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# To move or not to move: place attachment, Arcticness & migration in Siberia

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# Plan

- I. Introduction
- II. Fieldwork
- III. Interviews overview
- IV. Preliminary conclusions



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## II. Introduction



## II. Introduction

- The Russian Far North: focal point of Russia's economic development
- Particular historical and socio-political circumstances influenced migration fluxes
- Northern Districts: over 60% of the population was sent from eastern regions
- Northern economy: oriented towards resource extraction and infrastructure construction
- Collapse of Soviet Union:
  - 1) Reconfiguration of the political space – 15 new states
  - 2) Economic transition – from centrally planned to market economy
  - 3) Liberalization of societies

## II. Introduction

- Arctic communities count with high mobility and capable to adapt to changing contexts
- Rapid climate change: deep transformations of environment and societies
- Place attachment emerges through personal experience with a particular environment, society and historical moment
- Both physical and social attributes of place are interconnected and mutually reinforce place attachment (Brehm, 2007)

# GOALS

- Explore the influence of experiential and emotional ties with the place in determining Tiksi's inhabitants decision to stay (or to leave)
- Identify if new social and ecological interactions can trigger a changing migration pattern in Tiksi and/or the Bulunsky District
- Explore possible implications for research and policy making concerning the assessment of the impacts of climate change and permafrost thaw





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# III. Fieldwork







# III. Fieldwork in Siberia



- Where?
  - Bulunsky District: Tiksi
- When?
  - From July 16th and 25th (2019)
- Who?
  - 37 local stakeholders interviewed
- How?
  - Snowball sampling – semi structured interviews

# III. Case Study

## Тикси – Tiksi

- On the shore of the Laptev Sea
- Administrative Center of Bulunsky District
- 4604 inhabitants in 2017
- Ethnic composition (as of January 1, 2010):  
Russians (28.9%), Evenki (25%), Yakuts (23.4%), Evens (14%), Ukrainians (3.7%), other nationalities (5%)
- Distance from Tiksi to Yakutsk: by land transport is 1694 km, by air is 1270 km and 1703 km by maritime.
- Economic activities: agriculture, fisheries, reindeer herding, mining, production and distribution of electricity, gas and water, transport and communication.





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# IV. Interviews overview



INTERVIEWEE	CITATION	ASPECT
<p>#1 Female Works on cultural development</p>	<p>It's hard to live here. It's difficult, but we, of course, love our district, the village. We don't even want to move anywhere. Here the prices are very expensive: for food, for airplane tickets. For example, we, as a large family, it is very difficult for us to travel, for example, for vacation or somewhere (...) As family with many children, they (employer) pay for a vacation every two years. They cover the travel expenses. (...) I don't want to move! Never! Of course, we want a real estate (...) We want it in many places, just to travel during the summers. Just for the summer, for children. Maybe the kids will want (to move).</p>	<p>NOT LEAVING</p>
	<p>Housing is also very difficult, hard. A lot of broken apartments. A lot of people left, and the apartments are registered on their names (...) Nobody has the right to touch their apartments. They are already very broken! But it's not allowed to touch them, these apartments. And therefore it is very difficult with housing. And prices have risen. It's very bad!</p>	<p>HOUSING</p>
	<p>We have a tradition: in New Year's Eve we go to the Aikhal club. This is our tradition - without Aikhal we are nothing (...) All Tiksians go there. It is like a celebration (...) we all meet there.</p>	<p>TRADITIONS</p>
	<p>When I was cooking in the kitchen, I had the baby sleeping in a crib. And I heard such a terrible noise! I run into the living room. Such a cobblestone fell straight from the ceiling on the floor next to the crib! I immediately panicked. I went to neighbors. It turns out that everyone got a crack like this.</p>	<p>NEGATIVE MEMORIES</p>



INTERVIEWEE	CITATION	ASPECTS
<p>#2 Male, fisherman in Bykovsky who lived and worked in Tiksi</p>	<p>I plan to move from here, but it does not depend on the climate. My wife now lives in Yakutsk, she works there, she's got a job (...) When we came here, we thought that we would work here for three years, we would gain experience and move. But it happened that we stayed here a little, for six years now. Last year, we finally bought an apartment in Yakutsk (...) Since I started working here (Bykovsky), and she was in Tiksi, it was hard for her to live in Tiksi with a child. With the weather here, it's necessary to take the child to school in a blizzard, go back and forth. These are all difficulties.</p>	<p>LEAVING TIKSI</p>
	<p>Food production by traditional means - hunting - reduces the expenses of the family budget by almost the half (...) Here you can get this meat yourself. You can stock for the whole winter. Meat, poultry, fish this is all natural and environmentally friendly product.</p>	<p>RELEVANCE OF TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES</p>
<p>#3 Woman Authority at Administration of Bulunsky District</p>	<p>In Tiksi, we recently had an opening of a new military town. It does not, sort of, directly concern us. But it concerns in the sense that the military are arriving. A civilian population arrives with them, for example, their wives, children (...) Now, after all, the budget is per capita. Therefore, we expect that with the arrival of the military, the civilian population will arrive and they will add to the budget of the village of Tiksi (...) We have per capita financing and subsidies to the district are increasing accordingly. For instance, if we have additional funds in the budget, we can participate in all kinds of competitions. To receive grants, subsidies, to implement our projects.</p>	<p>SUBSIDIES</p>

INTERVIEWEE	CITATION	ASPECT
<p>#4 Female Artist</p>	<p>I really love nature in Tiksi. It is very beautiful in here. In the village is not nice, of course. But nature - it's very beautiful (...) Many people, when they come here in Tiksi, consider that it is a black hole. The houses of the USSR and everything is gray. But they simply do not understand, because they were not born here, they did not live all their childhood here (...) Almost every child here in Tiksi loves to go camping, nature, especially the sea.</p>	<p>LANDSCAPE</p>
<p>#5 Male Inspector of the Environmental Supervision</p>	<p>In people, mainly this is changing, mentality, culture, something is changing little by little. People have already begun to live not solely from hunting and fishing. Especially now that the laws have changed. For instance, a lot of private hotels appeared (...) As you can see, people started somehow trying to do something, weasel their way out. The influence of the Internet has greatly increased</p>	<p>CHANGING LOCAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES</p>
	<p>Compared to [the way we lived] 10 years ago, it is much better now (...) People's incomes have increased. People began to buy a lot of things. In Soviet times, they could not allow themselves that much. Now the fishermen have the conscience to keep ... slaves.</p>	<p>BETTER SITUATION</p>



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# V. Preliminary conclusions





3 categories of explanations for how and why people stay in Tiksi:

1. Attachment: staying despite of apparent discomfort or negative outcomes
  - positive attribute in the sense of being committed to a place during a time of hardship
  - negative attribute in the sense of having no better options or being “locked in” (Barnett & O’Neill, 2010)
2. Alternatives or making small changes to maintain stability
  - Generally a positive attribute: changes that produce positive outcomes and expressions of optimism regarding the future. Draw on innovation, cooperation and other forms of local capacity to sustain or improve quality of life.

3. Buffering or drawing on external or reserve resources to absorb impacts and delay negative consequences (Byron, 2003). E.x: Subsidies

- Positive attribute: if they allow a community to endure and recover from some short-term stressors and can be replenished
- Negative attribute: if they allow to problems to worsen or are exhausted before problems are acknowledged and alternatives can be created
- They can work together through complex feedbacks and interactions
- Availability and use of strategies: personal ties, age, degrees of access to different social networks; ethnic background and possibility to choose.
- Climate change does not seem to be the main trigger for out-migration
- Mobility and attachment need to be analysed from an Arctic perspective

# Thank you!



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