

Social implications of infrastructures in Eastern Siberia

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Research

- Configurations of Remoteness (CoRe): Entanglements of Humans and Transportation Infrastructure in the Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM) Region. (Austrian Science Fund (FWF) [P 27625], University Vienna.
- Master's Thesis: "Oil infrastructures and their affordances for 'traditional' livelihoods in Eastern Siberia"
- "How roads shape (im-)mobilities in Eastern Siberia" (2022; together with Natal'ya Krasnoshtanova)
In: Friedrich, D., Hirnsperger, M., and Bauer, S. (eds.). More than 'Nature': Research on Infrastructure and Settlements in the North, Vienna: LITVerlag, pp. 187-208.
- Ethnographic case study of the village Tokma: Empirical data collected in two fieldwork expeditions (2016, 2018)

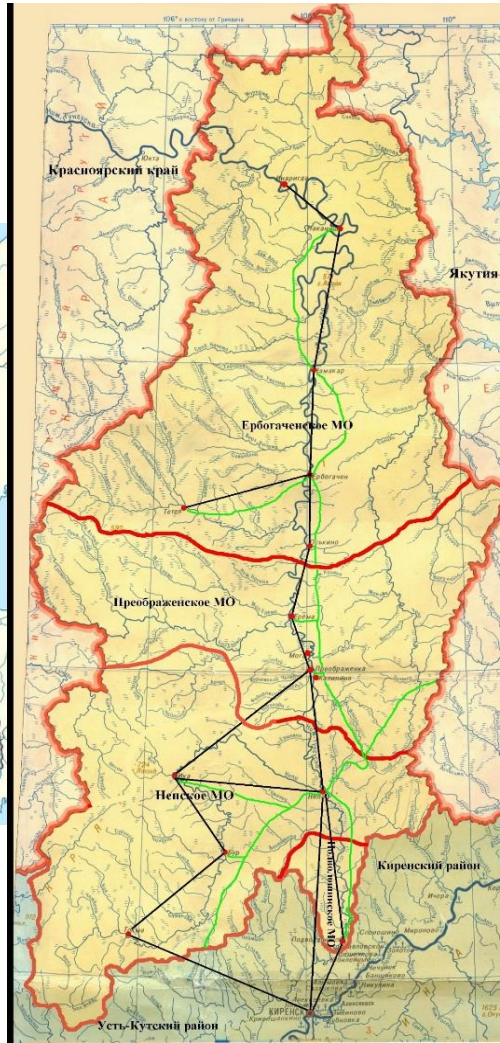
Structure of the presentation

1. Contextualizing the research field:
 - Geographical, socio-economic information
 - 'Remoteness' (?)
 - Resource extraction
2. Two kinds of infrastructures:
 - **Seismic lines**
 - **Roads:** the winter road, industrial oil-roads, industrial logging-roads
 - Social implications of roads
3. Conclusions

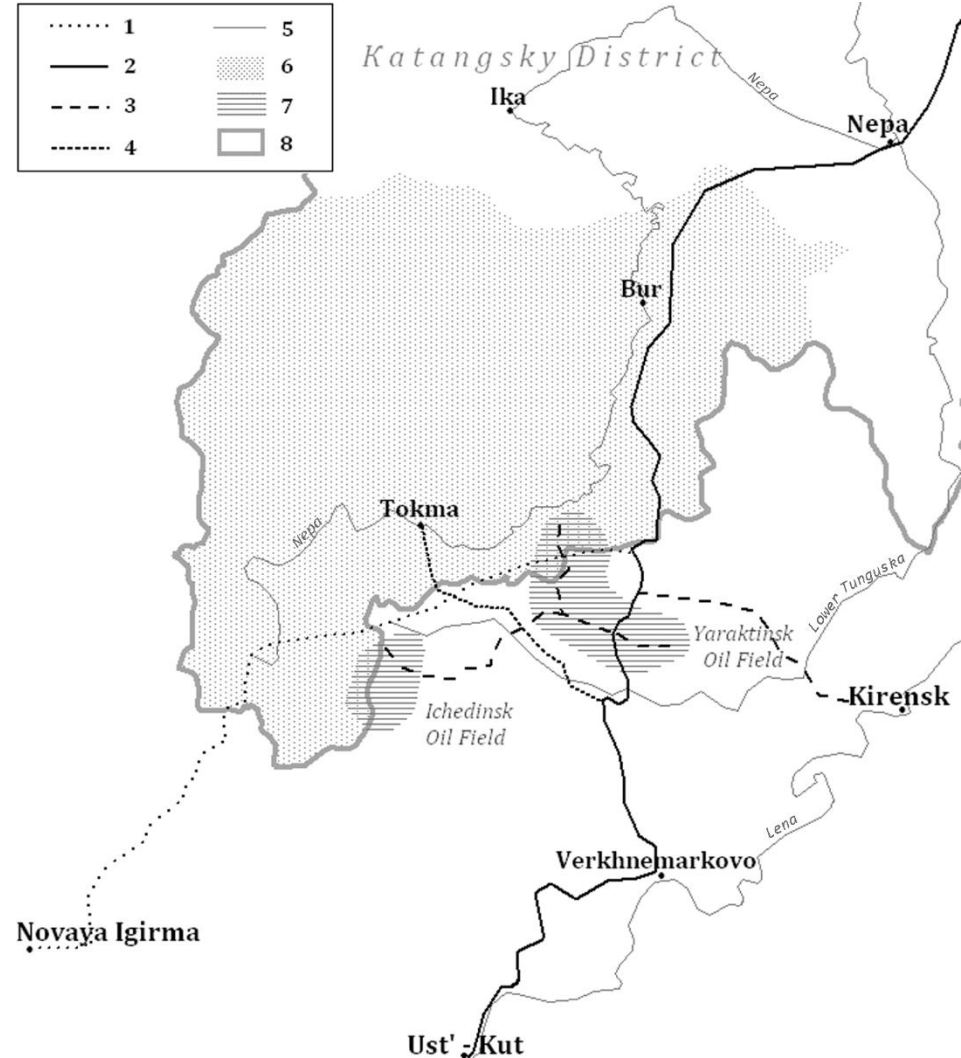


Katangsky District, Irkutsk Province, Eastern Siberia

140,000 km², 13 settlements, 3300 inhabitants, Village Tokma (40-50 residents)



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Resource extraction since the 2000s:

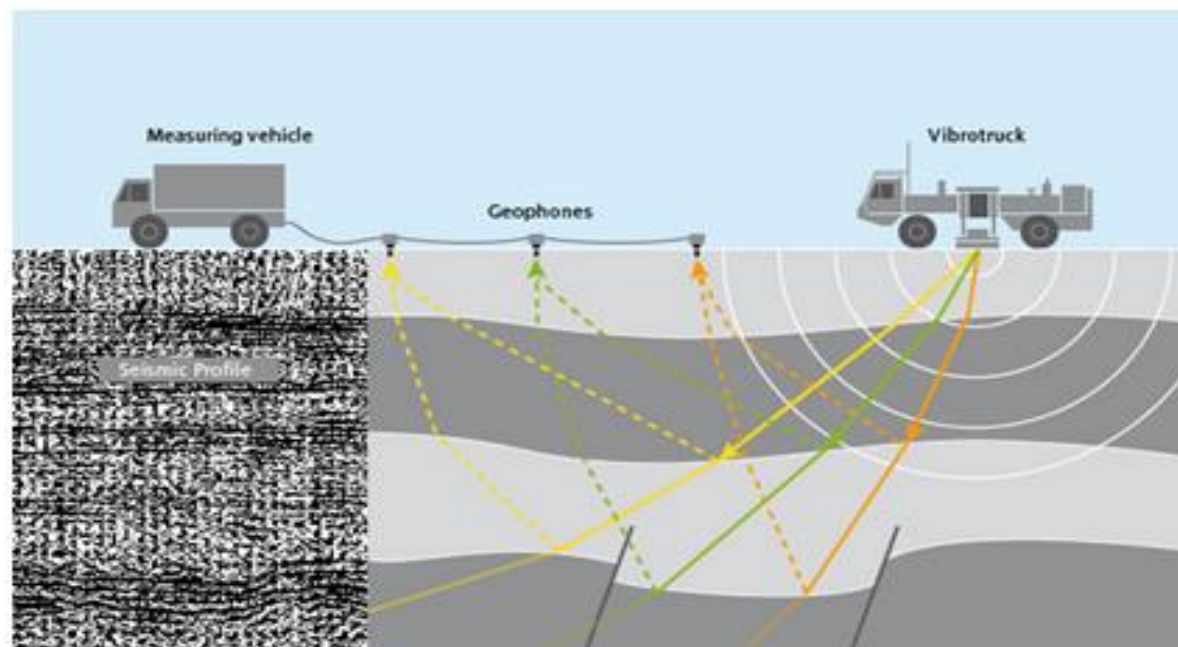
Oil development (Irkutsk Oil Company, INK), Industrial logging (LDK Igirma)





Seismic Lines

- Seismic prospecting is most widely used geophysical method in hydrocarbon exploration
- Logged lines, strictly straight, in grids
- different types → qualities of seismic lines



Corporate (Forest) Roads & Oil roads



Gertraud Illmeier, APRI Annual Meeting, Nov. 25, 2022

„Landscape of Development“ (Porath 2002)



Seismic prospecting landscape in Vershina Khandy © Natalya Krasnoshtanova (03.2020)



Gertraud Illmeier, APRI Annual Meeting, Nov. 25, 2022

Winter Road - Igirma (& other Forest) Roads - INK Oil Road(s)

RQ: How do these roads affect local mobility and sociality?



“With the winter it is like this, today it is there, tomorrow it is gone.” (informant from Tokma)
“fluidity” of northern roads (Argounova-Low 2012)



“Forest highway”, solid gravel road up to 15metres wide, perfectly maintained throughout the year

Irkutsk Oil Company (INK)



Social Implications of (corporate) roads

- Connects Tokma with the Angara river valley south-west
- Influx of people from outside: fishermen
 - increased competition for forest resources
 - development of mutually favourable relations
- Increase of risk of forest fires



Conclusions

- Hunting grounds being transformed into a landscape of development dominated by industrial roads and seismic lines
- Economic development, yet, one that excludes the local population
- Infrastructures secure the flows of resources, while, at the same time, the local population continues struggling with sparse and fragile travel opportunities
- Political and social inequalities reified in industrial roads and seismic lines – tangible through bodily experience
- Decrease of geographical remoteness, but people's social needs and interests (family ties, medical treatment, consumption needs) are not met by the new roads
- Roads, whose purpose is external, while ignoring the interests of local communities, are literal and symbolical manifestations of exclusion and marginalization and represent a form of “passive infrastructural violence” (Rodgers and O`Neill 2012).

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