A century of nomadic land use

Changes and continuities on the Yamal Peninsula, 1908-2008

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Dedicated to the late Yaungad brothers

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Nentsy / Nenets

- 1 of 40 indigenous nationalities inhabiting the Russian Arctic (as of 2000)
- 41302 Nentsy as of 2002 (26435 in YNAO)
- Living in the YNAO, NAO, Krasnoyarsk krai
- Finno Ugrian language group, Samojedic language family
Nenets nomads on Yamal

Yaungad Ivan  Yaungad Natasha  Yaungad Mikhail

- 50% of Yamal-Nenets leading a fully nomadic way of live
- 50% living in towns of the Peninsula (centre: Yar Sale, app. 4000 inhabitants)
- Tundra population managing app. 300000 reindeer on app. 10 M hectares pastures
Current land use patterns

Local migration
North Yamal

North-south pasture corridor migration
Land categories visualised

‘Agricultural land’

No reindeer pastures in law

Industrial land
The principle unit of actual land users

- Soviet & post-soviet BRIGADE
- Work team of 4-12 herders, with their families, living in private *chums* (*myad*)

In Soviet times:
- herding brigades,
- fishing brigades,
- hunting brigades.

Each brigade has a certain territory allocated. This pattern was discontinued after the Soviet Union. Now: chaos
Past land use on Yamal
North Yamal: 1929 – 1980s

Distribution of North Yamal Clans, Evladov 1929:286

Soviet hunting brigades of sovkhoz Yamal’skii, as of 1980s

Early 1930s: first wave of collectivisation
1961: all collective farms became soviet state farms (sovkhоз), border of North Yamal closed.

Note the parallels:
1 – Yamal, 2 – Yamal/Okotetto, 3 – Vengo
4 – Yaptik/Vengo, 6 – Okotetto, 7 - Tusida
North Yamal, 1980 - 2001

Own fieldwork, 2001: land use pattern very similar. Clan continuity, e.g. Okotetto / Yamal, Tusida, Vengo.

Change: presence of Laptander (no 5). Immigrated from Europe.
Increase of humans on Yamal

Euro-Nentsy escape to Yamal, early 1930s,
‘Dekulakization’ and prosecution of shamans under Stalin

Steady growth after sovkhoz system stabilised

Before 1926: no permanent settlements on the Peninsula. Today: Half of Nentsy settled, plus another 5000 non-indigenous residents
Increase of private reindeer

Where do all these animals graze???
Who believes in Carrying capacity?

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<td>Purovs</td>
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Sovhozy as only official land users from 1961. Pasture inventories made from 1960s on. (Angarskaia ekspeditsia). Goad: scientifically ‘engineering’ pasture use, assessing vegetation capacity, allocating territories to brigades, organising 6-season rotation.

Problem: assessment methods?? don’t incorporate management decisions, grazing practices, nomads’ behaviour, inter-regional migrations.

Note: 2001 figs for Yamal available pastures differ by 1 M hectares, Priural and Nadym assessments of the same year vary unacceptably.
Politics of dominance

- 2001: resolution No 371 by YNAO governor: for family of 5, 385 reindeer are enough for a living.
- Implementation of this limit suspended. Up to municipalities.
- NB: minimum subsistence limit is different for every region.

- 2007: subsidies, increasing meat price, hoping to reduce headcount – leaving out Nenets socio-cultural considerations.
- No understanding of nomads’ logic by administration.
- Herders categorically oppose mandatory regulatory measures. ‘These are a return to Soviet policies’.
Current land use in legal terms

- 2001: Federal law on territories of traditional nature use
- 2001: new Russian land code authorises privatisation of land
- 2002: law on agricultural land excludes reindeer pastures from privatisation
- As of 2007, land titles on the Peninsula held by successor enterprises of sovkhozy
- Permanent lease free of charge
- Clan-communities (*obshchiny*) in place since 2001, without land titles
- Most of Yamal herders after 1990: from ‘virtual hunters’ to ‘private freelancers’.
- **Problem: how to map their movements?**
‘We graze our herds in the air’

- The backbone of Yamal herding lives without documentation & land titles
- North Yamal: sovkhoz herds separately from private – sovkhoz crashed & defunct
- Central Yamal – private herders & herds as the backbone of sovkhozy
- Recent suggestion: ‘servitude’ for all herders, individual migration mapping, possible discontinuation of sovkhoz land titles.
- Triggered by oil&gas development
Approaching territorial behaviour

- Evladov 1929 fieldwork: ‘the land is open for all’
- Own fieldwork, 2001: ‘the land belongs to the state and is open for all’
- Expressed Nenets ideology of sharing
- Little domestic interest in discerning territories
- Collaborative coexistence on the land, no major conflicts even though population increased more than 5fold in the last 300 years
- Now increasingly confronted with territorial defence approaches
- Response: buying into it vis a vis outsiders, continue sharing with fellow nomads.

- Scientific & state approach: creating distinct territorial units,
- reindeer herding as part of agriculture
- Theory: economic defendability model
- Only defensive behaviour is territorial behaviour. Cooperative behaviour is a-territorial (or supra-territorial?)
- ‘biologicist’ approach, derived from Altum 1868: ‘an area defended by its holder against intrusion, to ensure food and breeding space’
What future?

- No way Nenets land claims will be settled before gas extraction starts
- Worst case: Dirty industry, constant territorial disputes, unclear competences, industry having torn apart Nenets nomadic society, second wave of relocation, the ‘end of nomadism’
- Best case: ‘minimal footprint’, fenced industrial islands, fruitful coexistence and trading relations with industrial workers. Turn Yamal into world exemplar how to get it done!!
- Wish: a vital nomadic Nenets reindeer herding culture in 2100, when the gas is gone