

# THE LOST NORTH OF RUSSIA: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE "RUSSIAN NORTH"

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**ABSTRACT:** THE PAPER DEALS WITH THE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PROCESSES IN THE EUROPEAN NORTH OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION CONCERNING DEGRADATION OF NORTHERN TERRITORIES. IT IS UNDERLINED THAT IN CONDITIONS OF DEEP ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS AT ESTIMATION OF NORTHERN PROSPECTS IT IS NECESSARY TO TURN RESEARCH INTEREST FROM THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS TO SOCIO-CULTURAL ONE. THE NORTH IS THE DEVELOPED TERRITORY ON WHICH SPECIFIC SOCIAL COMMUNITIES WERE FORMED AND THEIR INTERESTS SHOULD BE COMBINED WITH INTERESTS OF THE STATE DEVELOPMENT. THEREUPON THE PARTICULAR INTEREST REPRESENTS THE ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL, ETHNIC AND LOCAL IDENTITIES AND CULTURAL POSITIONS OF NORTHERNERS.

**KEY WORDS:** THE NORTH, IDENTITY, ETHNICITY, NORTHERNERS, REGION, TERRITORIAL COMMUNITY

## INTRODUCTION

THE European north of Russia which is often called "Russian North", possesses huge resources, plays the major role in regulation of climate and planet ecology, its geopolitical importance last years essentially increases. At first sight there is no lack of attention to studying the north, but basically economists and economy-geographers write on the problems of northern territories, and also ecologists. For several years the International Northern ecological congresses are successively held in the country, but neither the ecology of man, nor cultural ecology of northern communities became an object of interested discussion at scientific forums, and the attention to the thought over and purposeful improvement of the social-cultural environment in the north is not the subject of care for political managers. Moreover, actions of the authorities are quite often directly opposite to the interests of primordial inhabitants of the North.

THE Russian experts write all more persistently about degradation of northern territories [Pilyasov, 2009; North, 2007; Ushkalov, 1999], while foreign experts in turn speak of multi-variant approach of possible scenarios of development of the European north of the Russian Federation, including unfavourable enough [Brunstadt, 2004]. As to sphere of public discussions here again discussion of modern economic, social realities which take place in the specified region, very often has the character of apocalyptic prophecies coming to statements

about “loss of the North” [Danilov, 2009]. Moreover the formula “the lost north” from publicism sphere successfully moves to scientific discussions. Thus the geographical concept “the European north” gets already social sense as this region all more persistently is perceived as cultural periphery, as stagnating territory, as a zone of social trouble.

It is obvious, that both the question *whether the North is lost*, and the answer to it having moved from publicism to scientific discourse demand raising the problem. In our opinion, in social aspect the North problematics mainly concerns three problems: to what degree the northern communities are destabilized today, whether the European north will remain as the developed territory, whether there is northern identity or present northerners do not any more identify themselves neither with territory of residing, nor with local communities.

This paper represents an attempt to understand how much the northern communities are integrated in social aspect, what is the evidence of their destabilization and how it is possible to characterize northern identities. In its basis are the materials of public opinion polls, and also the results of long-term observations, historical materials, field ethnographic observations, statistical and other data.

#### PROBLEM CHARACTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN NORTH: DEMOGRAPHIC DIMENSION

There are enough grounds to speak of the problem character of development of the European north. First of all this concerns demographic processes which are nowadays characterized by constant decrease in total number of the population of northern areas, districts and republics and negative balance of migration. Since 1989 till 2010 the Murmansk Region lost 30,6 % of the population, Nenets Autonomous Area - 23,2 %, Republic of Komi - 29 % [Shabaev, 2006a: 6; Results, 2010]. Last years annual decline in population of the Arkhangelsk Region and the Republic of Komi on the average makes 10 thousand people, 8-9 thousand people a year - decline in population of the Murmansk Region, the population of Karelia and the Vologda Region considerably decreases. Thus decrease in number is basically connected not with negative natural increase, but with external migration, as natural increase, for a long time having negative value, last two-three years in a number of regions shows positive dynamics (birth rate began to considerably exceed death rate).

Nevertheless, after 2002 stabilization of population number occurred only in the Nenets Autonomous Area where the balance of migration is nowadays positive. But, according to demographers, next years migratory outflow will be much higher than migratory inflow in the European north as a whole [the North, 2007]. Essential decrease in birth rate, and also increase in death rate of the population is also expected as, as a whole, the population of the European north of the Russian Federation quickly enough grows old. This occurs because young people leave northern regions in large quantities.

In the analytical material prepared by the territorial body of the Federal Agency of State Statistics on the Republic of Komi it is noted that since 2002 in Komi there is observed decrease in share of youth in the total structure of the population as a result of increased migration of representatives of this social group from the republic. In 2007 every fifth inhabitant at the age of 14-29 left the republic [Youth, 2008]. Among social and economic problems disturbing the youth are complexities with employment, low level of payment, drunkenness and narcotism, bad care of the authorities on the population. Biographic essays

which were written under our task by students of high schools of Syktyvkar within the frames of studying the vital strategy of youth, also confirm aspiration of a considerable part of youth to depart from the region.

**OUR** poll conducted in three “northern regional capitals” in March, 2010 has shown that 35,5 % of inhabitants of Arkhangelsk, 38,8 % of Murmansk and 39,6 % of Syktyvkar would like to leave their towns and regions forever or for a long time, and among youth the share of potential migrants is higher (aged to 25 - 51,4 % expressed desire to leave). With that in the regional centres, as a rule, the average incomes of the population are higher, the labour market is well developed, service and educational sphere are better organized, while in other towns and settlements of northern regions the situation is less favorable, and dissatisfaction of the population with their position, according to data of our researches, is higher, that is why the share of people wishing to leave their present residence is also higher. Polls among students and schoolchildren, conducted next years (2012-2013), only confirmed the moods of the youth.

**HIGH** level of migratory moods, however, is connected not only with the general dissatisfaction with life (it appeared to be high enough in inhabitants of the regional centres), but, most likely, is caused by the general not clear prospects of regional development. To the question “Have you any idea about how your area or republic will develop next years?” 8,3 % of respondents in Arkhangelsk, 11,3 % - in Syktyvkar and 13,2 % - in Murmansk gave positive answer. Moreover, from 42 to 48 % of those questioned in the named cities declare that northern policy of the federal centre is not clear, that subregion is not given proper attention to from the part of the country leaders and only about 6 % of respondents in all three cities agreed with opinion that the federal government gives much attention to development of northern regions and there is clear northern policy.

**IN** fact there are all grounds to assert that today there goes a process *of decolonization of the European north* in which result not only many villages, but also settlements degrade and cease to exist.

**LET'S** note that industrial colonization of the north began in the end of XIX - beginning of XX centuries and unlike the Russian colonization proceeding since IX till XVII centuries, having spontaneous (natural) character, it from the very beginning went under the control of the state and became the answer to attempts of Norway to extend its influence on Spitsbergen, Novaya Zemlya and Kola peninsula [Fedorov, 2009]. These attempts have led to strengthening the economic influence of the Norwegian industrialists in the Russian North and to that some territories including Novaya Zemlya began to be perceived as “the neutral land” [Nilsen, 1996]. Only consecutive and scaled efforts of the imperial power could confirm the status of northern territories as Russian lands. Today again there is a problem of “the neutral land”, for the process of reduction of the population of the European north not only is not stopped, but also increases, and many settlements, especially villages, either stop their existence, or degrade, as they have lost stimulus for development.

**EXPERTS** notice that in the modern world the increasing influence get the concept according to which not used completely or poorly developed territories (and territories left by the population) become some kind of “the nobody's” land, and the state possessing similar land as if limits or even loses “the sovereignty over its resources in case other countries wish to make use of them” [Ushkalov, 1999: 30]. Last years Russia tries to actively defend its rights to the Arctic and subarctic territories and organizes expensive expeditions which

purpose is the installation at the bottom of the Arctic ocean of state standard, restores military airdromes and bases in the Arctic islands which have been abandoned in the 1990-s, plans building of new ports, meteorological stations etc.

**HOWEVER** loss of the population which has developed the Arctic and subarctic territories several centuries ago, and oblivion of that the polar seas and adjoining territories long since are a zone of economic activities of aboriginals of the North (the Pomors, for example, long before Norwegians have come to Spitsbergen), will be loss of the main, but not symbolical, argument in modern geopolitical disputes on delimitation of spheres of interests in Arctic regions - resident population.

**THUS** authorities of Russia declare their aspiration to "returning to the North". In 2008 D. Medvedev approved the Arctic strategy of the Russian Federation [Bases, 2008], and in 2013 President Putin signed the Strategy of development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation and protection till 2020 [Putin approved, 2013]. These important documents, in our opinion, obviously specify geopolitical positions of the Russian leaders, but are not based on deep analysis of modern social realities in the European north of the Russian Federation and in other Arctic and subarctic regions of the country, and also do not assume settling (fixation) of the population in the north, are not aimed at formation of strong regional communities here.

**MANY** Russian analysts and the extracting companies working in the north consider as the most expedient to use for development of the Arctic and subarctic territories of temporary workers who work on oil- and gas-fields, in mines during some time (month-two), and then leave back to places of constant residing and again come back to the North after strictly certain time of rest. These workers are named *shift workers*, the resident population mistrust them. Representatives of minorities of the north regularly complain on shift workers as some of them are engaged in poaching, and not only scare away game in woods, but also kill domesticated reindeers in nomads-reindeer breeders in tundra. In trains, by which shift workers go from the European north and from Yamal to Moscow (and further to places of residence), they quite often arrange drunken brawls, as on industrial platforms there is observed strict "dry law" and troublemakers are dismissed at once. Therefore the population of northern towns and settlements who has to use railway transportation, is extremely dissatisfied with shift workers and regularly demands from local authorities of toughening of the police control in trains.

**ATTEMPTS** to replace resident population with shift workers cause serious problems also because, first, among shift workers today there are more and more guest workers and representatives of those ethnic groups whom with the local population had never encountered earlier and which therefore are perceived as "strangers". Secondly, orientation to use work of shift workers means that the labour market for representatives of local population is considerably narrowed, which leads to growth of social tension in northern communities.

**THE** poll conducted in the Nenets Autonomous Area in December, 2013, has shown that in the area already today certain part of the population can be referred to risk group as because of social disorder (lack of work, insufficient skill level and education) part of people conducts asocial way of life (drunkenness, narcotism, dependence). This part of the population can be involved faster than other social groups in various social conflicts (including international). Special danger is caused by the fact that local population **loses in social competition on labour market to visitors (which at that do not become a part of**

**local communities**), including representatives of those ethnic groups who in cultural aspect essentially differ from inhabitants of the area.

**BESIDES** this situation (which is characteristic not only for the Nenets Autonomous Area) creates additional stimulus for "pushing out" the resident population outside the boundaries of northern regions and even more strengthens migratory outflow of permanent residents.

**DECOLONIZATION** processes we have specified, are stimulated also by that the North ceased to be attractive to migrants in social and economic aspect: here is non-comfortable climate, very high prices for products and goods, difference in wages with the central regions of the country is not considerable as it was before, there is not enough possibilities for career growth etc.

**THE** demilitarization of the North actively conducted in the 1990-s played an important role in strengthening of migration from the North. As a result many military facilities were liquidated or suspended and only part of them is restored today. Scales of scientific researches were also considerably reduced, owing to what a number of meteorological stations were closed, geological parties were decreased or liquidated etc.

**BUT *de-industrialization of the north*** and refusal from diversification of economic complexes had the greatest importance. In the 1990-s many coal mines, mechanical-repair factories, sewing and furniture factories, enterprises of building industry were liquidated, while in the countryside collective farms and state farms, forest enterprises and various small-scale productions came to ruin. Building of new enterprises practically was not conducted, and expansion and reconstruction of the old ones was directed only on supporting mainly raw orientation of economy of the North.

**PROJECTS** which could transform economy of the whole region and create not separate centres of economic growth, but to form a whole industrial cluster round which would begin to develop small and medium-sized businesses, all that remained only on paper. The idea of creation of aluminous-alumic complex in Komi including the largest in Russia bauxite mine in Kerki settlement, aluminous factory near Sosnogorsk and Aluminium factory in the city of Pechora (obtaining energy from the Pechora State District Power Station) can serve as an example.

**TODAY** realization of another largest project - development of the Shtokmanovsky gas deposit which would allow to change industrial specialization of the Murmansk Region considerably, is for a long time postponed. All this creates uncertainty in tomorrow and complicates processes of consolidation of local communities. For example, in 2007 the Laboratory of Sociopolitical Researches of Syktyvkar University interviewed the population in the most problem-free town of the Republic of Komi, its oil "capital" Usinsk. In this prospering town less than 40% of respondents declared of uncertainty in tomorrow. Reasonableness and prevalence of such moods are well illustrated by remarks of respondents on questionnaires which are almost identical: "Oil will come to an end and there will be nothing". With that in "rating of anxiety" of inhabitants of Usinsk uncertainty in tomorrow took the second place (on the first place there were high prices for goods and services). The people who have arrived in due time in the North for self-realization or for the solution of their material problems, perceive their personal position today not only as unstable, but also do not believe in the future of their towns and settlements, and quite often in the future of the region as a whole. It is no mere chance that local identity which in former years in a number



of settlements was strongly expressed, diminish. Besides, regional identities are unstable and poorly expressed.

**DATA** of public polls conducted in the Republic of Komi in 1996, 2004, 2012 are rather indicative in this respect. In all cases greater part of respondents denied that the uniform territorial community united by common interests and common identity was formed in the republic. In the mid-1990-s only 1/3 of respondents considered that it was possible to speak of similar community with reference to Komi, in 2004 and 2012 such were somewhat more, but within a statistical error, that is why this did not testify to strengthening of processes of civil integration at republic level [Shabaev, 2004a]. Public poll conducted in March, 2010 in three regional centres in this respect gave rather indicative result. To the question "Do you think that it is possible to say that inhabitants of your region make the uniform and united community which has common interests and traditions?" 39,7 % of respondents in Arkhangelsk, 38,8 % in Murmansk and 32,8 % in Syktyvkar answered "yes", and the most part either denied that the territorial community is integrated, or found it difficult to answer this question. Northern regional identities were not formed, though successful experience of purposeful formation of such identities, carried out not on ethnic, but on territorial (civil) basis, is available in Russia (the Tatars - in Tatarstan, Yugra - in Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area). Thus, neither regional identity, nor local solidarity cannot serve as the stabilizing factor in the European north of the Russian Federation.

#### **PROBLEM CHARACTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN NORTH: SOCIAL DIMENSION. TOWNS-ISOLATES AND UNDEVELOPED TERRITORIAL COMMUNITIES**

**THERE** is no common identity neither at the level of northern industrial cities, nor at the level of areas, republics and districts. Separate administrative regions are perceived only as territories, but not as the common home for complete local communities. Certainly, similar perception of territorial communities has its bases. First of all it is connected with the site character of development of northern subjects of the Russian Federation. Thus an overwhelming part of the population and almost all economic potential of the Arkhangelsk Region is concentrated in two industrial regions: Arkhangelsk-Novodvinsk-Severodvinsk and Kotlas-Koryazhma. Specialization of the first is shipbuilding and machinery construction, of the second - transport and timber processing. In Komi several industrial complexes are singled out - the coal-mining formed on the basis of the Pechora coal province (the towns of Inta and Vorkuta), the northern oil-extracting which unites oil-fields in Komi and the Nenets Autonomous Area (the town of Usinsk), the central industrial region where oil- and gas-extraction are available, as well as their processing, where there are building and transport organizations, mechanical engineering and accompanying infrastructure (Ukhta-Sosnogorsk) and the southern one formed around Syktyvkar, capital of the republic. In the Murmansk Region there is Murmansk-Severomorsk as the powerful transport and service centre, as well as Kirovsk-Apatity (extraction of apatites and geology), Monchegorsk-Olenegorsk, and also Nickel (extraction of cobalt, nickel, copper).

**NORTHERN** towns and settlements are poorly connected with each other and their industrial structures are oriented not on the intraregional markets, but on the external ones on which condition depends the economic well-being both of local manufacturers, and all the population. Industrial cooperation and technological interrelation between the enterprises of northern areas and republics is either weak or absent at all. This finds reflection in self-perception of the inhabitants. The most vivid example is miners' Vorkuta located in the very

north of the Republic of Komi. Its inhabitants not only feel uniqueness of the town and its inhabitants, but also accurately separate themselves from the republican social medium. Here inhabitants, neither before, nor today, do not read republican newspapers, do not watch republican TV programs, while the town population, together with inhabitants of other northern cities, as though conditionally form some special community. "Isolationism" and "urban-centrism" found expression in local town folklore (popular saying "Vorkuta is the world capital"), and highly local solidarity. Namely this solidarity promoted that the Vorkuta miners and their trade unions long enough were leaders of working-class movement in Russia [Ilyin, 1998]. When in the early 1990-s the most radical figures of the Komi ethnonational movement began to declare of necessity to confer special political rights to "indigenous people" and to introduce residence qualification, it was Vorkuta that loudly declared of the possibility to withdraw from the republic [ShabaeV, 1998]. Towns and settlements-isolates are the characteristic phenomenon for all Russian North [Pilyasov, 2009], cultural shape of these communities, their special social organization require special studying.

**LOCALITY** of northern communities and their isolation was not the result of specificity of industrial development of the North in the Soviet years. Northern communities were local initially. Both language and ethnographic materials testify to this. Researches of sociologists show that locality remains the important line of way of life not only of towns, but also of rural remote places in the North [Plyusnin, 1997].

**THIS** locality is even more increasing because habitual ways of communication cease to unite people owing to that the passenger transport by rivers which are natural and most ancient means of communication, practically everywhere is stopped. In many remote settlements where before the local airports regularly functioned, they are closed, and planes do not fly any more. Inhabitants of villages also limit their travellings as they do not have enough means for purchase fuel and boat motors. Thus, for example, in one of villages of Udora region of Komi the deputy of the Regional Soviet, discussing local problems with the author of this paper, gave such a fact: in the Soviet years through consumers' co-operative society hundreds of motors were sold here annually to inhabitants of neighbouring villages, and nowadays not more than two. Moreover, even those settlements that are far from rivers and roads, which the authorities are compelled to keep communication with as only by helicopter it is possible to reach them, often appear torn off from social goods: mail is brought here irregularly, the aircraft service is incidental, products and goods are delivered by local businessmen, using only their own resourcefulness. Many settlements (including towns) located on banks of the rivers, in spring and in autumn for a long time appear cut off from the "continent" being connected with it by ferries, pontoon bridges and "ice crossings".

**IN** the European north there are not enough roads and even those available, are not in the best condition. It is no mere chance that winter roads play special role (roads from snow densely rolled by graders), they are named "life roads", material on their input in operation during autumn-winter period is necessarily published in local press as the major event. Last years intensity of traffic on the main winter roads in the Nenets Autonomous Area, for example, increased three times, while surfaced road to Usinsk (Republic of Komi) and from Usinsk to Naryan-Mar is constructed extremely slowly and its putting into operation is possible only in the remote perspective. But for many settlements such perspective is practically impossible.

**IF** in the Murmansk Region and the Nenets Autonomous Area taken together there are only some tens of rural settlements, each of which being in the zone of constant attention of

regional officials (especially "national" villages), in the Arkhangelsk Region and in the Republic of Komi the situation is different. Both in the first, and the second region ¼ of the population lives in villages. With that greater part of 4 000 villages of the Nenets Autonomous Area and 7,5 hundreds of rural settlements of the Komi Republic today are in decline and have no development prospects (the same can be said about 800 settlements in Karelia and 8,5 thousand rural settlements of the Vologda Region). Life-support systems in them are either destroyed, or do not function, from all social structures only schools which teachers are basically pensioners work well enough. Youth, as before, aspires to leave depressive settlements and go to live to towns. Villagers on the whole live by subsistence farming. Drunkenness is widespread, scales of hidden unemployment are great, that's why social degradation of northern village has reached already critical level.

**THIS** degradation is caused by that, as is said above, the former agrarian enterprises in the majority were ruined or continue to exist as unprofitable. Attempts to create effective agrarian producers by means of the state support in most cases appear unsuccessful for objectively agrarian producers in the north have extremely high costs which give no possibility to get profit from agricultural activity. However, in the Soviet years greater part of the able-bodied population in the countryside was occupied not in agrarian sphere, but was engaged in other kinds of activity, with forestry, timber cuttings playing the leading role. But many timber enterprises are either ruined today, or are in a difficult economic situation. Transition to new technologies of timber cuttings (use of special cars - harvesters and forwarders) leads to that the requirement for hands on timber cuttings decreases considerably. All this promotes that the active part of villagers is pushed out from village, and the process of ageing of rural population is accelerated.

**VILLAGES** and settlements fall into decline, for they lose both subjects of economic activities, and the population which forms local labour market and consumer market. As a result schools, kindergartens, post offices, shops are closed in villages, and their isolation from the external world only increases. Besides, the named situation leads to further compression of settlement networks in the north.

**ALL** aforesaid resulted in that in offices of officials there appeared a myth about completely degrading and ruined by drinking northern village. However the social resource of a large enough number of rural settlements is quite sufficient for stable development. The fact that in conditions of the destroyed industrial systems the population has learnt not only to survive, but also to receive incomes at the expense of subsistence farming and seasonal activity, testifies to that. Today it is important to be able to effectively use the resource of self-organization which while now is shown at the level of separate households.

**To** rouse the initiative of peasants and to effectively use local resources for improvement of economic and social situation in village, the external impulse for self-organization of rural population and search of mechanisms for development is necessary. The most important condition for overcoming the crisis in village consists in change of mentality of villagers and their belief in that not the power but only they themselves can and are capable to change the state of affairs for better. The Arkhangelsk Region has in this respect shown a successful example of social technologies.

**"THE** Institute of Public and Humanitarian Initiatives" created by Gleb Tyurnin became the initiator of introduction of such technologies. As an ideological basis of the approach to the solution of social problems in village, he developed "we-concept", providing stimulation



of processes of comprehension by peasant of his own responsibility for the event, belief in his own forces and identification of himself with some community formed on certain territory.

**ACTIVITY** of the public institute created by him about 15 years ago and existing on grants of the western funds, began with the organization of meetings with villagers at which people of the institute convinced the last to be engaged in solution of at least the most essential rural problems. Joint activity on solution of some local problem united people and allowed to extend self-organizational experience to implementation of following projects. Thus there appeared bodies of territorial public self-administration (TPSA) which united the initiative groups of villagers and solved essential local problems: from repair of schools to organization of production [Breshkovskaya, 2004]. Today this idea was extended to the neighbouring regions, to the Republic of Komi, in particular, though it had no sufficient development as it ceased to be the initiative from below, but was spread from above - the regional authorities.

**STIMULATION** of the process of self-organization of villagers, attempts to mobilize local resources and the local initiative demand considerable and purposeful efforts, and the most important thing in this case is that the named strategy is meant for a long time. Such technologies are not interesting for the authorities, as they do not bring obvious momentary political dividends. Therefore official support to TPSA is insignificant. Nevertheless, the problem of stimulation of the local initiative and self-organization of local communities remains actual and demands inclusion *in regional strategies of development*, but this does not happen. For this reason today the process of self-organization of rural communities in the European north "has practically exhausted" and there are no grounds to expect that the resource of self-organization or spread from above communitarism can change social situation in northern villages.

**BUT** besides attempts on stimulation of self-organization of villagers and effective utilization of local resources, it is necessary to create optimum conditions for stimulation the activity of rural producers, for attraction to village of city businessmen, and this is already direct problem of the regional authorities. The authorities can essentially affect the economic and social processes in the countryside if they have clear understanding of the ways, methods and forms of development of the village, its place in the regional economic complex, and also of social potential and ways of mobilization of internal resources of the region.

**WE** are to agree that "the approach to development of northern periphery from positions of the endogenous theory of economic growth means accent on internal resources of the community - business, leadership, creative potential, local identity, economic institutes; but not passive expectation of the external help from the state for the solution, for example, of typical for northern periphery problems of unemployment and poverty. In this ideology measures on replacement of imported energy carriers by local ones, on preparation of own staff, appearance of new firms, development of alternative kinds of activity, opening of the new markets for local production, creation of new institutes are carried out..." [Pilyasov, 2009: 23]

**CERTAINLY**, weak regional identity, mentioned above, specifies the necessity of consecutive strengthening of civil solidarity, strengthening of the integration beginnings in policy of local authorities.

**FOR** strengthening the regional identity, the civil solidarity it is necessary, that consolidation level and trust level to each other in representatives of territorial communities

was considerable enough, for “namely the trust allows a civil society to overcome what economists call “opportunism”- that is those situations in which common interest is not realized, as each individual, acting separately, has temptation to evade from collective action” [Patnem, 1996: 113]. But the civil orientation of regional social policy in the North is, as a rule, very poorly accented.

It is thus important to have in mind that besides economic and infrastructural mechanisms of formation and strengthening of regional identity, there also exist political mechanisms including regional ideology, local symbols, traditions etc. Official political symbols (a flag, the arms, a hymn) are available already in all areas and republics of the European north, but still there is neither regional ideology, nor polytonyms. This is especially curious because in the north there are three national-state formations: the Republic of Karelia, the Nenets Autonomous Area, the Republic of Komi. In the early 1990-s the idea of adoption of laws on citizenship was actively discussed in the republics, that is citizens exist, but the community of citizens has no name. How the citizens of Komi, Karelia and Nenets Autonomous Area are called is not clear till now. While now they are simply "inhabitants" of corresponding subjects. That is, social dissociation of northern communities is caused by their civil and political under-formation. This under-formation is the consequence of that the regional authorities have no clear ideology of regional development and there is no understanding, what conceptual ideas can make the basis of political regional strategy. Habitual orientation to total indicators of social and economic development at working out of long-term regional (republican) programs is the most obvious illustration of absence of political and social strategy.

#### PROBLEM CHARACTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN NORTH: ETHNIC DIMENSION

THE North, as some researchers note, can be considered as a cultural construction and as the space created by people in the course of their activity, while the concept "North" in the Russian practice is rather multiform [Ingold, 2000; Stammmler-Gossmann, 2008]. The European north of the Russian Federation culturally is not homogeneous though in mass consciousness and in consciousness of the Russian intellectual elite it quite often is represented not only as uniform historical province called “Russian North”, but also purely “Russian region” which cultural heritage is essentially significant for formation of Russian mentality and Russian ethnic culture.

THE remark made by such an authoritative scientist for the Russian humanists, as academician D. Likhachev is in this respect most indicative: “The most important thing by which the North cannot but touch the heart of every Russian man is that it is the very Russian. It is not only heartfelt Russian – it is Russian because it has played an outstanding role in Russian culture. It has saved from oblivion Russian bylinas, Russian ancient customs, Russian wooden architecture ...” [Likhachev, 1983: 7]. Similar perception of cultural importance of the European north is almost an axiom, and yet in the second half of XIX century thanks to activity of many researchers “Russian north” began to be perceived in intellectual circles of the country as original “cultural storehouse” of the Russians.

AS a result of researches and efforts of historians, ethnographers, specialists in folklore, artists and writers of XIX century the region in mass consciousness of the Russians began to be perceived not as periphery of cultural space of the Great Russians, but as a historical center

of the Russian state, as the territory where the fundamental principle of the Russian ethnic culture was formed and some "primordial" Russism still remains.

**PRESENT** researchers write not only about "the merit of the Russian North in development of culture and education» [Bulatov, 1999: 258], but also about "metaphysics of the North", of its "sacral geography" which supposedly singles it out in a special cultural reality, and allows to speak about it as a single cultural space [Terebikhin, 2004].

**BUT** mythologization of cultural space of the European north is only an attempt of creation of some artificial model which is probably valuable gnoseologically, but is unproductive in respect of the analysis of the social environment. The cultural myth about the "Russian North" was obviously important for formation of common-Russian identity, but the European north had never been purely "Russian", and was and remains polyethnic region where the Karelians, Saami, Veps, Komi historically live, and where for 90 years there exist ethnoterritorial autonomies, and the ethnic structure of the population consistently changes and becomes complicated. With that the Russians, certainly, dominate in all northern subjects, being both the ethnic majority and culturally dominating group (in the Vologda and Arkhangelsk Regions the share of the Russians exceeds 90 %).

**HOWEVER**, multicultural level of the "Russian North", developed historically, does not lead to formation of multicultural consciousness in the population of northern subjects. In particular, high level of xenophobia and unacceptance of other-ethnic citizens of the country testifies to that. This level is equally high both in Komi and in Kareliya, in the Arkhangelsk and Murmansk Regions, the results of a number of sociological researches, including results of public opinion poll of March, 2010 testify to that: less than half respondents in Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and Syktyvkar declared there are no people for them which representatives they treat with distrust. And interethnic conflicts can take place not only in the large city centres with polyethnic structure of the population, but also in the most remote settlements. For example, in Khorei-Ver Nenets settlement some years ago inhabitants stated discontent because the structure of teachers at school became "Kalmyk", and the Gipsy arrived here to trade the local administration did not even let out from the plane, while in Kharuta settlement they tried to turn them out faster [Nenetsky, 2005: 321]. While the "problem" of eviction of the Gipsy, who have built one and a half tens of houses in one of city suburbs, from Arkhangelsk that has been long and actively discussed in the local press [Shabaev, 2004] in general became indicative in respect of illustration of intolerance moods which are also characteristic today for the population of the European north.

**CERTAINLY**, high level intolerance which is constantly fixed in the north both in our researches, and in some other research projects, is direct consequence of weakness of local identities, civil solidarity and absence of regional ideology and regional policy of integration. Last two decades ideological constructions of ethnonational organizations, speaking on behalf of the Finno-Ugric and Samodian people in which ethnicity was directly opposed to citizenship (and accordingly ethnic identity to civil identity) and which activity was actively supported by local authorities [Shabaev, 2014] played a certain role in strengthening the intolerance moods.

**NOT** only leaders of the ethnic organizations use ethnicity to carry out ethnic separation of northern communities and to objectively weaken civil solidarity, but the state also promotes it. Having the good purpose to support non dominant ethnic groups, the state singles out "indigenous minorities of the North" which obtain the special status. This status assumes

that all representatives of an ethnic group acquire the right to obtain preferences including alternative military service, free budgetary places at high schools, free quotas on extraction of bioresources, tax exemption on land, priority in economical activity in territories of traditional usage, etc. Thereby the state has legalized some ethnic hierarchy or, speaking language of the western experts, has taken the policy of positive discrimination. This policy is really discriminative for in the European north only the Saami and Nenets (later – the Veps) obtained the status of "indigenous people". And only they have real stimulus for support of local communities, while the rest old resident population did not get it. Thus Nenets reindeer breeders can use free of charge reindeer pastures, while farmings of Mezensky area of the Arkhangelsk Region (where the Nenets grazed their reindeers) were compelled to pay land tax and as a result completely refused from reindeer breeding. The Saami and Nenets receive annual free quotas on fishing, while the Pomors (fishing co-operative societies) are compelled to pay large money for quotas, having no guarantees to pay the cost. 30 families of Saami-reindeer breeders in the Murmansk Region get target support from the state and local authorities, and 90 families of Komi-Izhma reindeer-breeders living and working next to them do not receive such support. Thus the cultural groups living nearby, engaged in similar kinds of activity and having shared problems, by means of the state appear divided on groups hierarchically opposing each other. Namely opposing as the special status depraves. The Nenets population already asserts claims to Arkhangelsk people which long since fished in lakes of the Nenets Autonomous Area, declaring that only "indigenous" people can carry out economic activities on lakes (the Nenets traditionally did not catch fish in lakes), the Saami demand big privileges and trade in quotas on catch of cod, selling it to Pomor fishing co-operative societies.

**OBVIOUSLY** it is necessary to support local cultural groups which were long since formed in the North and learnt to use successfully local resources. But with that it is impossible to divide and oppose groups to each other, but it is necessary to create optimum conditions for their existence, without any selectivity. Today both land and forest codes do not consider interests of local communities which should have priority at conducting economic activities in the north. The lands and grounds not only are easily alienated by the largest companies, but also are easily obtained by various Moscow businessmen who fence with barbed wire former fishing or forest grounds of local residents and declare them the property of firms. Local authorities are not capable to change the situation as natural resources are completely under the authority of federal officials.

**UNDERSTANDING** all complexity of modern situation, and aspiring to find ways of self-defence, and also to obtain resources for self-development the northern communities pay attention namely to ethnicity and the ethnic status, to constructing of new ethnic identities and reconsideration of old ones, trying to use a resource of ethnicity in the constructive-applied aspect - for search of the new stimulus promoting development of local communities.

**THERE** are quite enough examples of use of ethnicity with pragmatic purposes, but the situation with the Komi-Izhma people and the Pomors is most indicative. The Komi-Izhma people is the most northern group of the Komis, reindeer breeding being the basis of their farming. In 1990 the Izhma people created "Iz'vatas" association which was a part of the general Komi movement and for a long time had no special position. But then the association position changed. 8 years already the Komi-Izhma people through their "Iz'vatas" association try to achieve them to be recognized as the indigenous minority of the north and declare that they greatly differ from other Komis and in general are separate people. Leaders of "Iz'vatas"



address both to the regional, and to the federal authorities with the request to include them in the list of indigenous minorities of the Russian Federation, while various international organizations have already paid attention to the situation developing around Izhma people. The Pomors as an ethnographic group of the Russians was formed by XVIII century, and already in the beginning of XX century the Pomor determinant was gone out of use, and the Pomor identity practically disappeared. However 2002 population census has shown that 6,5 thousand people gave ethnonym "Pomor" as their nationality, practically all of them were inhabitants of the Arkhangelsk Region (16,5 thousand people named themselves Komi-Izhma people). However, 2010 census has shown that number of those who had designated their ethnic belonging by means of local ethnonyms essentially decreased both in the European north, and in other regions of the country. Number of those named themselves Pomors decreased twice, and Komi-Izhma - three times. With that both Izhma and Pomor identities remain and can be considered not only as a way of cultural marking of groups, but also as a certain social and political resource which promotes social consolidation and political mobilization of local groups. Last circumstance also causes special concern of the regional authorities. Therefore in Komi during 2010 census "register as Komi" campaign was developed.

**AFTER** 2002 census the intellectuals from Arkhangelsk with support of the most active inhabitants of Pomor villages formed the Pomor movement which leaders also try to achieve granting the status of "indigenous people" to Pomors and declare that the Pomors have their own language and their ethnic consciousness remained, but it is not necessary to consider the Pomors as Russians, for their "substrate basis" is Finno-Ugrian [Shabaev, 20066]. There was little official support in the Pomor movement, but this fact only consolidated it, the congress of Pomors held in Arkhangelsk in 2007 and formation of its executive body testifies to that. The subsequent congresses were also held by Pomor activists independently, except the last IV-th one when the authorities gave financial support to Pomor movement and tried to put it under their own control. Simultaneously attempts to discredit the movement were undertaken, for what two anti-Pomor campaigns were organized and officially supported in Arkhangelsk. The first campaign was organized in 2008 and had ecological character. As a result the Pomors were forbidden to catch Greenland seal. The second campaign had more scaled character and reached its peak in 2012. Criminal case was opened against the leader of the movement, and they began to accuse that the movement executes the order of foreign sponsors and works in their interests. As a result the movement as the organized force ceased to exist [Shabaev, 2014].

**THE** Pomors are the bearers of sea trade culture, the territory of their traditional nature use are the Barents, White and Kara Seas, where oil exploration is actively conducted and realization of scale projects on extraction of hydrocarbons begins. If to recognize Pomors as indigenous people then oil industry workers should share incomes with them and make ethnoecological expert examination of projects intended for realization in the Arctic regions. But as nobody protects interests of Pomors, so oil industry workers have no problems any more.

**BUT** the political resource of local identities and possibility of its actualization continues to remain, events of 2014 in the Izhma region of the Republic of Komi testify to that.

**ON** April, 15 in Krasnobor village of the Izhma region there was held a meeting of representatives of "LUKOIL" Open Society with inhabitants of 15 villages of the region. Next

day in mass-media there appeared information on this meeting which Izhma activists considered doubtful as there was said about cooperation between local residents and the oil company while in fact the ultimatum was delivered to the company. Inhabitants of the region demanded to stop company activity in territory of the Izhma region because of ecological irresponsibility. The next oil spills which occurred in the beginning of 2014 became the basis for such requirements. The conclusion accepted at gathering of inhabitants greatly differs from that given in press. In particular, it said: "We, the Komi-Izhma people, are indigenous people, and these are our lands. We do not wish to reconcile with uncontrolled exploitation of our bowels and ecological irresponsibility of the LUKOIL company". A number of concrete requirements among which there was creation of a special commission on control of the activity of the company in territory of the region, the unimpeded admission of committee-men to objects of the company, making somebody unanswerable for giving order to burn oil spillage (Makar'el-Shchelyayur oil pipeline where the oil spillage occurred, goes through the territory of the region), revision of terms and conditions of agreement on partnership between the company and administration of the region, etc. [From blogs] *Thus it is necessary to note that Krasnobor villagers, and after them activists of "Iz'vatas" acted not so much from positions of interests of an ethnic group, but from civil positions, protecting interests of all inhabitants of the region and common environment, therefore it is no mere chance that the position of Krasnobor villagers and "Iz'vatas" was supported by deputies of the region and the local administration* [Usov, 2014].

**FOR** today we can say that the conflict goes to another stage. The repeated meeting of the population of the Izhma region and oil industry workers took place on May 18, which, however, was reformatted because of visit to the Komi Republic of Leonid Ogul', deputy of the State Duma, member of the Committee on Natural Resources. At the meeting he was asked many questions which in particular concerned reforming of the taxation, development of fishery, reform of the Forest code, ecology. The deputy could not answer all questions, but he promised to direct independent ecological expertise for carrying out ecological monitoring in the region [Deputat, 2014]. Thus, local activists try to transfer the conflict to federal level that, certainly, will strengthen their positions. However, it is yet early to speak of success of this attempt.

**ANYWAY**, pressure on Izhma people is increasing and it is no mere chance that at the VIII Congress of "Iz'vatas" Association held at the end of September, 2014 the conflict with oil industry workers was not discussed openly, though it is far from solution.

**IF** to speak of ethnic identities in the north of the Russian Federation, in majority of the local ethnic groups they are weakened and more and more characteristic become multiple ethnic identities, i.e. comprehension of oneself as a representative of several ethnic groups at once (more often two). With that the processes of ethnic erosion which are characteristic for the majority of not numerous people of the European north, are less shown in the Saami and Nenets, i.e. in groups which for a long time already have the special status and which get additional stimulus for development at the expense of exploitation of their special position [Shabaev, 2010].

**THUS** ethnicity is the important resource for self-organization of local communities in the European north, but its resource is not used to the full because of pressure of the authorities or the hidden counteraction to processes of ethnic self-organization from the part of large extracting companies, and also because of the general mistrust to the activity of

ethnic entrepreneurs which is available both in the authorities, and in dominant groups of the population.

### NORTHERN IDENTITY

**WEAKNESS** of regional (and ethnic) identities in the North, influence of processes of decolonization and de-industrialization give grounds to assume that common northern identity also cannot be today a significant cultural marker. But in reality namely the common northern identity is expressed most obviously among territorial civil identities. To the question "Do you feel yourself a northerner?" positively answered - in Arkhangelsk 61,6 %, in Murmansk - 77,3 % and in Syktyvkar - 58,1 % of respondents, while the share of those who do not wish to recognize himself as representative of northern community in all three towns is less than 10 %. Thus answers to the question on ethnic component of northern identity allow to say that in understanding of inhabitants of the named three "northern regional capitals" northern identity is not connected with "the people of the north", that is it carries not ethnic, but civil character. With that the most significant bases of this identity are both place of residence, and civil solidarity. In an individual cultural image of the North its perception not as periphery, but as native land and as special part of the country with which vital strategy of its inhabitants is connected prevails. Thus considerable part of respondents noted that not only the inhabitant of northern regions can consider himself a northerner, but also the one who lives outside their boundaries, but whose destiny is connected with the north, i.e. it is not simply connection with the land, but namely identity.

**WEAKNESS** of regional identities and presence of strong northern identity show that the European north is nevertheless perceived as the "Russian North", but *not as Russian ethnic province*, as the uniform cultural region which image has strongly taken roots in mass consciousness. And consequently a number of local experts and politicians-Russophiles began to insist on that the region was named this especially culturological term officially.

**FROM** here logically follows the following assumption: the population of the European north in the majority should support ideas of wide northern integration. Such ideas are expressed constantly, while the Northern administrative territory existed since 1929 to 1936. In November, 2009 the conference "Processes of integration of territories and their influence on development of the European North" was held in Arkhangelsk devoted to the 80 anniversary of creation of the Northern administrative territory, where it was once again proposed to unite Karelia and Murmansk Region in the Karelo-Murmansk administrative territory, while Komi, Nenets Autonomous Area and the Arkhangelsk Region to unite within the frames of another uniform subject (it is characteristic that there is no name for it) that will allow to overcome "uncertainty of territorial administration" in the north [Domoroshchenkov]. Next years similar ideas were expressed repeatedly both by researchers, and by politicians.

**THE** conclusion about adherence of the population of northern regions to the idea of regional integration proved to be true by the results of research "I and my people", carried out by Komi ethnologists in 2004. Mass public poll of Komi population has shown that 51 % of respondents support integration of the regions, but on condition if this integration has the consequence of increase of standard of living of the population of corresponding subjects. We assumed that answers to the question on unification of subjects of the Russian Federation will closely correlate with an ethnic belonging of respondents, but we were mistaken. 51 % of Russian respondents and 51 % of Komi respondents were for unification of regions. But when

the question was about “unification for the sake of unification”, then positions of different ethnic groups varied. Much smaller shares of respondents were ready to support such unification as a whole, and among the Komis level of support was essentially lower, than among the Russians. Thus, it is obvious that the national-state status is estimated by people first of all from economic expediency positions. In 2012 we conducted the next public poll and again obtained the data testifying that the idea of integration had broad support. Moreover, the poll data has shown that the all-Russian civil identity (“I, first of all, am the citizen of Russia”) became dominating in all age, social and ethnic groups of the population of the Republic of Komi and Komi-Permian District of the Perm administrative territory (the public poll was conducted in these subjects).

**DOES** the idea of integration find support in mass moods of inhabitants of other northern regions? As data of 2010 public poll have shown, the idea of integration of regions is to some extent supported by 54,6 % of inhabitants of Arkhangelsk, 60,8 % of inhabitants of Murmansk and 41,7 % of inhabitants of Syktyvkar. While the idea on creation of the Northern administrative territory which would include the Murmansk Region, Nenets Autonomous Area, Arkhangelsk Region and the Republic of Komi, are ready to support 51,3 % of respondents in Arkhangelsk, 60,5 % - in Murmansk, 48,3 % - in Syktyvkar (categorically against the idea are 12,8 %; 6,9 % and 16,2 % accordingly).

**THERE** are two factors which can help integration. The first is, however rather paradoxical, locality and disintegration of northern communities. This means there cannot be any wide and ideologically organized front of resistance to integration efforts.

**THE** second factor is an obvious presence of common northern identity.

**THE** third factor is presence of political forces which not only oppose any separative ideas, but are even against those organizations and public figures which can be suspected in hidden aspiration to separatism.

**AND** at last, the fourth factor are the increasing attempts to create a cultural and ideological basis for political integration. At the federal level such idea is the idea of the Russian nation which, however, is thought not so much as the civil nation, but as the political nation [Achkasov, 2012: 184-189]. At regional level these are attempts to form cultural and ideological bases for regional integration.

**CERTAINLY**, it is necessary to discuss economic and political expediency of unification of northern regions, for this unification cannot bring any obvious benefits to the population and regional economy, but mentally the population is ready to similar administrative transformations. Public opinion poll of Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and Syktyvkar also confirmed that local patriotism is low, but the all-Russian identity is dominating for inhabitants of all three towns: 58,7 % of respondents from Arkhangelsk, 71,1 % of respondents from Murmansk and 55,1 % of respondents from Syktyvkar name themselves the citizen of Russia, from 1/4 to 1/3 of respondents in the named towns declared that they consider themselves to be citizens both of Russia and of their region or republic (from 3 to 6 % of respondents named themselves only citizens of region/republic ).

## CONCLUSION

**THE** economic and social situation in the European north, especially in rural settlements, is extremely difficult that was already repeatedly fixed by various researchers.



This allows experts to speak about degradation of the north in general and especially of the European north of the Russian Federation.

**SOCIAL** and cultural processes which take place in the European north of the Russian Federation, show that stability of northern communities is broken. In immediate perspective the situation will not improve, for the North will actively lose the population and first of all the most active part - youth, the resources which could be used for self-organization and self-development of northern communities (especially local groups) are not used, as they are considered as some threat for the state or corporate interests.

**THE** image of the European north as stagnating territory formed in mass consciousness will in turn strengthen streams of migrants outside the boundaries of the region.

**THE** developed territory in the north is narrowed, and this process progresses, as many settlements have no more stimulus for development, and the population actively leaves them. "Returning to the North" of the state did not become stimulus for its development.

**IT** is obvious that there is necessity for development and realization of the clear program of development of not only Arctic regions, but also subarctic regions and in particular the European north of Russia which would have the purpose of solution regional problems of social and economic character and strengthening the processes of both social and economic, and civil integration.

**THE** program should be based on understanding of social and cultural realities of the region and provide use of cultural resources as an important component of regional development. Developers of the program are obliged to provide mechanisms with which social resources of local communities will be mobilized, and favorable conditions for their economic activity and legal basis for self-organization of similar communities - created. In this respect it is important to give equal rights to all cultural groups, for their status division not only limits economic mobility of local groups and settlements-isolates, but also strengthens conflictness in the European north, weakens civil solidarity of northerners. Moreover, local communities should possess priority at carrying out of any competitions connected with extraction of bioresources, distribution of sites for logging areas, allocation of ground areas etc.

**IT** is obvious also that the north *"is not lost" yet*, for the northerners are left here and northern identity is the strongest regional identity which can be used both for strengthening the civil solidarity of territorial communities, and for administrative renewal of all subregion.

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