are presented as the community keeping strong links to various part of the surrounding landscape including forest (and its animals, especially bear), lake (and fish), plants and insects (there is a stand devoted to grasshoppers as the symbol of fertility in Vepsian mythology). Already when approaching the museum, the visitors are greeted by Forest Master [V: *Mechine*], one of the especially powerful spirits of Vepsian belief system. Most of the stands are organized in a similar order:

there is an ethnographic description of a particular symbol in Vepsian mythology, as well as different rituals connected to forest, lake, or crop fields respectively.

The stand devoted to stone (see Fig. 23), however, is in some way a standalone. The title of the stand refers to the sacrality of stone in Vepsian mythology and specifically mentions *čuurkivi* – rotted rock – which was believed to have healing power (Vinokurova, 2015). However, there are no notions of specific traditions or rituals connected to stone. Instead, raspberry quartzite and gabbro-diabase, as well as stoneworking instruments and products made of stone for Soviet industry are exhibited. The upper part of the stand is devoted to the photos of Veps stoneworking brigade in St. Petersburg, the construction of one of the St. Petersburg bridges completed by Ivan Mel'kin's brigade, as well as famous constructions and monuments made of local stone, such as Napoleon's sarcophagus. The exhibited items refer to stone as a valuable resource for the community used for construction in various parts of the country and abroad. There are also no illustrations for this stand (the illustration displayed at the picture below refers to the previous stand devoted to bears in Veps culture).



FIGURE 23. STAND DEVOTED TO STONE IN VEPS MUSEUM (NOVEMBER 2018)

This stand looks like the visualized symbol of rupture I was discussing in Chapter 5: suddenly, when it came to stone, the established and organized flow of museum narrative of Veps people – landscape – symbolism got interrupted and replaced by the narratives of the glory of the local stone, the fame of Veps stoneworkers, and the importance of stone-made products for the industry. As the items exhibited in the museum today were mostly collected in the 1960s – 1980s, it is possible that the state-promoted stoneworking narratives widespread in the villages at that period influences the choice of the items collected as well as their representations for visitors. Even though the stand's design was later changed, its structure remained the same, and stone was presented as a symbol of industrial progress, not as a symbol of deep connections to landscape.

In her book *Long Night at the Vepsian Museum* (2017), Veronica Davidov reflects on her experience of attending the Museum Night activities in Sheltozero. She refers to the museum as one of the pillars of cultural life in Sheltozero and other Vepsian villages, and as a strong promoter of Vepsian culture in the community. Museums are often viewed in academic literature as producers of cultural knowledge in the community (Kolas & Xie, 2015), but they are also a symbol of state's integration in the life of the community. The function of the museum is presenting the culture of the community not only to outside visitors, but to the members of the community itself. They serve as reminders of tradition, or as inventors of it. Even though the Veps museum is presented as “people's initiative” and as a personal dream of a Veps worker which came true, and reinforces the notion of “roots” which the people cannot forget, in fact quite soon after establishment it became acquired by state institutions. Therefore, it projects a certain state-approved view on the contemporary Veps community.

In the permanent exhibition, it is rarely possible to see references to contemporary life in the villages: it is focused on “tradition” which is now, as I demonstrate in Chapter 5, rarely a part of everyday life in Vepsian villages. It looks as if the museum aims not only to present the “tradition” for outside visitors, but also to “reinvent” it for the insider community, to demonstrate “how it used to be here.”

Since I started fieldwork in 2015, the exhibition of the museum has changed. In 2018, I noticed that much less space is now used for the history of Vepsian activism, language revitalization campaign, the history of indigenous status recognition. Instead, the exhibition was now much more focused on Vepsian mythology and symbolism, rituals, proverbs, and other material symbolically depicting “the past.” Just as I wondered at the “Tree of Life” celebration in summer 2018, when viewing the updated exhibition I tried to reflect why the strong emphasize on “roots” is gradually replacing the “revitalization” narrative. The exhibition presents a vivid picture of the past, but it does not pay much attention to the present – and, consequently, the future.

### ***7.1.2. Paginklub as counter-conduct***

*Paginklub* refers to monthly meetings of people interested in Vepsian language and culture which are conducted at the Centre of National Cultures in Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelia. The meetings were initiated in March 2011 by Larisa Chirkova (Smolina), a prominent Vepsian activist, a former student the Finno-Ugrian department of Petrozavodsk State University who is currently working as a Veps journalist for Radio Karelia. As Larisa reflects on her motivations to initiate *Paginklub*, “The idea to create a club for Veps of different ages and with different level of language proficiency appeared as recently the Vepsian language has been more and more used in its written form (for mass-media, radio,

TV). And the spoken Vepsian language is losing its functions in different areas of communication – in families, among children and young people, in after-school activities, in the work of cultural institutions and NGOs...” (Katargina & Malykh, 2014)

Though Larisa mentions that the club was intended for Veps, in fact everybody who is interested in the language may join any meeting. It is not required to speak the language, though Larisa encourages the participants at least to introduce themselves in Vepsian. For those who do not know the language, it is also acceptable to speak in Russian, and Larisa subsequently translates at least a part of the speech to Vepsian. After a round of introductions, the participants read a text, listen to a presentation or watch a film, discuss a certain theme for a while, and in most cases end the meeting with tea and sweets. Most of the meetings are devoted to a certain topic: sometimes there is a presentation of a project related to the Vepsian language or culture, a film or a new initiative. The club also holds thematic meetings focusing on public holidays, such as New Year or Women’s Day (8<sup>th</sup> of March). Some of the meetings are devoted to Veps activists, writers or poets. Once I participated in a meeting devoted to International Day of Indigenous Languages (6<sup>th</sup> of February) when indigenous status of the Veps people was the central topic: the participants of *Paginklub* were explained what being indigenous meant and how the status of small-numbered indigenous people influenced the situation of Veps in Karelia. During my fieldwork in Petrozavodsk, I managed to attend several *Paginklub* meetings between 2015 and 2017.

A typical meeting of *Paginklub* at the time of my fieldwork consisted of ten - fifteen people of different age. There are elderly participants who grew up in Veps villages of Prionezh’e and moved to Petrozavodsk later, middle-aged people whose parents knew Vepsian but who in most cases do not speak the language well enough, and younger participants, those who studied the language at school or at university in the 1990s or later. Sometimes this mix of ages and types of language acquisition creates problems: the elderly

participants of *Paginklub* and its young members speaking “literary” Vepsian do not always understand each other well.<sup>135</sup> Besides, whereas middle-aged and elderly people are used to writing in Vepsian using Cyrillic alphabet, younger people use Latin alphabet (the official version of Vepsian alphabet taught at schools and universities). The middle-aged participants (aged around 45 – 60) in many cases represent the “rupture generation” they were born at a time when their parents preferred to speak Russian to them, but at the same time they never studied the language at school or at university. Most of them have passive understanding of Vepsian language, but have difficulties speaking or reading it. There are also cases when the participants join the meeting via Skype from another town or country; I managed to join several meetings like that while being in Budapest. Such cases are particularly valued in the community of club members, as they give a sense that the interest towards the language is present far beyond the borders of Karelia, and thus adds extra value to their efforts to keep speaking Vepsian. Larisa and other organizers of *Paginklub* invest a lot of efforts on the meetings’ availability for those who wish to join via Skype. The availability of digital technologies encompasses one of the main messages which the organizers of *Paginklub* convey: Vepsian language is not an element of the past, but the living language which is open to the people of all ages and is in line with technological development.

In this situation the concept of “rootedness” becomes a link which symbolically unites all the participants. “Vepsian roots” is something most of them share, and in cases when their language knowledge is not strong enough, “roots” become their entry ticket, their proof of belonging. Very soon after starting attending the meetings of *Paginklub*, I noticed that at every meeting the members of the club are deeply interested in each other’s *jured* (Veps word

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<sup>135</sup> As Siragusa (2018) notes, the revitalization campaign of Vepsian language was largely focused on the fast expansion of the language’s vocabulary based on old Vepsian, Finnish and Russian roots. As a result, there are a number of words in contemporary literary version of the Vepsian language which are not familiar to those who acquired the language prior to the revitalization campaign of the 1990s.

for “roots”).<sup>136</sup> When new participants introduce themselves, they are immediately asked which village they come from. When they answer, there is always somebody else in the room who is from the same village, so other questions immediately follow: “When did you grow up there?”, “Do you know this or that person?”, “Do you remember that huge tree near the lake?” Common memories create a sense of community among participants of the club, and in this way new members position themselves and become associated with a certain area. Also, when talking about themselves, the participants always name the village they come from; some of these villages do not exist anymore, and in this way Vepsian language they learn at *Paginklub* becomes associated with the lost past.

When I joined *Paginklub*, I was also immediately asked which village I come from, and when I answered: “No, I am from Petrozavodsk”, another participant asked impatiently: “Yes, but your family, from which village is it?” At that moment, surprisingly, I felt uneasiness, as if I am the one who does not belong here: even though I understand and speak Vepsian, I do not have any relatives in the Vepsian villages, and my knowledge of the language is the result of school education. Unlike other participants, I was unable to identify myself in relation to a certain Vepsian village. However, as others knew I was a researcher, they accepted the absence of my “Veps roots” fast: as I was interested in Vepsian language and culture and wanted to write about them and to disseminate the knowledge, I was still perceived as one of the group due to doing an important work.

However, there were situations when the absence of Veps roots was remembered in relation to other participants. Once at a meeting I witnessed an incident with an older man who was disrupting others and speaking loudly in Russian. When Larisa and other organizers

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<sup>136</sup> In the reports from the first meetings of *Paginklub* in 2011 published in the club’s group in Russian social network *Vkontakte*, the organizer Larisa Smolina indicates that the participants introduced themselves and stated in Vepsian “kut händast kuctaze, kuspäi oma hänen jured...” (V: “what his/her name is, from where his/her roots are...”)

of the meeting tried to stop him, he got angry and left abruptly. One of the participants said, “But he is not even a Veps, why does he come here?” Therefore, having no “roots” connecting one directly to the Vepsian language and culture was tolerated in the community as long as the member demonstrated interest and complied with the rules. However, in the situations when the other participants felt the club rules were not respected, the right of the person to join the club despite not being a Veps was immediately questioned.

This being said, other participants who did know the language at all and had very loose ties with Veps or Prionezhskii district, were always welcome at the meetings. There was an elderly participant who did not speak the language beyond several basic words; nevertheless, he was recognized fully as an established member of the club. When I walked with him to the bus stop after one of the meetings, I learned that he was born in Petrozavodsk, as well as his parents, but he had ancestors coming from Vepsian village. He never learned the language as a child and had never been interested in his heritage until he retired. Then the interest towards the Vepsian language started growing up, and for him learning the language was a way to establish the sense of continuity between him and previous generations, to find his place in the world.

Monthly meetings of *Paginklub* bring together people of various ages, professions and interests, who would otherwise have little in common. Their Veps heritage as well as knowledge of language at different levels is their main connection during these meetings, and it is reinforced through the concept of “roots,” through sharing memories about one’s childhood in the same village or looking for common acquaintances. Those who have Veps roots are considered full members of the community even if their current ties with the language and culture of the Veps people are not strong. At the same time, the total absence of Veps roots is rare, and those who do not have ancestors in Veps villages are integrated in the community while complying with their rules.

The creation of *Paginklub* mirrors the story of the Veps ethnographic museum in some aspects: just as the museum started as an intention to keep the Veps artifacts from the past, the club started as an initiative to keep the spoken Vepsian language used in an informal conversational setting. Both the museum and *Paginklub* started as personal initiatives, but today, while Veps museum is forming a branch of Karelian National Museum, *Paginklub* meetings are conducted at the Centre of National Cultures of Karelia funded by the state. The missions of these two establishments are also similar, though *Paginklub*, even more than the museum, is aimed at the community itself: it presents past and present of the Veps people to those who may start losing their connections with the language and culture. Besides actually speaking or trying to speak Vepsian, the participants learn about latest initiatives and projects aimed at the promotion of language and culture of Veps, get free copies of the Veps newspaper *Kodima*, discuss Veps poetry, - or in other words, become immersed in the life of the Veps activist community in Petrozavodsk.

### ***7.1.3. Datsan and religious merge***

The word *datsan* refers to a Buddhist religious complex, a university monastery; datsans are mostly located in Mongolia, Tibet, and Siberia. In Russia, Buddhism represents one of the widespread religious traditions and is acknowledged in legislation as “constituting an integral part of the historical heritage of the peoples in Russia.”<sup>137</sup> The regions where Buddhism is one of the dominant religious traditions include Buriatia, Tyva, Kalmykia, Altai and Zabaikal regions. In Buriatia, Buddhism is heavily integrated with shamanism (Zhukovskaya, 2013), and this integration is especially visible in Oka, where the cult of territory spirits and masters remains strong.

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<sup>137</sup> 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations (*O svobode sovesti i o religioznykh ob'yedineniyakh*)

Tibetan form of Buddhism became widespread in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, mostly because of the large-scale resettlement of Buddhist lamas from Mongolia and Tibet to Buriatia (Fagan, 2001). Though local officials opposed the new religion, the toleration decree of Empress Elizaveta issued in 1741 formally recognized Buddhism as a religious tradition (Fagan, 2001; Holland, 2014). By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the number of lamas in Buriatia constituted more than 15,000 (Hundley, 2010). After the 1917 revolution, the leaders of Buddhism in the Republic tried to demonstrate their allegiance to the newly forming traditions, and lama Agvan Dorzhiev proclaimed in the 1920s that Buddhist doctrine was in many ways compatible with the communist thinking (Fagan, 2001). However, this move did not prevent heavy repressions which aimed Buddhist believers in Buriatia up until 1937 (Holland, 2014). During this period, all of the existing datsans were closed, and most of the lamas were exiled; out of 15,000 only 200 later returned to Buriatia (Fagan, 2001). Agvan Dorzhiev, one of the Buddhist leaders of Buriatia, was arrested and died (most probably in prison) in 1938 (Zhukovskaya, 2013).

The wave of repressions reached Okinskii district as well. In the early 1930s, Zhelgen datsan which was built in Oka in 1904 (or, according to other sources in 1910) stopped functioning as a temple, all its possessions were confiscated, and finally in 1935 the datsan was closed. (Samaeva & Arzukhaeva, 2011). The datsan's buildings were transferred to Orlik and used for different purposes (for example, as a bakery). The Buddhist lamas in Oka were arrested, as well as shamans. Today, the former building of Zhelgen datsan is in ruins. However, it remains a sacred place for local residents, and the demolition of the datsan and the arrest of lamas in the Soviet period are considered as one of the signs of state cruelty (Interview B14).

Similarly, Buriat shamans were under repressions in the same period. The most famous shaman of that period, Chimit Putunkeev, was arrested at that period. Later, when

released, he was living alone for years (“he had to hide in the mountains”, as one of my informants explained (Interview B14) and died around 1960. After many years, Chimit Putunkeev remains an important figure in Oka narratives. He is believed to be such a strong shaman that prison walls were not important for him: he was able to mentally pass through walls and to visit home and other places even when in prison (Interview B27).

In 1946, two of Buddhist complexes in Buriatia were re-opened (Holland, 2014). However, in Okinskii district the revitalization of Buddhist religious institutions started after the 1990s. This was largely the initiative of Fedor Samaev (Danzan-Haibzun Lama), a native of Oka who was also a prominent leader of Soiot revitalization movement.<sup>138</sup> In early 1990s, under the supervision of Samaev a new *dugan* (B: Buddhist temple) was founded in Orlik. Later, it turned out that the building used for the new *dugan* was a reconstructed former house of Agvan Dorzhiev in Zhelgen datsan. The newly built *dugan* became a foundation for Okinskii datsan, also called *Puntsognamdolling*, which was founded in 2003 (see Fig. 24).

*Puntsognamdolling* is situated close to Orlik, on the way towards Huzhir. Its leaders state that the datsan is continuing the traditions of Zhelgen datsan. When I was conducting fieldwork, the Okinskii datsan as well as the *dugan* situated in the centre of Orlik settlement were managed by Norbu-lama, the leader of the datsan, and his younger brother, Dondok-lama. Norbu-lama, or Vladimir Ayusheev, was also an activist of the Association of Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of Russia. In 2017, he became the Head of the Buriat branch of the Association. Norbu-lama is recognized in Oka as one of the prominent Soiot activists. Therefore, the revitalization of Buddhism and the revitalization of Soiets in Okinskii district went alongside since the beginning of the 1990s. Both movements also had

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<sup>138</sup> Fedor Samaev (Danzan-Haibzun lama) was born in 1954 in Orlik, Okinskii district. In the 1990s, Samaev was the leader of St. Petersburg’s Buddhist temple. In 1997, he returned to Buriatia and two years later created the Buddhist organization *Maidar* which worked in several regions of Buriatia including Okinskii district. Fedor Samaev died in a car accident in Okinskii district in 2005.

the same “spiritual leaders”: Fedor Samaev, the founder of the first post-socialist dugan in Oka, was at the same time an active supporter of Soiot revitalization. Currently, Norbu-lama is both an important religious figure and an indigenous activist.



FIGURE 24. DATSAN *PUNTSOGNAMDOLLING* NEAR ORLIK, OKINSKII DISTRICT

Contemporary residents of Oka could be characterized as having a syncretic Buddhist-shamanist belief system (Belyaeva-Sachuk, 2012). Both religions are closely connected to the sacred view of the Oka’s landscape where different landscape features have own masters. In addition, the landscape is believed to be populated by the spirits of ancestors who may help or hinder the residents of Oka depending on how they are treated. Buddhism and shamanism play a vital role and are in many cases perceived interchangeably: for example, before starting a difficult trip, the residents may turn to shaman or lama in order “to open the road.” Once I witnessed such a request, as it happened during my interview with the lama: a local man entered the room impatiently and asked us to stop the interview for five minutes, if possible, as he needed to leave soon and had to receive the permission from the territory masters before proceeding. My need to ask permission from the spirits before starting the research was also widely recognized in the community. After one or two days in the field, when I mentioned to

my hosts that I would like to see the datsan, one of them said approvingly, “Yes, this is the right way to start, you should go there, this way you will show respect.” Similarly, after a couple of days they brought me to a local shaman in Orlik, and the purpose was the same: to open the way for conducting research. It seemed that Buddhism and shamanism were in many cases treated as complementary religious practices. One of my informants explained that when she has a health issue, she goes to lama and then to shaman, just to make sure they both address the problem and ask the spirits for fast healing (Interview B19).

Datsans, as well as shamanic practices are closely related to the concept of “rootedness” in the specific territory. In Oka, as the connection to the land remain strong, the rootedness is not presented as building a bridge towards the past, as this past already exists, and one’s ancestors play a vital role in one’s life. Therefore, rootedness is rather seen as being a part of the common pluriverse, following the rhythms of nature and living in accordance with the non-human entities. In this understanding of rootedness, Buddhist lamas and shamans play a vital role, as they help the locals to strengthen their connections to the land when needed.

## **7.2. Resourcescapes of Karelia and Buriatia**

In this section of the chapter, I will discuss in more details the relations between natural resource extraction, people, and place. This section is drawing on the concept of “scape” suggested by Appadurai in his study on global cultural flows for the concepts like ethnoscapescapes or mediascapescapes in order “to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes” (Appadurai, 1996: 33). As Soja (2006: xv) notes, the adaptability and versatility of the suffix –scape is limitless, and it can be easily transformed into “escape,” “shape,” “scope,” and receive additional layers of meanings with each transformation. Other scholars also employed this concept in their research: see Brambilla (2015) on borderscapescapes and

Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos (2014) on lawscapes. For this dissertation, the concept of minescape developed by Ey and Sherval (2015) proved to be especially useful. This concept would characterize the extraction sites as more than economic areas or static landscapes. Resource extraction could therefore be understood as the process which reforms not only the physical environment, but also changes the socio-cultural processes surrounding the mining site (Ey and Sherval: 2015).

Natural resource extraction is often perceived as the activity opposing other forms of interacting with the landscape such as ecotourism (Büscher & Davidov, 2013), hunting or fishing. In this chapter, however, I argue that the extraction of stone may become deeply embedded in the established forms of human – landscape interactions. The examples from Prionezhskii district in Karelia demonstrate that the residents of Veps villages do not perceive mining as the process directly opposing other activities such as fishing, berry picking, or hunting. My informants are sharing stories when for years they combined work in the quarries and close interactions with nature. Even though private mining enterprises are criticized for harming the nature, the same criticism goes towards private tourist companies occupying the shore near Kvartsitnyi settlement. For local residents, mining and tourist companies are often united by the same feature: they “steal” the resources which should be aimed for locals. In the example from Okinskii district in Buriatia, modern-time extraction of jade follows the same rules and the same logic as the established tradition of hunting. The informal jade mining is a recent activity which started only in the early 2000s, but it got quickly embedded into other forms of natural resource extraction existing in the community.

Drawing on these examples, in this section of the chapter I suggest the term *resourcescape* as an overarching concept defining the interplay of different forms of extraction in Prionezh’e and Oka. This term stresses that the entanglements of mining and landscape are not happening in isolation, but they are a part of the larger notion of human –

resource relations. In this sense, not only hunting and fishing, but tourism as well may be seen as resource extraction, as tourist companies “extract” parts of the Onega lake shore in Kvartsitnyi from common usage for their private clients.

### ***7.2.1. Mining and nature interrelated***

The rapid development of mining industry in Karelia in the Soviet period resulted in significant changes in the landscape. The whole settlement of Kvartsitnyi appeared “from nothing” (as it was discussed in Chapter 6). The panorama of Rybreka village in Prionezhskii district is now defined by the long rocky mountain where diabase is extracted. Even though the discourse of “mastering” and “conquering” the nature was widespread in Karelia in the Soviet period and promoted through local newspapers, the interview data show that the residents of Veps villages do not perceive mining and nature as being necessarily in opposition. Most of the villagers combined work in the quarry and close contacts with the surrounding nature. One of my informants in Shoksha, Svetlana, shared with me how in summer she and her husband went fishing or berry-picking after a shift in the quarry or during the day off:

“We also had time to pick blueberry, two buckets of blueberry over a weekend, then we would go to the city to sell it. And then he [the informant’s husband] would return home at 2 a.m. with a bag of perch. And imagine, I need to wake up at five to go to work, but at two I am still standing and scaling the perch!” (Interview K13)

Similarly, Emma, a long-term resident of Kvartsitnyi, recalled her husband’s habit of going fishing early in the morning, before the work shift starts (Interview K40). Egor from Shoksha talked about his hunting trips as a free-time activity (Interview K12).

In the interviews, a number of informants mentioned the beautiful nature of Karelia as one of the reasons for staying in the village even if the work prospects were not good. The radical changes of nature were often perceived as something negative. The attitudes towards possible negative impact of mining on nature are, nevertheless, complex. While many informants mentioned negative impacts of mining on nature (such as the dust in the air or the water pollution), they still acknowledge mining as an important industry for the villages' development. A former worker of the boiler-house who moved to Karelia in 1971 stated when describing her life in the settlement, "There were explosions almost every day in the quarry, but they were not bothering me. This was their work, you know" (Interview K37). Even though the informant mentioned negative impacts of mining industry (such as the noise from the explosions), she also noted that it was a necessary part of the work which could not be avoided. Such seemingly contradicting statements which suggest that mining could be harmful for the environment while firmly stating that this was an important work needed for local development, are common in my interview materials.

Even when a possible environmental harm (less berries in the forest or less fish in the lake) was acknowledged, mining companies were not necessarily the ones to blame. In the neighboring settlements of Shoksha and Kvartsitnyi, the anger of local residents is rather aimed at the private tourist companies which are situated in Kvartsitnyi, at the shore of the Lake Onega. They are mostly aimed at the wealthy tourists from Moscow or St. Petersburg who are willing to experience the countryside life in Karelia with fishing, swimming, boat trips, and excursions to the raspberry quartzite extraction site as a bonus. Svetlana from Shoksha, after recalling how her husband returned home with gab of perch, added angrily:

"There were tons of fish! Tons! But no, today there is no fish in the lake, especially red fish. We had it before... But now these [tourist] bases fished it out" (Interview K13).

Tourist companies are perceived negatively as outsiders: they, as the locals claim, mostly have Moscow owners. As a result, the informants feel that the tourist companies have appropriated the resources which are meant first and foremost for local residents. "Are you from Petrozavodsk? – a resident of Shoksha asked me, and quickly added: - It's good, I thought it was somebody from Moscow!" (Interview K28). He later explained that the tourists from Moscow are appropriating the land near the villages, including the territory of the monastery<sup>139</sup> and the shore of Lake Onega. Similarly, the seller in a local shop in Kvartsitnyi told me, "Our entire coast has been bought, and we are just cobblers without shoes: we see no fish these days".

In Rybreka, probably due to the presence of several diabase quarries working full-time, tourism is not an issue. Here, private mining companies are often blamed for their dust and noise, as well as for not helping the village financially: as my interlocutor in Rybreka expressed it, "They just take and take from us, and we are not important to anybody." My informant Stepan stated that while the state quarries were supporting Rybreka, the current owners of the quarries do not even know the community: "The owner of *Interkamen* [one of the mining companies in Rybreka] – people say he has a helicopter field next to his house here. He just gets to the helicopter, flies to Moscow, then back... He does not know the village" (Interview K51). At the same time, even when the private companies are accused in mismanagement, the importance of mining itself is never doubted by the informants. "Our village would not exist without mining," – a resident of Rybreka whom I talked to at the bus stop stated simply.

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<sup>139</sup> The Iona of Iashezero Monastery is situated in Prionezhskii district near Sheltozero village. It was founded in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Iona of Iashezero, a Veps born in Shoksha and a monk of Russian Orthodox Church. In 1918, after the Bolshevik Revolution, the monastery was closed. It reopened in 2003. The monastery is hard to reach as the road towards it is broken and there is no public transportation.

The interview data demonstrate that the resourcescape of Prionezhskii district in Karelia is arranged as a division of different forms of resource extraction into positive – when it serves the community, and negative – when the locals feel that they are deprived of their resource without any profit in return. Thus, Soviet-time state quarries are in many cases perceived positively as they helped the community providing services, accommodation, support of kindergartens and schools or other assistance. In contrast, tourist companies and private mining enterprises may be commonly blamed for appropriating local resources. Mining and nature are presented in the interview narratives as being not in opposition, but in interdependence. Their transformations are mutually related: stoneworking is seen as the outcome of the natural richness of Prionezh'e, and the development or decline of mining defines the future of the district in general.

### ***7.2.2. Jade as a subsistence resource***

Geological institutes began probing for jade in Okinskii district of Buriatia in the 1970s, but extraction started only in the 1990s. However, as the representative of Orlik's administration explained to me, as the companies owning licenses to extract jade had administrative and financial problems, the extraction was carried on small-scale or would sometimes stop completely (Interview B9). Since the early 2000, when the demand for jade increased in China, informal extraction of the stone began in Okinskii district (Interview B10). Nowadays China is the main market for Buriat jade, as there it is considered a sacred stone and in certain historical periods was valued higher than gold or silver. Informal jade extraction is a widespread occupation in Okinskii district among young and middle-aged men (Interview B4). In most cases they travel to Kitoi or Hara-Nur, two main jade deposits. The extracted jade is then brought to Irkutsk or Ulan-Ude and sold to informal Chinese buyers.

The contacts of these buyers are shared by word of mouth (Interview B8). The residents of other neighboring regions (for example, Tunkinskii district) also often travel to Oka to extract jade (Interview B5).

Informal extraction of jade is a very dangerous business. “Our boys are walking under bullets for the stone”, - Tatiana from Sorok said referring to the episode from August 2015 when a young unemployed resident of Orlik was accidentally shot by the guards while trying to steal pieces of jade from the company’s warehouse (Interview B16). After this tragedy, the amount of informal miners dropped, but there are still people ready to risk: “What else can we do? There are no jobs here” (Interview B27). Jade trips often involve other challenges, for example infrastructural ones. In many cases the routes to jade extraction sites go through the forest where there are no roads, so the locals use four-wheelers or all-terrain cars like UAZ or KamAZ. The forest roads are difficult for driving, and sometimes the cars get stuck in the snow. Mutual cooperation and assistance becomes especially important on such occasions. The drivers help each other when somebody’s car is stuck: “Luckily there were guys on KamAZ following our car and they helped us to get out” (Interview B5). The illegal miners also cooperate in case there is a police control on the road: “Many guys had satellite phones, and they said several times: the police raid is coming, OMON<sup>140</sup> will get here and will arrest us” (Interview B5).

During my fieldwork, when I listened to the stories on jade extraction trips, such narratives often resembled the way the residents of Oka talked about hunting. Later I discovered ethnographic studies drawing parallels between stone extraction and other forms

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<sup>140</sup> OMON (Special Purpose Mobile Unit) is a system of special police units of Federal Police within the National Guard of Russia.

of interactions with nature.<sup>141</sup> Safonova and Sántha (2016) in their study of Evenki in Buriatia show the similarities between the extraction of jade and gathering of ice (which is the main source of drinking water in winter). Both are collected in pieces and stored on wooden platforms, and after that jade is transferred to the places where it is sold to Chinese buyers. In the authors' view, the parallels may also be drawn between the eventual melting of ice and the symbolic disappearance of jade from the local community. Another study of Safonova and Sántha (2010) discusses the similarities between Evenki hunting style and the way of doing business when extracting jade at their territory. Graybill (2009) suggests that hunting in the Russian East can be viewed historically as an extractive industry, a precursor to economic practices organized around resource. Büscher and Davidov (2013) demonstrate that ecotourism and extraction in many cases share a similar logic and are often experienced by locals in a similar way. Extraction and ecotourism, as Büscher and Davidov show, are more similar than it is often imagined: as they are related not only through the experiences of people they affect, but also through the broader structures of power and ownership over resource.

There are several possible parallels between jade extraction and hunting in Oka. First of all, both jade and hunting trips involve a strong element of luck.<sup>142</sup> Just as hunters, informal jade miners never know how they will return from the forest. They may get enough money to buy a new car or renovate the house, but at the same time all the investments may be in vain if the piece of jade they get turns out not very valuable (Interview B5). In addition to that, it is important to respect the stone and not to be too greedy towards it. It is considered

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<sup>141</sup> Margaret Moore defines the term “natural resources” in an open way and uses it to refer to “anything, derived from the environment and not made by humans that is instrumental to satisfying human wants and needs” (Moore, 2015: 163). Land, water and sunshine are resources, as well as plants, animals, and mineral ores.

<sup>142</sup> The concept of luck in Siberian hunting societies differs from its established Western understanding (as a chance or coincidence) (Broz and Willerslev, 2012). Indigenous views on luck during hunting are closely linked to local spirituality. A lucky hunt strongly depends on the good will of the animal's guarding spirit and thus needs to be negotiated before or during the hunt (see also Willerslev, 2004).

appropriate to get enough jade to secure one's well-being, but people should not try their luck and search for more, as it will result in misfortune.<sup>143</sup> Those residents of Okinskii district who are greedy for jade were referred to negatively in the interviews. The informants stated that jade has a strong energy and thus will revenge to those who do not have limits in regards to extraction (Interview B7, B25). Therefore, jade is treated like a subsistence resource, and the logic is similar to the one applied to hunting and fishing: one should respect the resource and avoid taking more than needed.

Both hunting and jade extraction are associated with danger: while in hunting the danger is wild animals (Interview B11), in jade extraction the danger is to be caught by police (Interview B5). Sometimes such trips are organized in secret from relatives, because of this high danger associated with jade extraction (Interview B8). It seems, though, that partially due to this danger and possibility of luck jade extraction is appealing for young people: jade represents "fast money" and may make its owner rich overnight, but at the same time it is risky and requires courage and adaptability (Interview B11).

The local residents do not see much value in jade per se, though it is sometimes used in saunas, as jade steam is believed to be good for health (Interview B10). Some residents of Oka have pieces of jade at home, but they are seen more like a "hunting trophy" or a souvenir, and they are not kept for their visual appeal. In general the attitude to extracting jade is in some way similar to hunting. Even if some residents of Oka keep pieces of jade at home as souvenirs, they are hidden and not showed openly, so demonstration of a piece of jade is a sign of trust.

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<sup>143</sup> See Tsing (2003: 5104): "Natural treasures themselves become fugitive in this landscape of movement and flight, just as once, people said, a man stumbled over a nugget of gold as big as a rice mortar and marked the place, oh so carefully to come back later with help – but when he did, nothing was there. Masculine magic and charisma is required, for even safe in one's possession, treasures disappear."

It is also possible to draw parallels between jade and other types of resource extraction. I refer to the jade trips as “informal mining,” but even though it was the actual extraction at the beginning of informal jade business (Interview B4), today in many cases the locals do not extract jade, but rather take bits and pieces which may remain at extraction sites. There are also cases when they steal jade from the warehouses of the extraction company. In this sense this activity could be referred to as “jade picking,” similarly to berry and mushroom picking. Even though the informants refer to their activities as “stealing” (Interview B8), they do not see this as a problematic issue, as jade is not believed to be “owned” by the extractive business just based on the fact that the company has the license. Jade is perceived more as a part of nature similarly to animals, fish, or plants, so it is logical to take some for your needs (however, not too much, in order not to enter into the conflict with the spirits of the territory).

This logic of symbolic ownership over resource due to the knowledge of the landscape is, however, contradicting the imposed logic of the state which sees the informal miners as thieves. My informant Balta recalls the episode of direct interaction with the state during his informal “jade hunting” trip: on the way back, already carrying the stones in the car, he and his friends were stopped by police and had to pretend they were carrying fish instead:

“So, those cops, two of them, were just standing there... So, they are asking, swearing, of course: “Who are you? Where are you going?” We answer: “We are fishermen.” They just look at us, like who are you taking us for. So they searched the car and found the stones.”

(Interview B5)

This episode is in line with Louis Althusser’s (1971) famous example of the hailing policeman: when a policeman shouts “Hey, you!” and you turn around, this is the moment you recognize yourself as the subject of the state. The example above demonstrates the clash in two perceptions: the locals carrying the jade they see as their own, but when being stopped by the police, recognizing that their actions would be considered illegal from the state’s point

of view. As a result, they subjugate to the state's discourse and try to pretend they were engaged in another form of resource extraction which is officially allowed (i.e. fishing). Nevertheless, the policemen do not believe them and exercise their power searching the car. This episode demonstrates, than even though informal jade extraction may be seen as a counter-action and as questioning the established role of the state, this role is not contested openly, and the locals are ready to conform to the rules designed by the authorities. Their protest, instead, takes a silent hidden form, as I discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

The resourcescape of Oka, therefore, reflects a complex entanglement of various forms of natural resource extraction. The extraction (or picking) of jade which started relatively recently became embedded into previously existing forms of subsistence hunting or fishing. Nowadays it follows similar logic: the concepts of luck as one of the organizing principles, the importance of showing respect towards the resource and not taking too much, the “hunting trophies” as reminders of previous trips, the risks associated with the activity, and, finally, the demonstration of strength and masculinity. The line between these forms of extraction is, therefore, blurred, even though for the state these activities are divided into “legitimate” and “illegal.” Both informal jade mining and other forms of extraction are embedded into the complex perceptions of sacred landscape in Oka and into the set of relations between humans and non-human entities (masters of territory).

## Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that humans, mining sites and landscape features in Prionezhskii district of Karelia and Okinskii district of Buriatia are mutually entangled in a common “resourcescape” and may be united through the concept of rootedness. In both regions, local residents and mining are perceived as “rooted” in the landscape, though in

different ways. In Karelia, mining is seen as “rooted” due to its long-term tradition and expected continuity, as well as its strong influence on people’s lives. The rootedness of local residents is expressed as the need to remember the traditions (such as the traditional way of dancing or cooking), the Vepsian language, the villages which are long gone and their inhabitants who are also now a memory. Although in the Soviet period many of these connections got disrupted, the organizations such as Veps museum and *Paginklub* try to revive them with their role as “sites of memory” - *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1974; Szpociński, 2016). Therefore, in Karelia rootedness of Veps is promoted and popularized through cultural organizations and events such as Veps museum, *Paginklub*, Veps holiday “The Tree of Life.” In Buriatia, however, the concept of rootedness as eternal connection to one’s place of birth and place of living is a vital part of Buddhist-shamanist religious syncretism.

In Karelia, promotion of rootedness is more formalized and related to state institutions. In Buriatia, on the contrary, the notion of rootedness has been in many ways formed in opposition to the state: thus, shamanism and Buddhism reinforce the idea of belonging to the land despite being persecuted by the Soviet state in the 1930s. The local discourses on rootedness in Karelia and Buriatia may contradict the established state narratives. However, these contradictions are subtle and do not take the form of open protests. *Paginklub* may be viewed as an example of counter-action aimed at shifting power relations between state and its citizens, as it presents the Vepsian language as the element of present and future, the language of technology, or as a part of “city life.” Nevertheless, as *Paginklub* uses state-provided premises for its gatherings (The Center for National Cultures in Petrozavodsk) and is closely related to state-sponsored organizations and institutions, it does not openly contradict the state-promoted narratives of Vepsian language as “rooted” in the traditions and beliefs belonging to the past and to the countryside. Similarly, in Buriatia the illegal extraction of jade, though seen as a counter-conduct, does not openly question or doubt

the state power. Therefore, informal jade miners, when interrogated by police, immediately try to find a safe ground in their relations with the state and pretend they are engaged in state-approved activity (such as fishing).

Veps museum, Paginklub and Okinskii datsan may be viewed as heterotopias and heterochronias connecting various places and historical periods in their mere existence. They are filled with complex meanings in the communities and reflect the different relations between the residents and the state. The museum, even though it started informally, is now a state institution promoting the state-approved discourses on rootedness as mythological symbolic connections to the landscape. Paginklub, on the other hand, could be viewed more as an informal attempt of Veps activists to challenge the established discourses on “Veps, our ancestors” and to promote the Vepsian language as a contemporary medium of communication. In Veps museum and at the meetings of *Paginklub* in Karelia, the Soviet-time repressive politics towards Veps is not emphasized, and the state is rather viewed as a companion in the revitalization campaign: the administration shaped the museum in its current form and provides premises for the meetings of *Paginklub*. The datsan in Okinskii district of Buriatia, however, is rather a symbol of the repressive role of the state. The contemporary existence of Okinskii datsan is at the same time the reminder of the non-existence of Zhelgen datsan demolished in the 1930s. Okinskii datsan, by declaring itself a continuation of Zhelgen datsan, establishes the narrative of revitalization and development despite sufferings in the past. It reminds the residents of Oka of the past atrocities of the state: the purges, the imprisonment of lamas and shamans, the demolition of the datsan, prohibitions to practice Buddhism and shamanism (and, consequently, reinforce the connections to the land of ancestors). As I discussed in previous chapters, the different perception of the state and its policies may be explained by non-remote position of Prionezhskii district in Karelia and its large integration in state policies throughout the Soviet

period. In Okinskii district of Buriatia, due to its remote position, the role of the state was less visible, and when the state interfered, it in many cases resulted in destructions.

The concept of resourcescape demonstrates that in both of the case studies mining, other forms of extraction such as hunting or fishing, humans and non-human entities are in mutual interaction forming a common pluriverse. In Prionezhskii district of Karelia, mining is viewed as the activity deeply rooted in the community and in the landscape. Soviet-time mining enterprises are evaluated positively despite possible environmental problems they caused. On the contrary, contemporary mining companies, just as the tourist companies near Kvartsitnyi settlement, are blamed for appropriating local resources. The process of jade extraction follows a set of rules similar to hunting (e.g. the prohibition of taking too much from the nature or perception of both as men-dominated activities). The extraction of jade simultaneously becomes a process of negotiation with the masters of territory, and therefore not just an informal business, but a spiritual journey. Jade pieces are sometimes kept at homes similarly to hunting trophies and demonstrated as proofs of one's bravery and ability to take risks. The notion of "resourcescape" refers to the blurred borders between different types of resource extraction in Karelia and Buriatia, but at the same time the strong connection of all types of extraction to the land and its dwellers.

In this chapter, the concept of resourcescape demonstrates that the notions of nature and industry may be perceived as mutually entangled concepts not being in opposition. Both in Karelia and in Buriatia, stone extraction may be viewed as the continuation of the regions' natural richness. In both case studies, mining is embedded in local histories and narratives. Through the relations to mining, the notion of rootedness is manifested, as being rooted in the territory of Prionezhskii and Okinskii districts means having rights to participate in resource extraction. Therefore, mining becomes embedded in the particular understandings of

rootedness in Karelia and Buriatia. In Karelia, it is seen as a part of the local traditions, while in Buriatia it becomes a part of the sacred relations between humans and nonhuman entities.

## Discussion and conclusion

A piece of rock may connect a remote Russian settlement to France or China and become a symbol of great glory – or great danger. This dissertation focuses on two communities residing in different corners of the Russian Federation and articulating their claims towards language, land and resource through different means, including the concept of indigeneity. The notion of indigeneity has been important in the multinational Soviet and Russian states in different historical periods. Throughout time, aboriginal groups of the Russian North, Siberia and the Far East have been viewed by the state as largely unknown “others”, as subdued groups in need of protection, as a part of a global indigenous movement, or – currently – as a possible threat to the state’s sovereignty (Slezkine, 1994; Sokolovskiy, 2007a, 2013). These different roles are nevertheless united by a common overarching position: groups claiming to be indigenous are the subjects of the state, the products and co-producers of its power. This dissertation contributes to the body of knowledge on indigeneity construction under the influence of state-promoted discourses or in opposition to these discourses.

In the Introduction, I formulated the main aim of this dissertation: to analyze the articulations of indigenous subjectivities in Russia influenced by dominant discourses on indigeneity as well as by local interactions with the landscape and natural resources. The dissertation project aimed to analyze how the local communities in Prionezhskii district of Karelia and Okinskii district of Buriatia negotiate and re-negotiate the discourses on indigeneity and stone extraction.

This research question was addressed in each of the four analytical chapters from different perspectives. The empirical findings analyzed in Chapters 4-7 are structured by the dissertation's theoretical framework in Chapter 1, as well as the discussion of the case studies' background and the project's methodology. The goal of this concluding chapter is to bridge the dissertation's empirical findings with the relevant scholarly literature in order to demonstrate the project's original contribution to knowledge.

Chapter 1 demonstrated that the articulations of indigenous identity in many cases reflect the policies of the state as well as specific narratives and discourses promoted by the government. The analysis followed Foucault's definition of power as a multidirectional overarching process (Foucault, 1990) and Li's notion of government exercising power through creating mindsets (Li, 2000). I demonstrated how indigenous groups, while trying to articulate their claims, at the same time submitted to pre-existing narratives and reinforced the existing stereotypes.

At the same time, however, Chapter 1 argued that it would be simplistic to claim that indigenous identities are "imposed" by the state, even if we speak about a strong state with a history of subjugation such as Russia. As Susan Hicks (2011: 3) notes, indigenous experiences are diverse and are situated in a particular historical and political context, and therefore it is hardly possible to speak about "necessary conditions for the articulation of indigenous identity" or "inevitable outcomes of indigenous politics."

Throughout the dissertation, I focused on these seemingly contradictory notions of adapting one's indigenous claims to state policies and basing them on historical context and the features of landscape. This contradiction echoes the Warwick debates between Ernest Gellner and Anthony Smith where both theorists of nationalism shared their views on the concept of nation. Both Smith and Gellner agreed that nations are modern phenomena, but held different views on the importance of memories, values, myths, and shared symbols in the

formation of ethnic communities. While Smith<sup>144</sup> argued that shared memories and values play a crucial role in the shaping of communities, Gellner<sup>145</sup> pointed out that these memories and common myths are in many cases produced by modernist processes. This dissertation argues that both state-promoted narratives and the specificities of historical context and the connections to territory have an impact on the articulation of indigenous claims. While the notions of indigeneity in Karelia and Buriatia are constructed under the influence of state discourses and the narratives of other agencies (such as foreign NGOs), these notions are simultaneously informed by local links to the specific territory and its *resourcescapes*. Moreover, the connections to territory and natural resources may temporarily shift existing power relations and make indigenous citizens question the established discourses and offer counter-narratives.

This concluding chapter concentrates on several intertwined themes: the accommodation of indigenous claims to state discourses in Karelia and Buriatia; how indigenous identities are informed by local resources and ultimately become a local resource in post-Soviet Russia; and finally, indigenous identity as a continuum or “a bundle of lines” (Ingold, 2015: 3). The final part of this chapter discusses the new directions this research may take in future.

## Contested narratives

Sarah Radcliffe (2015: 2) notes that indigeneity can only emerge from contested processes, and it is produced “in power-drenched ways”. As the empirical findings of this

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<sup>144</sup> The 'Warwick Debates' between Anthony D. Smith and Ernest Gellner: Anthony D. Smith, 'Opening statement: Nations and their pasts'. October 24, 1995. Available at: <http://gellnerpage.tripod.com/Warwick.html> (accessed May 8, 2019)

<sup>145</sup> The 'Warwick Debates' between Anthony D. Smith and Ernest Gellner: Ernest Gellner's reply 'Do nations have navels?', October 24, 1995. Available at: <http://gellnerpage.tripod.com/Warwick2.html> (accessed May 8, 2019)

dissertation demonstrate, the articulations of indigeneity in Karelia and Buriatia are components of a process of constant negotiation and contestation between the state and its citizens. The perceptions of the state as an actor with unlimited power are very strong in post-Soviet Russia, and a number of recent studies focused on the limited capacity of indigenous citizens to engage in open protests against the state. The reason for the lack of open confrontation could be the Soviet legacy of approving state-produced narratives (Stammmler, 2011), a lack of capacity and training to stand for one's rights legally (Fondahl & Sirina, 2006), or the historical dominance of Russians regulating the economic and political life of the Russian North and Siberia (Petrov, 2008). However, taking Foucault's notion of power as a starting point, this section does not view state power as a top-down process directed from the state's authorities towards local residents. It shows how the residents of Karelia and Buriatia, while appropriating state discourses, simultaneously contest them. While viewing the post-Soviet Russian state as omnipotent and seeking its support, they do not perceive it as just or fair and instead see it as a peculiar entity with continuously changing rules. In order to secure a better living, they learn to play by these rules and in certain aspects manage to outplay the state in co-creating common narratives. Therefore, I view the local residents of Karelia and Buriatia not as passive executants of the rules dictated by the state, but as active co-creators of these rules. In doing so, they accommodate state narratives, but concurrently they articulate their demands to the state and therefore exercise their agency.

In academic literature, mixed attitudes to the state in post-Soviet Russia as a source of support but at the same time as a potential danger have been widely analyzed. Recent studies of the role of the state in Russian regions demonstrated that in many areas which are commonly considered "peripheral" in Russia, such as the Republic of Dagestan (Kaliszewska, 2016) or the Republic of Altai (Pozanenko, 2019), the state is perceived as present and absent at the same time. It may simultaneously be perceived as a cruel force which one should avoid

and as the source of order or security one should long for (Kaliszewska, 2016).<sup>146</sup> While acknowledging a lack of support from the state, the residents of peripheral regions nevertheless continue to hope for such support (Pozanenko, 2019). The “order” provided by the Russian state, however, is far from clear, as the federal and regional laws have changed frequently since 1990 and still bear the residues of Soviet legal practices (Voell & Kaliszewska, 2016).

The ability of Russian citizens to flexibly adapt to changing policies could also be viewed as a legacy of the Soviet time. As Jens Dahl (2012: 141) notes on his experience of working with indigenous representatives in the UN during *perestroika*, “The indigenous peoples of the Russian Soviet Republic were surprisingly quick in getting organized... From the Communist system, they were familiar with organizing and they carried these experiences to the United Nations... the Russian indigenous peoples had various forms of training and experience in dealing with governments and governmental institutions.” Indeed, ethnic revitalization campaigns of indigenous peoples of Russia were informed by their previous experience in dealing with state institutions which they acquired in the Soviet period. As Soviet policies were changing, it was important to demonstrate a certain level of flexibility in dealing with the state and accommodating its policies. In Buriatia, Soiot activists leading the revitalization campaign of the 1990s, worked in local administration, such as at the *sel'sovet* (R: village council) and therefore had experience in dealing with bureaucracy which was needed in their work towards receiving indigenous status.

The discrepancies in articulations of indigenous claims in Karelia and Buriatia are the result of their level of immersion in state-promoted narratives. Northern Veps in Karelia are

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<sup>146</sup> Similarly, in Ssorin-Chaikov's (2003) example of the Evenki indigenous minority, they simultaneously try to avoid the state as it is associated with dangers and also lean towards it for security and stability. In the case of the Kola Sami discussed by Vladislava Vladimirova (2014: 37), the informants “conserve their expectations for strong state rule and protection.”

an example of an ethnic group which for a long time has lived in extreme proximity to the state. Veps villages are situated close to Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelia, and not far from federal centers. This closeness offered opportunities for negotiating with the state already in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when Veps stoneworkers were involved in stonecutting and building works in several Russian cities. Their work and the travels of Veps stoneworking brigades connected them to famous places and events such as the 1917 Revolution or the construction of Lenin's Mausoleum, one of the main symbols of the Soviet state. Since diabase and quartzite quarries opened in Prionezhskii district in the 1920s, the role of the state in Veps villages became even more important. The quarries became symbolic centers of the district, and most of the residents worked there or had a family member employed there.<sup>147</sup> Mining enterprises were responsible for other aspects of local life: supporting schools and kindergartens, providing heating and hot water, repairing roads and granting vacation trips to health resorts (*R: sanatorii*). Life in Prionezhskii district was governed by industry rhythms, and these repeating rhythms provided the feeling of security. This does not mean that the district's residents blindly trusted the state. The narratives of "imprisonment" and "being tamed with stone" discussed in Chapter 5 demonstrate that the narratives of conquering nature promoted by Soviet media were not necessarily shared by the residents of Veps villages. However, the Soviet state was treated as the security provider, and therefore the privatization of the 1990s created the contemporary narrative of being abandoned by the state (as Chapters 4, 5 and 6 demonstrate). As this narrative was summed up by one of my interlocutors in Prionezhskii district, "they just take stone from us, and we are not needed anymore."

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<sup>147</sup> This involvement was so natural for the residents of Prionezhskii district that I had several informants who would at first answer negatively to a direct question about stoneworking experience, but later in the conversation it would turn out that they actually did work at the quarry at some part of their lives. But as this occupation was so widespread, they did not even record this employment at the quarry as a specific stoneworking experience.

As a result of mining development and related migrations in the 1950s – 1980s, the ethnic composition of Veps villages changed substantially. Without long-established common foundations, the newly diverse population became especially prone to state-promoted discourses and narratives. The Soviet state provided the discourses of stone being important for the state, the sacrality of industry and labor, and mutual support and comradeship among workers. These narratives are still present in today's villages and provide a striking contrast between the idealized past and the disrupted present (such as the example of Kvartsitnyi settlement which is discussed in Chapter 5). The locals are eager to find excuses for state enterprises potentially harming nature and instead blame private companies and tourist bases for the quality of water and the loss of fish and berries. Many of the informants are extremely proud of their diabase and quartzite, not only because of their beauty and rarity, but also because of their role in Soviet industry. The high demand for the stone is associated with demand for themselves as the producers of this stone. On the other hand, the decline and privatization of mining enterprises is often viewed as a betrayal of the former values of working hard for the country and the sense of comradeship which they developed as a community.

In Okinskii district of Buriatia, the role of the state was – and remains – seemingly different. The district is a remote part of Buriatia with limited transportation options and harsh natural conditions which limit travel possibilities. Therefore, both the regional capital Ulan-Ude and Moscow are perceived in Okinskii district as faraway places from different worlds. Due to strong memories of the purges of the 1930s and subsequent actions such as the liquidation of reindeer herding, state policies are largely associated with violence, disruptions of the established lifestyle, and instability. However, similarly to mining being absent from everyday life but still present as a threat or as a secret source of income, the state is simultaneously absent and present in Okinskii district. Its residents, while hoping to remain

isolated from state policies (e.g. they hope the state will not limit jade extraction further), at the same time expect state authorities to take action when they need it (for example, concerning road repairs or mobile connection). Although many local residents reproduce narratives of the suppressive role of the Soviet state, these narratives ultimately reinforce their self-positioning as a marginalized community which is in need of additional support, and therefore supports the state-promoted discourses on indigeneity. The regional authorities construct the image of Sojots as people who were marginalized in the past and need to get justice now (e.g. to be protected from mining companies). Therefore, whereas the presence of the state is very different in Karelia and Buriatia, attitudes towards it are similar. The residents of both regions are distrustful of the state, while at the same time longing for its support, as this support could potentially bring security. The state is two-faced, appearing as a strong pressuring force and as a kind security provider.

The strong desire to be supported by the state is manifested in the indigenous campaigns which started both in Karelia and Buriatia at the beginning of the 1990s. During the campaign, both Veps and Soiot activists used state-defined categories when defining and promoting their indigenous identities. They emphasized the features of indigeneity which were accepted by the state, such as the focus on cultural aspects of indigeneity in Karelia and revitalization of language and reindeer herding in Buriatia. On the other hand, the features which were not in line with the state-promoted indigeneity discourse were omitted. When promoting the revitalization of the Soiot language, the leaders of the Soiot indigenous campaign did not mention that the language was never used outside of the classrooms of Sorok school. When emphasizing the importance of the Veps cultural heritage, indigenous activists from Karelia did not stress the local links to stoneworking which could also have defined their local identity, since stoneworking as a traditional occupation did not conform to the notions of “exoticized Others” or communities living close to nature and rejecting

changes in their lifestyle. Therefore, indigenous status in Karelia and Buriatia is a manifestation of local relations with the state. As the definitions of indigeneity that the state produces only become a social reality if they are accepted by the members of a particular community (Vakhtin, Golovko & Schweitzer, 2004), the articulation of indigeneity becomes a two-sided process. In the cases of Karelia and Buriatia, the definitions of indigeneity were provided by the Russian state, but they were accepted and promoted by the local communities.

However, the process of negotiations over indigenous claims indicates not only the strong role of state power, but also the level of the citizens' distrust towards the state and dissatisfaction with its policies. The rapid escalation of indigenous campaigns in the 1990s, during the post-Soviet transformations, demonstrates that the residents of Karelia and Buriatia were seeking for possible ways to protect their regions. Today, the promotion of indigeneity in Karelia and Buriatia can be seen at the same time as being in correspondence with the state's narrative and also as a counter-narrative indicating a low level of trust in the state's support. In both regions, the escalation of indigenous revitalization campaigns indicated that the residents take actions aimed at the protection of the land and resources which they perceive as "their own" based on the notions of symbolic ownership. In addition to the Soviet-time narrative about stone being important for the state, the residents of Veps villages realized it was important for their well-being, and they tried to protect their links to the stone by becoming a part of the indigenous campaign. In Buriatia, even though local residents reinforce the narrative about the strong pressuring role of the state,<sup>148</sup> their engagement in the indigenous campaign becomes an attempt to question these narratives. This dissertation argues that the indigenous status in Karelia and Buriatia is a contested notion. It is clearly

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<sup>148</sup> With remarks such as "If only Putin decides so" (field notes, 2016) and "Everything is decided from above: we should be engaged in cattle breeding" (Interview B15).

defined and promoted by the state, and while trying to receive it, indigenous groups need to re-position their identities within the state-approved frameworks. At the same time, the mere existence of indigenous campaigns in both regions signifies that Veps and Sojots activists were ready to fight for ensuring their rights over their territory and resources which they believed were unjustly taken from them. In this sense, the pursuit of indigenous status becomes simultaneously a state-approved action and a counter-conduct questioning its omnipotent power.

## Resource identities

This section introduces the concept of *resource identities* which unites the two main themes of this dissertation: indigeneity in Karelia and Buriatia as shaped by state-promoted narratives and as produced by local interactions with a place. The notion of resource identities refers, on the one hand, to the state-approved version of indigenous identity becoming a resource for the residents of Karelia and Buriatia. This resource, as discussed in the previous section, is used to seek state support and to justify and protect local connections to the land. On the other hand, the notion of resource identities relates to the formation of identity under the influence of a local *resourcescape* which, as discussed in Chapter 7, includes not only stone or gold, but also fishing, hunting, or other forms of interaction with the landscape. Establishing a link between the connection to local resources and the formation of indigenous identity explains the claims of symbolic ownership over natural resource extraction expressed by the residents of Karelia and Buriatia. This section focuses on the notion of indigenous identity as based on local resources and as becoming an additional local resource.

Both meanings of *resource identities* are intertwined and mutually dependent. The relations between humans and resourcescapes in Karelia and Buriatia get shaped by state

discourses. Chapter 5 discusses how sacred perceptions of landscape in Karelia were gradually replaced by narratives promoting the importance of industry. Similarly, Chapter 7 focuses on the way indigenous connections to place in Karelia are framed by state institutions such as the Veps ethnographic museum in Sheltozero village. However, there is also a counter-process. The constructions of identity in Prionezhskii district in Karelia and Okinskii district in Buriatia are based on the community's shared resources – the cultural capital including their links to territory, their historical connection to the region's industries, and their knowledge of the place. As David Anderson (1998: 64) notes in his work on the Evenki minority in Siberia, "...appropriative action in this region was based on different yet complementary ways of knowing the land." Similarly, for the Sami people in northern Finland "knowledge... creates places. And in creating places, it also makes the inhabitants people of these places – it makes them local" (Ingold and Kurttila, 2000: 194). In Karelia and Buriatia, the knowledge of the land creates the perceptions of symbolic ownership over it.

The notion of economic privileges related to indigenous status goes back to the Soviet time when indigenous residents had a number of benefits including hunting and fishing quotas. In the post-Soviet period, having indigenous status strengthened the position of the group, especially on the international level (Vakhtin, Golovko & Schweitzer, 2004). As a number of studies demonstrate, ethnic and indigenous identity may be viewed as a resource which helps the group to increase its social capital and to receive additional support (Appiah, 2001; Grigor'eva, 2017; Amogolonova et al., 2008). In strong pressuring states, the residents need to find a way to protect their land and resources. Indigenous identities are seen as a recourse in obtaining certain benefits and privileges which cannot be obtained by other means but to which the local residents feel symbolically entitled, such as greater control over the district's stone deposits.

Speaking about the reasons behind indigenous campaigns in Karelia and Buriatia, it would be a one-sided perspective to narrow them down to economic benefits which come with the status of a small-numbered indigenous people. Both in Karelia and Buriatia, indigenous campaigns became attempts to secure the state support which was needed in the turbulent period of the 1990s. In both regions, this was the time when the familiar schemes stopped working and new modes of livelihood were still unclear. In Karelia, state mining enterprises which, as Chapter 6 demonstrated, had been the pillars holding the settlements together, were either closed or were sold to private owners. In Buriatia, rapid development of gold mining and the construction of the Mondy – Orlik road opened up possibilities for further resource extraction. Reflecting the dual attitudes to the state in both Karelia and Buriatia as a source of pressure but also as a source of support, indigenous status became a way to get protection from the state's actions and to secure its support at the same time.

However, the perception of indigenous status as a resource which helps the community to receive support from the state is only one side of a larger issue. When indigenous identity is shaped, its notions are based on the values attached to local resources. As Chapter 5 argues, local connections to the land and resources in Karelia and Buriatia influence the relations between the state and its citizens and even provide counter-narratives which become a form of silent protest. Both Veps and Sojots have a history of resource extraction in their territories, and stone-related legends are still popular among local residents as serve as a source of pride and as a manifestation of strong local links to the territory.

The empirical findings of this dissertation demonstrate the influence of mining on the formation of local identities in Prionezhskii district of Karelia and Okinskii district of Buriatia. Decorative stones extracted there have multiple layers of meaning: as financial assets, as a product of one's own labor, as a connection to famous places, as important elements of the state's industrial development, or as beautiful and rare objects which make

the districts' territories special. In Karelia, mining serves as a family legacy, while the past, present and future of Veps villages are defined by local historical links with stoneworking. These links form the unique local identity of Veps villages which unites northern Veps as well as the people who moved to Prionezhskii district to work in the quarries and got accustomed to the local way of life through shared work in the mining industry. Although the connections to stone in Okinskii district are not as visible as in the Veps villages of Karelia, jade is important for local residents as a part of the sacred landscape (as discussed in more detail in Chapter 5). As Chapter 4 argues, the connections to natural resources influence the specificities of indigenous claims. Therefore, in Karelia, where mining is not perceived as something alien, the focus of the indigenous campaign was mostly on the development of Vepsian language and culture. In Okinskii district of Buriatia, where mining development is rather a recent phenomenon and was perceived as a threat to the established lifestyle, the main focus of the indigenous campaign was on the protection of land. Chapter 7 also demonstrated that whereas in Karelia the notions of indigeneity as “rootedness” are closely connected with the knowledge of the Vepsian language, in Buriatia the concept of indigeneity encompasses close connections to the sacred landscape and to the Buddhist-shamanist religious syncretism.

The symbolic relations of ownership over the land and resources in Karelia and Buriatia do not merely inform the articulations of indigeneity in both regions, but influence power distributions between the state and the citizens. A number of studies analyze the controversies and disparities between “official” norms and local beliefs in relation to legal versus “moral” ownership over natural resource management (Wilson, 2002; Simonova, 2014; Lahiri-Dutt & Dongov, 2017). In the case of Okinskii district, local symbolic ownership over the land and resources is realized in the form of illegal jade extraction. As the residents of Okinskii district state, they may not comply with official legal norms of resource

extraction, but they have the moral right for the local jade as a part of their land. As one of the interviewees framed it: “Why not take something that belongs to you anyway” (Interview B5).

In Karelia, the close links of Veps with local industry influences the creation of counter-narratives which question the state-promoted view on indigenous minorities as people deeply rooted in the past and not willing to change an established lifestyle. In contrast, Chapters 5 and 7 demonstrate that Veps activists promote a different image of Veps as a modern ethnic group which partakes in technological development and is prepared for changes. During the interviews, several Veps activists stated that they see Veps as not complying with the general image of indigenous communities being “backward” and “stuck in the past.” Both Margarita and Renata, whose quotes I discuss in Chapter 5, stated that, in their opinion, industry helped Veps to develop as an ethnic group and to accept the changes brought to their community by rapid industrialization. However, the image of Veps as highly industrialized and modern community, though shared by many activists, was not emphasized during the indigenous campaign. In order to comply with the state-defined criteria, Veps were presented as a “forest people” in a land full of ancient beliefs and superstitions. The fact that this land was situated within an hour or two’s drive from Petrozavodsk was not emphasized, as well as the industrial heritage of northern Veps.

Therefore, while state power shapes and modifies people’s relations with the landscape, this process may also take the opposite direction: local connections to land influence people’s relations with the state and its policies. In Chapter 6, I discuss the ways of “synchronization” with nature in Okinskii district when the locals are never sure when the natural conditions change but quickly learn to modify their routines accordingly. Similar principles of synchronization, which were developed in Okinskii district over centuries, could later be adapted to the “working the system” in the Soviet and post-Soviet period. As Alena Ledeneva (1998) discusses, specific skills and networks were needed to maneuver within the

constraints of the Soviet system. In post-Soviet Russia, as state's policies are unstable, it becomes important to demonstrate flexibility when adjusting to them. It is possible to suggest that the skill of synchronization with nature mastered by the residents of Okinskii district, together with the legacy of working the Soviet system, allowed them to construct the discourse of Soiot indigeneity and to eventually receive indigenous status.

This section continues the discussion from the previous part of this chapter on indigeneity as a contested identity. It argues that while the notions of indigeneity in Karelia and Buriatia were largely informed by state-promoted narratives defining indigenous identity and were used by the communities as resources potentially bringing economic and social benefits, these notions were simultaneously informed by the local resourcescapes. Local connections to the land and its resources in Karelia and Buriatia influenced the character of indigenous claims and questioned the established state narratives. However, as the state is perceived in both regions as a powerful actor with almost limitless influence, the counter-narratives produced in Karelia and Buriatia did not take the form of open protest and remained in the local domain as silent forms of counter-conduct.

## **The continuum of indigeneity**

If, following Ingold, we imagine every living being comprised of connections and entanglements with other beings and with the landscape, e.g. as a “bundle of lines” (Ingold 2015: 3), our identities become a combination of various processes, some of which may interact in a number of ways or even contradict each other. The study of people and objects then becomes the study of the lines they are comprised of and the connections they form to each other (Ingold 2007). It is in most cases not possible to divide a community into clear and stable categories such as “local” versus “incomer” or “native” versus “non-native”; instead,

the community may rather look like a continuum (Liarskaya, 2017: 141). As Susan Hicks (2011: 229) notes, “indigeneity can be seen as a kind of continuum in which some groups are more successful in claiming an indigenous identity and other groups less so.” Rane Willerslev (2007: 5-6) refers to one of his encounters during fieldwork in Siberia: “...For many local people, being a Yukaghir person is not so much an identity that one is born with or born to, but a quality that is obtained through one’s occupation and territory of residence. An elderly man thus explained to me that although his parents were Yukaghirs, he registered as an Even when he moved to the mountains to work with reindeer herders, and then became a Yukaghir again when he returned to Nelemnoye to take up hunting.” In Willerslev’s example, being Even or Yukaghir depends on the specific activity the person is engaged in, namely working with reindeer or hunting. In this example, Even or Yukaghir identity is presented not as something “set in stone,” but as a fluid notion without strict borders. David Anderson makes similar observations in his study of the Evenki minority in Northeastern Siberia. He refers to “relational identity” (Anderson, 2000b: 91) as a way to conceptualize the fluid nature of identity formation when it is common for a person to move between several identities within one’s life span. As Vakhtin, Golovko and Schweitzer (2004: 256) note, “the contemporary ethnic and cultural reality in the Russian North and in the whole Arctic region is undoubtedly an intermixture. The binary systems of classification, still widespread today (indigenous – non-indigenous) are in the best case a sincere fallacy.”<sup>149</sup>

Both case studies at the focus of this research represent continua of fluid identities which cannot be divided into clear distinctive categories, as the categories themselves are accidental. There is no clear logic to the fact that Veps have the status of an indigenous small-

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<sup>149</sup> See also Schweitzer, Vakhtin & Golovko (2013: 147): “The Old-Settlers portrayed and discussed in this article can best be understood as “mixed groups” along a continuum ranging from “native” to “Russian.” The end points of the continuum, however, are merely ideal types today, and probably have never been anything else.”

numbered minority of the Russian Federation, whereas Karelians do not, simply because the number of Karelians exceeds the numerical ceiling of fifty thousand people. Similarly, while Sojots are considered indigenous by the Russian state, Buriats do not have the status as they are too numerous as an ethnic group. Why is this numerical ceiling stipulated to be fifty thousand people and not ten thousand or one hundred thousand? There is no clear reason behind this decision of the Russian government.<sup>150</sup> For the residents of Prionezhskii district in Karelia and Okinskii district in Buriatia, it is also unclear why people who have lived in the area for years and know it well should enjoy different rights and privileges to each other as some of them have indigenous status while others do not. My informant Alevtina from Karelia defined herself as “Ukrainized Veps” on the basis of her knowledge of the Vepsian language and the local nature. Another informant from Karelia stated, “of course I am indigenous, I am from here.” In Okinskii district in Buriatia, a number of informants saw a clear distinction between being Soiot “on paper” while being “really” Buriat. These divisions do not seem to matter much as long as the local residents are in their immediate surroundings “where they have at least some control” (Wilson, 2002: 164) and not in direct contact with the state bureaucracy.

Within these immediate surroundings, alternative divisions appear. Whereas people who have lived in the community long enough are readily accepted as indigenous, worries may rise regarding those who are perceived in the community as “outsiders” in case they claim indigenous status. In Chapter 4, I present the example of Vladislav, originally from Novosibirsk, who was either accused of betraying the community of Okinskii district or praised for helping it due to the gossip claiming that he had registered as a Soiot. In Karelia,

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<sup>150</sup> As Sirina (2009) and Øverland (2015) note, in 2005 the Russian political party *Yabloko* in cooperation with The Congress of Karelians suggested to raise the numerical ceiling for indigenous small-numbered peoples from fifty thousand people to seventy thousand. As *Yabloko* representatives stated, this change would mean that several ethnic minorities such as Karelians would be included in the list of indigenous peoples and enjoy corresponding rights. However, this suggestion was not discussed further by the Russian government.

whereas Soviet-era migrants are accepted as part of the community, recent migrants who started a stoneworking business in the former church building in Shoksha village are treated negatively as outsiders trying to appropriate local resources. The former directors of state-managed enterprises are still respected in Prionezhskii district, while most of the current quarry directors are accused of dismissing local needs.

In the immediate surroundings of Prionezhskii and Okinskii districts, alternative local identities appear as well. The community of former and current mining workers and their families in Prionezhskii district of Karelia are united by their common industrial legacy, have common holidays such as the annual Miner's Day in Rybreka, share common legends and myths and hope for a common future. In Okinskii district of Buriatia, there is a strong local identity of "Oka people" (R: *okintsy*). This identity unites people of various ethnic origins living in Okinskii district. In local narratives as well as conversations on the *Okinskii anonym* social media platform, *okintsy* are presented as a distinctive group with common features: as strong and brave people who are not afraid of hardships, ready to help each other when needed, take high value in extended families and respect their nature. Okinskii district itself is viewed as a place "not for everybody," as a beautiful land which is extremely difficult to live in but to which people nevertheless get attached.

These alternative identities do not get promoted as a part of people's negotiations with the state, but this does not mean that they do not matter. In this sense, the vague notion of indigeneity becomes a way to protect the communities which formed in the given territories and which need to feel secure and to be protected by the state. Joe Bryan's definition of indigeneity linking it to cartography encompasses this situation well: "like maps, indigeneity also functions as a style and manner of representing the outcomes of specific historical and geographical processes... Like maps, indigeneity thus describes a relationship rather than an objective fact" (Bryan 2009: 25). This understanding of indigeneity resonates with Ingold's

distinction between mapping as an embodied understanding of the world and map-making as knowledge production. Map-making, as Ingold argues, is abstracted from the perception of being in the world, while mapping represents the immediate perceptions of dwelling in the landscape. The process of indigenous articulations in Russia represents both mapping – or experiencing rootedness in the resourcescape – and map-making, or producing knowledge about indigenous identities which are not immediately connected to the actual experiences.

This dissertation is about state power and the co-creation of knowledge, but it is also about entanglements and losses. It is about people forming connections with the land and with the stone extracted there, following the cycles of nature and industry, feeling related to distant cities and countries, becoming rooted to a certain territory and experiencing the loss of stability and the rupture in previously existing networks and processes. Despite being far away from each other, the settlements of Karelia and Buriatia are nevertheless connected because of their common experiences, common fears and losses. While the miners in Prionezhskii district of Karelia are worried about privatization of their quarries and the loss of mythologized Soviet stability, the hunters and herders in Okinskii district of Buriatia fear the expansion of mining and possible changes in the official status of jade they illegally extract. These emotions have a common base: alienation from the sense of rootedness, and relative stability turning into unknown futures.

## **Possibilities for future research**

The contemporary changing discourses on indigeneity in Russia demonstrate that new variations of these negotiations are yet to follow; new knowledges will be created as well as new responses. This study is therefore likely to take new directions in future, especially as the state's power in Russia is constantly growing and centralization discourses are becoming

more widespread. In these conditions, indigenous activists may be seen as potential sources of instability which are undesired by the Russian authorities. It would be interesting to return to this analysis within the period of several years and to reassess how the changes in Russian federal policies influence local manifestations of indigeneity in Karelia and Buriatia. I am also planning to expand the current focus in order to include more case studies of local relations with stone extraction in Russia. Possible case studies of the histories of human – stone relations would be the extraction of amber in the Kaliningrad region or local perceptions of emeralds and malachite extraction in the Ural Mountains. I recognize that the specificities of indigenous/local relations with industry, or more specifically, with stone extraction vary depending on the concrete case. Therefore it would be beneficial to compare the cases of Veps and Sojots with other examples of local connections with stoneworking.

Another possible future direction would be to compare indigeneity construction under the influence of state and industry discourses in the former Soviet Union with that in Latin America or East and Southeast Asia. The ethnographies of Amazonia and Siberia have been compared through the lens of perspectivism and human engagement with nonhuman animals and artifacts (Brightman, Grotti & Ulturgasheva, 2012). I see a number of similarities between my case studies and the ethnographic materials from Latin America (e.g. Penfield, 2019) in terms of resource extraction.

The analysis of the interview data provided material for a number of themes which are just marginally mentioned in this dissertation, as they did not fully fit within its main focus. In the future, I plan to expand my analysis on several of these themes. One of them would be the entanglement of mining and gender in Karelia and Buriatia. The histories of female stoneworkers in Karelia constituted a solid part of my interview data but could not be fully included in the dissertation's text. In the future, I plan to focus on the gendered dimensions of mining as a separate project. Such a study would address the current gap in the academic

studies of gender, environment and technology in historical narratives (Morgan, 2017) and illustrate the importance of gender research within the field of environmental history (Merchant, 1990). An additional direction I plan to focus on while reassessing the fieldwork data will be the relations between local communities, mining and infrastructure in post-Soviet Russia. Many of the resource-rich regions of Russia, such as Okinskii district, are associated with remoteness and transportation difficulties. Whereas the development of infrastructure makes resource extraction and transportation easier, it may at the same time be seen as interference by the state in the local way of life. In-depth ethnographic studies of the entanglements of local dwellers, resource extraction and infrastructural development could provide valuable materials on the connections between landscape and industry. I hope that this dissertation will serve as a starting point for new research projects focusing on various aspects of human – industry relations in the post-Soviet space and beyond.

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## Appendix 1. List of interviews conducted in Karelia

Interview code	Pseudonym, gender	Role	Interview data
K1	Konstantin (m)	FM	Shoksha, 2015
K2	Galina (f)	FM	Shoksha, 2015
K3	Elena (f)	FM	Shoksha, 2015
K4	Rodion (m)	CM	Shoksha, J2015
K5	Nikolai (m)	FM	Shoksha, 2015
K6	Polina (f)	ACT	Shoksha, 2015
K7	Mila (f)	FM	Shoksha, 2015
K8	Ekaterina (f)	FM	Shoksha, 2015
K9	Lyudmila (f)	FM	Shoksha, 2015
K10	Maria (f)	FM	Kvartsitnyi, 2015
K11	Irina (f)	FM	Kvartsitnyi, 2015
K12	Egor (m)	FM	Shoksha, 2015
K13	Stetlana (f)	FM	Shoksha, 2015
K14	Lev (m)	FM	Shoksha, 2015
K15	Aleksandra (f)	CM, MNG	Petrozavodsk, 2015
K16	Gennadii (m)	CM	Rybreka, 2015
K17	Veniamin (m)	FM	Rybreka, 2015
K18	Anatolii (m)	FM	Rybreka, 2015
K19	Sergei (m)	CM	Rybreka, 2015
K20	Andrei (m)	CM	Rybreka, 2015
K21	Valerii (m)	CM	Rybreka, 2015
K22	Anisia (f)	FM	Rybreka, 2015

K23	Vladimir (m)	CM	Rybreka, 2015
K24	Raisa (f)	LR	Shoksha, 2015
K25	Olga (f)	FM, ADM	Shoksha, 2015
K26	Antonina (f)	LR	Shoksha, 2015
K27	Klavdia (f)	LR	Shoksha, 2015
K28	Semyon (m)	CM	Shoksha, 2015
K29	Nina (f)	FM	Rybreka, 2015
K30	Zhanna (f)	FM	Rybreka, 2015
K31	Vilen (m)	CM	Rybreka, 2015
K32	Vadim (m)	CM	Rybreka, 2015
K33	Evgenia (f)	FM	Rybreka, 2015
K34	Alena (f)	FM	Rybreka, 2015
K35	Alevtina (f)	FM	Rybreka, 2015
K36	Vasilii (m)	FM	Kvartsitnyi, 2015
K37	Larisa (f)	FM	Kvartsitnyi, 2015
K38	Ninel' (f)	FM	Kvartsitnyi, 2015
K39	Rada (f)	FM	Kvartsitnyi, 2015
K40	Emma (f)	FM	Kvartsitnyi, 2015
K41	Nadezhda (f)	FM	Kvartsitnyi, 2015
K42	Stanislav	CM	Kvartsitnyi, 2016
K43	Lada (f)	FM	Kvartsitnyi, 2016
K44	Vitalii (m)	CM, MNG	Kvartsitnyi, 2016
K45	Matvei (m)	CM	Kvartsitnyi, 2016
K46	Lidia (f)	FM	Kvartsitnyi, 2016

K47	Oksana (f)	LR	Kvartsitnyi, 2016
K48	Iakov (m)	CM	Rybreka, 2016
K49	Viktor (m)	CM	Rybreka, 2016
K50	Anton (m)	CM	Rybreka, 2016
K51	Stepan (m)	CM	Rybreka, 2016
K52	Artyom (m)	CM	Rybreka, 2016
K53	Elizaveta (f)	FM	Rybreka, 2016
K54	Averian (m)	LR	Rybreka, 2016
K55	Pavel (m)	CM	Rybreka, 2016
K56	Adelaida (f)	FM	Rybreka, 2016
K57	Leonid (m)	ACT	Petrozavodsk, 2016
K58	Ravil (m)	CM	Kvartsitnyi, 2016
K59	Lenora (f)	FM	Kvartsitnyi, 2016
K60	Yuri (m)	FM	Kvartsitnyi, 2016
K61	Zlata (f)	ACT	Petrozavodsk, 2016
K62	Eduard (m)	ACT	Petrozavodsk, 2016
K63	Margarita (f)	ACT	Petrozavodsk, 2017
K64	Renata (f)	ACT, ADM	Petrozavodsk, 2017
K65	Innokentii (m)	FM, MNG	Petrozavodsk, 2018
K66	Marina (f)	ADM	Petrozavodsk, 2018

**Abbreviations:**

ACT – Veps activist

ADM – local administration representative (Prionezhskii district)

CM – current mining worker

FM – former mining worker

LR – local resident of Prionezhskii district who never worked in mining

MNG – managing position in one of the quarries

## Appendix 2. List of interviews conducted in Buriatia

Interview code	Pseudonym, gender	Role	Interview data
B1	Baiar (m)	BUD	Orlik, 2016
B2	Dashi (m)	ADM, ACT	Orlik, 2016
B3	Dondub (m)	BUD	Orlik, 2016
B4	Erdeni (m)	LR, J, H	Orlik, 2016
B5	Balta (m)	LR, J, H	Orlik, 2016
B6	Valeria (f)	ADM	Orlik, 2016
B7	Nikanor (m)	LR, H	Orlik, 2016
B8	Andrei (m)	ADM, J	Orlik, 2016
B9	Valentin (m)	ADM, ACT	Orlik, 2016
B10	Zhambal (m)	LR, J, H	Orlik, 2016
B11	Elisei (m)	LR, J, H	Orlik, 2016
B12	Zinaida (f)	ACT	Orlik, 2016
B13	Vladislav (m)	LR, H	Orlik, 2016
B14	Nadia (f)	ACT	Sorok, 2016
B15	Damba (m)	ADM, ACT, H	Sorok, 2016
B16	Tatiana (f)	ACT	Sorok, 2016
B17	Irina (f)	LR	Sorok, 2016
B18	Iulii (m)	LR	Orlik, 2016
B19	Nina (f)	LR	Orlik, 2016
B20	Aiur (m)	BUD, ACT	Orlik, 2016
B21	Nikolai (m)	ADM	Orlik, 2016
B22	Baldar (m)	LR, J	Orlik, 2016

B23	Nordan (f)	LR	Orlik, 2016
B24	Ivan (m)	ENG	Ulan-Ude, 2016
B25	Boris (m)	ACT	Ulan-Ude, 2016
B26	Snezhana (f)	ADM	Ulan-Ude, 2016 - 2017
B27	Nomina (f)	LR	Sorok, 2016
B28	Aleksandr (m)	LR	Orlik – Huzhir, 2016
B29	Dugar (m)	ADM	Sorok, 2016
B30	Arkadii (m)	LR, H	Sorok, 2016
B31	Valentina (f)	LR	Sorok, 2016
B32	Milena (f)	ACT	Ulan-Ude, 2017
B33	Vikentii (m)	ACT	Ulan-Ude, 2017
B34	Bulad (m)	ACT	Ulan-Ude, 2017
B35	Bator (m)	LR, J	Ulan-Ude, 2017
B36	Syren (m)	LR	Ulan-Ude, 2017

### Abbreviations:

ACT - Soiot activist

ADM – administration representative

BUD – primary occupation related to Buddhist religion

ENG – former road engineer

H – engaged in hunting

J – engaged in informal jade extraction

LR – local resident