

**Diverse Geographies of Power and Spatial production:  
Tourism industry development in the Yamal Peninsula,  
Northern Siberia**

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# **Diverse Geographies of Power and Spatial production: Tourism industry development in the Yamal Peninsula, Northern Siberia**

## **Abstract**

This paper offers a geographical, anthropological and historical analysis of current tourism development in the Yamal Peninsula, Northern Siberia, Russia. Through qualitative research it highlights the institutional, regulatory and socio-cultural trends of the indigenous society of this marginal region. Currently the traditional economic activity of reindeer herding, which offers autonomy to its nomadic communities, is threatened by local oil and gas industry development. Whilst the introduction of tourism is being pursued by authorities as beneficial to indigenous populations, this research explores power imbalances expressed through space relating to the works of Harvey (1989), Lefebvre (1991) and Gavanta (2006). Findings illustrate conflict characterised by external forces steering local communities toward the tourism industry as an economic aspect of regional strategy.

**Keywords** Landscape; space; indigenous people; development; power

## **Introduction**

Tourism development in disadvantaged regions and developing nations is acknowledged as offering significant economic stimuli (Cole and Morgan, 2010). However, the full impact of the socio-economic benefits resulting from tourism have been questioned due to concerns over the uneven nature of such development (Cole and Morgan, 2010; Harris *et al.*, 2012; Uysal *et al.*, 2012; Fowler *et al.*, 2013; Hall *et al.*, 2015; Mostafanezhad *et al.*, 2016). It is suggested that related power structures serve to reproduce and condition local tourism industry development (Bianchi 2002; Holden 2005; Mosedale 2011) and, as a consequence, produces diverse outcomes for the local economy (Holden, 2005). A key reason for this imbalance is the power structure which serves to reproduce and condition different modes of tourism industry development (Bianchi, 2002; Holden, 2005; Mosedale, 2011). As a consequence, it is argued that there are diverse outcomes for the local economy and its actors. Therefore, the balance of power within economic structures has been

recognised to influence the economic benefits arising from tourism and to determine how tourism aids the development of a country or region (Holden, 2005).

Tourism is also one of fastest growing sectors in the world economy and in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, it contributes an average of 4.1 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 5.9 percent of employment and 21.3 percent of service exports (OECD 2017). As the OECD state, however, there is also a critical need to rethink tourism policy to ensure socially inclusive growth within this sector. Higgins-Desbiolles (2006) describes tourism as amongst the most important forces to shape our world and (highlighting Russell and Stabile 2003) states that “developing countries are encouraged to use it as a means of economic development that wreaks less damage than extractive industries” (p1192). However, this paper argues that the power relations which tourism both face and generate create a more complex landscape within which local communities struggle to contend, even when tourism is championed as a sustainable alternative to those industries which are perceived to be more destructive.

A number of theoretical approaches applied in this arena have been greatly influenced by the work of Karl Marx and Georg Hegel. Regulationists, comparative, and Marxist political economists stress the significance of a concentration on the material, or politico-economic space, which shapes power relationships (Morrison, 2006). Advocates of cultural political economy and alternative/post-structural political economy (underpinning the notion of the ‘Critical Turn’) share Hegel’s emphasis of the importance of mental constructions of space and the role which ideas play in the formation and sustainability of differential powers and the resulting inequalities (for example Gibson-Graham, 2006; Ateljevic et al 2007). Influenced by Marx, theorists using critical approaches to power have tended to focus on the somewhat aspatial concerns of the equality of relationships between actors or stakeholders and, in doing so, understate the inherently socio-spatial nature of power.

The present study privileges the role of space in power relations and identifies a need to focus on its influence and utilisation in tourism industry development if we are to fully consider inclusivity in regions. Lefebvre (1991) argued that space and power are social constructions, rejecting dialectical materialism (historical or material primacy) in favour of a reciprocal formation of social space. For Lefebvre this is not

a passive realm and space may be wielded strategically to serve the motives of multiple actors. This spatiality of power is a central component for Lefebvre, accommodating the ideas of both Marx and Hegel but in a more performative sense. In this paper, Lefebvre's social construction of space is supplemented by Gaventa's (2006) 'power cube' to facilitate a more nuanced appreciation of the spatiality of power in relation to the tourism industry and the ways in which space may be transformed through social action.

The study aims to challenge the notion of 'dependency' between international (the multinational corporations) and local (local indigenous communities) levels, by considering the relationships at the local level, namely between local tour operators and an indigenous community. The geographic area was chosen based on the observations of Webster *et al.* (2011) noting that there has been a lack of focus in tourism studies on countries that have a federal type of governance, with a non-colonial past, being in transition from one political economy regime to another, and with the tourism industry at an early stage of its development. Yamal in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (YNAO) of the Russian Federation was identified as a suitable destination area to be studied in order to explore diverse geographies of power in tourism industry development.

The paper proceeds firstly through a review of literature relating to the spatiality of power, then it sets out the geographical and political context of the case study. The 'Methods' section then outlines the ethnographic/anthropological nature of this study with associated interview schedule which is then reported on in the 'Findings' section. The paper closes by summarising the conclusions and identifying the key contributions made by the study.

## **Literature**

The work of Marx has been highly influential in determining how tourism studies on power and power relationships have developed through a focus on political economy (Bianchi, 2002, 2011; Sharpley and Telfer, 2002; Mowforth and Munt, 2009; Sharpley, 2009, 2011; Meyer, 2010; Mosedale, 2011; Erskine and Meyer, 2012; Knight 2018). Marx considered that the inequalities in wealth and power are founded in the historical path of development which may be interpreted from an economic

perspective and which formed the basis 'Historical Materialism' (Marx 1974). This is grounded in the notion of the 'unequal distribution of wealth' inherent in a capitalist economic system based on the rights of capitalists to not only own the means of production, but also the products of production (Mosedale, 2011; Choat, 2016). The issue of distribution has become a major concern amongst tourism scholars (Toops, 1992; Hall and Patrinos, 2006; Lunde, 2007; Prachvuthy, 2007; Ypeij and Zorn, 2007; Greiner, 2010; Bennett *et al.*, 2012; Coria and Calfucura, 2012; Yang *et al.*, 2013).

The influence of both Marx and Hegel on theoretical approaches employed in the study of power in tourism is evident in, for example, the perspectives of regulationists (Lipietz 1987), comparative and international political economists (Gilpin 1987; Lairson and Skidmore 2002; Balaam and Veseth 2007; Draper and Ramsay 2007; O'Neil 2007) and Marxist political economists (De Kadt; Britton 1980, 1982, 1991; Bianchi 2002, 2011) who stress the material, or politico-economic, space which shapes power relationships (Morrison, 2006). Lefebvre (1991) argued that both space and power are 'social relations' created by our mental and material constructs. The unitary theory of space offered by Lefebvre comprises of: representations of space (conceived, mental space); spatial practice (material, physical, perceived space), and; spaces of representation or 'representational space' (directly lived space). According to Lefebvre those who control how space is represented inevitably control how it is produced, organised and used. From Lefebvre's perspective, 'the State' creates a social space to serve the economic goals of Capitalism which in turn ensures that Capitalism is reproduced, enabling its very continuation. Through this perspective one may consider that the main aim of the state's control is the commodification and bureaucratisation of people's everyday life, namely the demarcation and rationalisation of space to govern it most efficiently (Sharp, 2009). The representations of space here function as mechanisms of control, discipline and power. Control of the representations of space is expressed by the state through its development of planning as a professional discipline with an inherent ideology of space. For example, in Europe and the US, the shift in planning governance from one of managerialism to the neo-liberal entrepreneurship of the 1970s and 1980s: "had an important facilitative role in the transition from Fordism to flexible accumulation – opening up mechanisms of social control through the

promotion of place-based identities; encouraging the serial reproduction of similar forms of urban development” (Wood 1998, 121).

From this perspective, space can be seen as “is a product literally filled with ideologies” (Soja, 1989: 80) which serve to maintain the dominance of state interests (Harvey 1989). In fact, it may be argued that any lack of acknowledgement of the role of ideology denies the politics inherent in space. In the context of this paper, the physical representations of the control of space by the state, local government, tour operators and indigenous travel agencies can be perceived as ‘spatial practices’. In this case, ‘spatial practice’ refers to the ‘empirically observable’, ‘readable’ and ‘visible’ practice of material transformation of space which mobilises productive forces and the social system (Stanek, 2011). It is proposed that within spatial practices there is an inherent exercising of power through the operation of procedures which seek to limit, regulate and control movements, choices, and behaviours through their spatial design and ornamentation. Through these expressions of power, there are those inhabitants who become ‘out of place’ and become delegitimized. However, they are able to appropriate spaces within the dominant coding and use of space, either by subverting the codes of the dominant space or by representing an alternative means of inhabiting it. For example, the global ‘Occupy’ movement which originated from ‘Occupy Wall Street’ in New York City's Zuccotti Park on 17th September 2011 was an explicit way of illustrating this. Therefore, through routine actions or practices, people may undermine or challenge the dominant ‘representations of space’.

In the case of the study region outlined here for example, legal boundaries set up by the state representatives and/or local government were found to be at odds with the mental maps and boundaries held by indigenous communities as experienced through daily life (Wells-Dang, 2010). Therefore, through simply undertaking everyday activities (‘spatial practices’) these actors may potentially transgress laws defined by regional planners and administrative authorities. In this sense, the simple occupation of space may therefore have the power to undermine or subvert the dominant picture. This may happen because of competing meanings and values as well as uses and practices invested in the occupation of space.

Whilst some socio-spatial arrangements are obvious to discern through legal definition, others may be concealed rather than denied. A seemingly 'open' space may be inaccessible for at least some if not many people. These form the notion of 'smothered' spaces. For example, access to a decision-making forum may in turn become smothered through an exercise of power, and the means by which this happens may not always be through the explicit restriction of access using formal mechanisms. Yet, those who are 'out of place' may still be able to inhabit the space through the notion of 'representational' or directly lived space. In this paper, these practices are placed within the wider historical and present political, socio-economic, cultural and environmental context (Clancy, 1999; Reed, 1999; Lieven and Goossens, 2011), which shapes the spatiality of power surrounding the relationships between the state, local government, local non-indigenous tour operators (PNITO), indigenous travel agencies (ITA), and the indigenous population ('the Nenets'). This research is therefore concerned with more than land disagreements, it is about the 'visible' and 'invisible' power of ideology as well as the 'invited', 'closed' and 'smothered' spaces which may reside in contested landscapes. In addition to Lefebvre's conception of the social production and constructed nature of space we augment this perspective with the work of Gaventa (2006).

Gaventa's 'Power Cube' introduces concepts such as 'hidden' power, 'created' spaces and facilitates an examination of the levels through which interrelationships between spaces and forms of power may occur. This lens enables the research to "draw attention to important features of social interaction and provide guidelines for research in specific settings" (Gilgun, 2002: 4). Previously, Lefebvre's 'production of space' has been mainly used in relation to specific legal and political settings (Clout, 2007; Butler, 2012; Konzen, 2013), in the context of technology and media (Ingersoll, 2011) or in the field of urban studies and architecture (Stanek, 2011). Applications of Gaventa's (2006) 'Power Cube' include Giva and Sriskandarajah's (2014) exploration of the possibility to improve the engagement between management of the National Park in Mozambique and local communities. Here, Giva and Sriskandarajah offer an action research approach and through Gaventa's work are sensitised to the terminology used in participant engagement. For example, the use of 'platform' for discussion is avoided by Giva and Sriskandarajah as it suggests a level field and fails to acknowledge power relations in a discussion space between

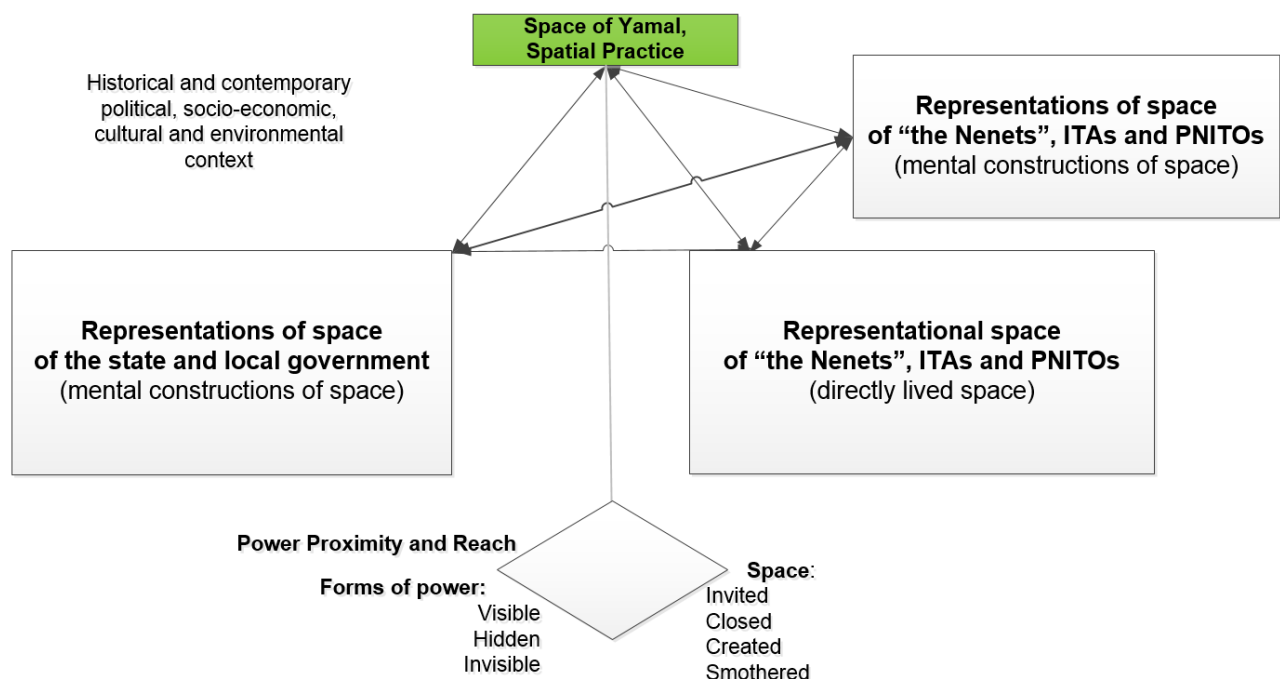
researchers and participants. Investigating the problem of local participation in conservation management of Kangchenjunga in Nepal, Myhrvold (2014) explores the multi-scale geographic nature of political space highlighting Gaventa's reference to the forms (visible, invisible and hidden), levels (global, national and local) and spaces (closed, invited and claimed/created) of power. Brauholtz-Speight (2015) examines how the Scottish community land movement has used various forms and sources of power in pursuit of local development, including tourism. Finally, Gebert (2015) focuses on the ways local economic development in tourism can be evaluated and refers to Gaventa's 'claimed' spaces as ranging from "ones created by social movements and community associations, to those simply involving natural places where people gather to debate, discuss and resist, outside of the institutionalised [or smothered] policy arenas" (p10).

### **Case study context**

With a population of around 40,000, 'The Nenets' of the Yamal Peninsula represent one of the largest of the indigenous groups in Northern Siberia, Russia. Their traditional economic activity, reindeer herding, is the third largest industry in the region after oil and gas. However, the development of oil and gas industries in the Peninsula threaten "Nenets" lifestyle and culture as more and more pasture territories are being allocated for industry purposes (Golovatin *et al.*, 2012). It is reported that the peninsula holds the largest stock of reindeer population in Russia consisting of 730,000 reindeer in 2016 (predicted by TASS News Agency, 2017 to exceed 800,000), 55 per cent of which are privately owned by "the Nenets" (Stammler, 2005; Vitebsky, 2006; Beach and Stammler, 2006), are being grazed on 106 000 km<sup>2</sup> of the Yamal Peninsula and "the Nenets" have to use the same pastures twice per season (Golovatin *et al.*, 2012). This situation, according to Golovatin *et al.* (2012), has already led to the degradation of vegetation and desertification of tundra and might lead further to the collapse of reindeer herding, as a result destroying the natural basis of indigenous lifestyle. To support "the Nenets", the region's governor Dmitry Kobylkin, (following Vladimir Putin), is promoting inbound tourism industry development (Mazharova, 2011) as a means to provide create additional income streams and job opportunities and in an attempt to diversify the local economy. Researchers have explored this form of regional strategy in

different geographic contexts (Briedenhman and Wickens, 2004; Hall and Müller, 2004; Morais *et al.*, 2006; Rogerson & Kiambo, 2007; Halseth & Meiklejohn, 2009) and with indigenous and marginalised communities this is commonly pursued with the aim of decreased dependency on local natural resources. In the Yamal Peninsula, if properly developed, regional government hopes that tourism may become one of the area's largest economic sectors.

However, as Simpson (2008) states, in order for indigenous communities to benefit from tourism development, participation is not enough. The level and types of subsequent profits depend on the spatiality of power surrounding them. The Yamal has become not only the location where associated political struggle happens, but the very object of that struggle. In this context, the spatiality of power is explored through investigation of 1) the state government's 'representations of space'; 2) spatial utilisation for industries' development (oil, gas, reindeer herding, and tourism); 3) 'spatial practice' used to sustain the government's control; 4) the Nenets 'representational space' (or directly lived space), and; 5) the Nenets 'representations of space' expressed through their 'spatial practice' in response to the state's 'spatial practice' (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Social space production at the local level of Yamal (Source: Adapted from Gaventa 2006; Lefebvre 1991)

## Method

The research presented here focuses on an exploration of spatialities of power and identification of whether power imbalances are observed. An ethnographic approach was adopted to underpin qualitative data collection although this was not employed in its classical longitudinal form. Instead, following the recommendations of authors such as Johnson and Clark (2006) and Daymon and Holloway (2011), ethnographic tools were employed in a sense to enable the utilisation of a range of qualitative methods including semi-structured interviews, informal conversations - or so called 'ethnographic interviews' (Spradely, 1979; Tracy, 2013), participant observation, field notes, photographs, and secondary data analysis. The research sample is outlined in Table 1, together with the codes employed to protect anonymity of the respondents.

Informal conversations, or so called 'unstructured' or 'ethnographic interviews' typically took place in a field setting, during field observation. Their usage was particularly valuable as they allowed the researcher to gather more emergent findings (Matthews and Ross, 2010). Such naturally occurring and spontaneous situations may arise whilst sitting at the table and drinking tea at someone's house, or whilst walking or waiting. Examples of themes surfaced by these situations included, inferences of hidden racism towards "the Nenets", as well as corruption and concealed dissatisfaction with the current government and current political economy regime more broadly. These were veiled issues faced by the representatives from tourism businesses.

Whenever permission to record conversations was obtained, the conversations were captured using an MP3 recorder and ethical procedures were adopted with respect to consent and anonymity. All the interviews have been conducted by one of the authors who is a native speaker of Russian and so a translator was not required.

Based on the information obtained during pre-fieldwork stage skype conversation with the representative from one of the indigenous travel agencies, it was identified that there are currently four local non-indigenous tour operators, including one state owned tour operator, and two indigenous travel agencies operating in the region specializing on inbound tourism industry development. Thus, interviews and

conversations were undertaken with all four representatives from local non-indigenous tour operators, as well as one state owned tour operator, two representatives from indigenous travel agencies, and twenty-seven representatives from “the Nenets”.

**Table 1: The research sample**

<b>Sample group</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Number</b>
Indigenous community member	R1-27	27
Non-indigenous tour operator (including state owned tour operator)	PNITO1-3, STO-4	4
Indigenous travel agency	ITA1, ITA2	2

In total, 33 informal conversations and in-depth interviews were conducted over a three-month period and, on average, each conversation or interview lasted two to three hours. The data collected were transcribed and analysed employing a ‘grounded theory’ approach (Corbin and Strauss 1990; 2015) whereby emergent themes were revealed through a process of free coding of thematic areas followed by a clustering (axial coding) phase to structure the data. Once the data had been initially gathered from informal conversations, interviews, observations and field notes, the information was transcribed and translated from Russian into English. It is worth noting here the difficulty that the authors experienced with this approach at the stage of analysis. The primary researcher had to constantly refer back to the sources in Russian in order to ensure the accuracy of the translation made and to ensure that the meaning was not lost, which was an extremely time-consuming process. For future studies it would be highly recommended to analyze the data and build the results in the origin language used for data collection, and only then to undertake the translation into the language required for research reporting. The interviews and informal conversations were directed by the following thematic areas:

#### **Interviews with the representatives from “the Nenets”**

1. Personal details (age, place of birth, education, current occupation)
2. Attitude and perception of oil and gas industry development. (e.g. value of land, attitude to its utilisation for industrial purposes, impacts of oil and gas industry development)
3. Attitude and perception of reindeer herding industry development and the way it is being currently developed (possible comparison with historical development)
4. Attitude and perception of inbound tourism industry development. Reasons for participation - opportunities, barriers.
5. Relationships with tour operators/indigenous travel agencies. Length of collaboration, who initiated, role in inbound tourism industry development.
6. Describe processes of decision-making and governance (e.g. involvement, inclusion/exclusion, influence).

Interviews with the representatives from the local non-indigenous tour operators and indigenous travel agencies

1. Personal details (age, place of birth, education, current occupation)
2. Details about your company (private/governmentally owned, number of tourists hosted per year; types of trips offered; most popular trips)
3. Attitude and perception of inbound tourism industry development.  
Development in the region - opportunities, barriers, role of the state and local government
4. Relationships with the Nenets, between each other, with the local government (who are the initiators, what is the nature of their involvement in inbound tourism, collaboration with representatives from local indigenous travel agencies, collaboration with representatives from local government)
5. Usage of land, natural resources and the Nenets' culture for inbound tourism industry development purposes? (availability of planning documents, maps, designs or images)

## Findings

The research is concerned with exploring diverse geographies of power and social space production in tourism industry development and several key observations can

be made relating to forms of agency. Most notably these were in the areas of: 'power within'; 'power to'; and 'power with' (Veneklasen and Miller, 2002) (Figure 1). The most influential factors of social space production in Yamal were the historical politico-economic conditions. In this case, a key relationship between the main stakeholders studied is the macro-historical, politico-economic factor; namely, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The process of '*Perestroika*' triggered the country's transition from a Socialist, centralized economy, to a Capitalist, decentralized economy. This resulted in the preserved power of the federal government and the significance of its 'representations of space'.

*a) Federal government's 'Representations of space' of Yamal*

The spatial objective for the state government may be seen as one of control and transformation of the space of Yamal to serve economic interests driven by the need to develop tourism so as to appropriate the land necessary for oil and gas industry development. The local government in the YNAO is responsible for the implementation of the state government's 'spatial practice'. These findings are in line with O'Neil's (2007) belief that the ways in which the local government in Salekhard, YNAO, responds to the development of industries, specifically the tourism industry, is largely influenced by the type of prevailing political economy regime in the country.

*b) Local government's 'representations' of economy development in the YNAO*

The space in Yamal is currently being transformed by the local government for industrial purposes – oil and gas, reindeer herding and tourism industry development. This corresponds with the plan approved by the president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin and the Government of the Russian Federation, in November 17, 2008 (Order N 1662-p "*The Concept of long-term socio-economic development of the Russian Federation for the period until 2020*"). According to which, in the interests of expanding Capitalism, the federal government is concerned with the geographic diversification and economic restructuring based on the possession of natural resources.

The 'representations of space' of the federal government became *"the basis for the development of the state programme at the regional level"*<sup>1</sup>. They were implemented at the level of the YNAO through *"The strategy of Socio-Economic Development of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug to 2020"*<sup>2</sup>. According to *"The strategy of Socio-Economic Development of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug to 2020"* the industries to be developed in the region are oil and gas, reindeer herding and tourism (Article 1).

*c) Local government's 'representations' of oil and gas industry development*

Primacy, as stated by the representatives from "the Nenets" and indigenous travel companies, is given by the local government to oil and gas industrial development. The development of this industry is important because, as specified by one of the representatives from the indigenous travel agency: *"oil and gas industry development helps the country to solve its problems"* (ITA1 supported by ITA2)<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, *"all the changes started to happen"* (R6). This may be interpreted to relate to transformation of space or 'spatial practice' (Lefebvre, 1991) for industrial purposes (Capitalism expansion). The main political transformation of space mentioned related to the land use:

*"More and more land is being allocated by the local government, for industrial purposes"* (R2 supported by R17; ITA1 and ITA2).

In this context, the power of the local government to allocate land for oil and gas industry development is based on visible, remote political power of Federal law<sup>4</sup>. This, in turn, was perceived by the respondents to adversely impact on reindeer

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<sup>1</sup> Articles 19.1 and 19.2 of the directive *"On the strategic planning in the Russian Federation"* passed by the State Duma on June 20, 2014, approved by the Federation Council on June 25, 2014 and signed by the President of the Russian Federation in June 28, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Decree of the Legislative Assembly of the YNAO from 21.05.2014 N° 2076 from 17.12.2014.

<sup>3</sup> (R – Respondent from "the Nenets"; ITA – indigenous travel agency; PNITO – private non-indigenous tour operator; STO – state-owned tour operator)

<sup>4</sup> Article 36, Constitution of the Russian Federation, section 1.2.1.

herding as a traditional economic activity. This conflict of interests is comparable to Vinding's (2004) findings for example in the context of Cambodia.

*d) The 'representational space' of "the Nenets" of the unsustainable impact of oil and gas industry development on reindeer herding*

Allocation of land for oil and gas industry development has resulted in the shortage of pasture space (resources) for reindeer herding activities. According to the representatives from "the Nenets", oil and gas industry development has not only led to pasture reduction, but it also destructively impacted the environment in general which, in turn, adversely influenced reindeer herding (Figure 2). In this context herds are managed in increasingly smaller spaces through pasture reduction therefore dissimilarities in the 'representations of space' between the representatives from "the Nenets" and local government can be seen. These are based on competing understandings, meanings and values as well practices invested in the use and appropriation of space.



**Figure 2:** Shortage of space for the "Nenets" reindeer herders (Source: Authors)

The situation is complicated under the influence of macro-conditions such as the harsh climate which along with the unsustainable and environmentally harmful impacts of oil and gas industry development which directly affect reindeer herding. It would appear that micro conditions such as pasture reduction and environmental pollution, together with macro conditions contribute to economic outcomes and, in this case, a reduction of the 'means of production' (i.e. the number of privately owned reindeer). This reduction of 'capital' (reindeer), in turn, may be seen to trigger negative social changes in "the Nenets" income (equating to further reduction of pastures) and overall economic activity. "The Nenets" therefore have little choice but to enter the labour market. They often start to work for either the state-owned reindeer farm, concentrate on fishing, seek additional income relating to the inbound tourism industry, or become sedentary and look for a job in the settlement (Figure 3). In this sense, the preservation of "the Nenets" culture, customs and traditions is threatened:

*"Construction of the railway across the tundra, of the processing complexes, reduces the pastures. Industrial spills pollute the environment. These factors along with the harsh climate cause the reduction in the number of reindeer and, as a consequence, endanger the existence of the reindeer herding" (R6 supported by R9);*

*"If one of "the Nenets" has less than 100 reindeer, it means he must go to the village and settle down" (PNITO1);*

*"This might mean the end of reindeer herding which, in turn, might lead to the fact that about 300 Nenets families will have to settle down. They will live in Yar-Sale or somewhere else and will start fishing" (R17).*



**Figure 3:** Sedentary life in the settlement (Source: Authors)

This process is similar to that described by Marx and Engels (1848) and Lenin (1899) according to whom the lack of sizable means of production results in members of the ‘petty-bourgeois’ (“the Nenets” in this case) being under threat of sinking into the ‘proletariat’ and so by losing independence they become part of the ‘means of production’ (Ball *et al.*, 2014); used and discarded as required (Slattery, 2003):

"The lower strata of the middle class [...] sink gradually into the proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital [...] is swamped in the competition with the large capitalists, partly their specialised skill is rendered worthless by new methods of production" (Marx and Engels, 1848: 213; Lenin, 1899: 235).

Harvey (2003) argues that the separation of people from their independent means of livelihood, or ‘economic alienation’. This is a continuous process embedded within contemporary global capitalism, and is referred to by Lefebvre as ‘accumulation by

dispossession'. This process is rooted in historical processes such as state capitalism development and in the case of YNAO this began after the Russian Revolution in 1917 and is still taking place today.

One outcome arising from “the Nenets” alienation from the land and their ‘means of production’ is that they are forced to settle down or to search for employment in the settlement or to seek additional income through participation in local tourism. A similar process has been observed and highlighted in the research findings of Davydov *et al.* (2006), in the neighbouring Nenets Autonomous Okrug where the intensive commercial exploitation has resulted in industrial pollution and landscape degradation.

### **“The Nenets” participation in inbound tourism industry development**

“The Nenets” decision to participate in inbound tourism industry development has been triggered by their dissatisfaction with the federal and local government’s ‘representations of space utilisation and transformation’ for oil and gas and reindeer herding industries development in Yamal. In this sense, decisions have been influenced by the competing meanings and values as well as uses and practices in the appropriation of space in Yamal. Under the impact of Capitalist expansion, this resulted in the space of the everyday becoming constrained, regulated, bounded, ordered and thus, dominated by economic concerns and the authority and power of the local government. As an outcome of this, representatives from “the Nenets” have chosen to resist (Young, 2000; Dierwechter, 2001; Larsen, 2006) and subvert this planned and dominating picture by creating a new space through participation in inbound tourism industry development (Figure 4). Here, the process of reoccupation illustrates Gaventa’s notion of claimed/created spaces.



**Figure 4:** “The Nenets” participation in inbound tourism industry development  
(Source: Authors)

As one of the representatives from the indigenous travel agencies stated:

*“I wouldn’t say that the private reindeer herders are satisfied with the current socio-economic, political and environmental situation” (R2).*

And so, according to the representatives from “the Nenets”, private indigenous travel agencies, and non-indigenous tour operators, the tourism industry was perceived to be non-threatening:

*“The Nenets” attitude to tourism industry is just positive because it doesn’t steal from “the Nenets”, doesn’t invade “the Nenets” land, it doesn’t change their lives” (R11 supported by R4; R14);*

In this context, this finding is similar to the findings made by Swarbrooke (1999) and Dé Ishtar (2005) on indigenous Australians. Moreover, the tourism industry is perceived by respondents as the only source which can bring “the Nenets” an additional income and employment. As one of the respondents highlighted:

*“This is the only sphere in the region that can bring “the Nenets” an additional income and employment” (R2 supported by R3; R4; R13; R17; R24; ITA1; ITA2; PNITO1; PNITO2).*

However, there is a mismatch between expectations and reality. The inbound tourism industry in Yamal is under-developed due to the local government’s ‘representations of space’ as jointly perceived by the other stakeholder groups in this study.

a) *Local government’s ‘representations of inbound tourism industry development’ in Yamal*

According to private indigenous travel agencies and non-indigenous tour operators, inbound tourism industry development is immature because the local government lacks understanding of the importance of inbound tourism industry development for the region. This probably has historical antecedents since during the Soviet period, the tourism industry was considered as a non-productive industry, based on the ideology and political economy regime promoted during that time (Burns, 1998). As a consequence, it is perhaps unsurprising that the respondents consistently bemoaned a lack of clear government strategy in relation to tourism industry development.

It may be, as presumed by one of the representatives from the private indigenous travel agencies, that a reason lies in the primacy of oil and gas industry development for the local governor over inbound tourism industry development (suggesting the influence of the ‘macro-economic factor’ upon ‘micro-economic factors’):

*“The local governor does everything for oil and gas companies because this industry brings lots of money and easy money while the development of the inbound tourism industry takes time that is why it is being developed just because of the directive of Vladimir Putin” (ITA1).*

As a result,

*“There is a lot written in the newspapers that the current governor of the Yamal-Nenets AO, Kobylkin, does a lot to develop the inbound tourism industry in the region in order to supply “the Nenets” with an additional source of income to improve their welfare, but do not believe it” (ITA1 supported by ITA2);*

*“Everything is just words. Where is development? There is no development” (R6);*

*“There is lots of said that the inbound tourism industry should be developed in the region, but in reality, there is nobody who would develop it” (PNITO2).*

Moreover, the ‘representations of space’ promoted by the federal government and, as a result, by the local government relate to public-private sector collaboration on inbound tourism industry development. This is considered by many as an important factor for successfully supporting a mixed economy (Holloway and Taylor, 2006; Ioannides and Timothy, 2011). Yet, this research finds that at a local level “the absence of public-private collaboration” means that the space for public-private collaboration remains unsupported by the local government.

b) *Local government’s ‘representations of public-private collaboration’*

As the representatives from private indigenous travel agencies and non-indigenous tour operators suggest in relation to private-public partnership: *“we are neither invited to participate in the exhibitions nor in the consultations or discussions on the tourism industry development in the region”* (PNITO2 supported by ITA1; ITA2). That is to say, the visibly open space of public-private collaboration is in reality ‘closed’ (or more accurately, ‘smothered’) by the representatives from the local government using ‘hidden power’ of control over the access to the meetings or to the exhibitions (Lefebvre, 1991; Bachrach and Baratz, 1962). This is akin to the case of tourism industry development in China (for example, Huang and Chen, 2015; Yang and Wall, 2016).

The findings here suggest that more ‘democratic’ open spaces and opportunities have not emerged for citizen engagement in tourism planning and development processes in this context. Similarly, the proposition is not supported by the research that different groups of people, including minority groups, although not equal in

influence, have access to, and influence upon, inbound tourism industry planning and development or indeed any associated decision-making (Murphy, 1988; Keogh, 1990; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Margerum, 1999; Ladkin and Bertramini, 2002; O'Faircheallaigh, 2010). This is coherent with Pellissery and Bergh (2007) and AbouAssi *et al.* (2013), who find that governmental structures are quite inflexible to work with in participatory decision-making processes. The space for the citizens often does not sufficiently materialise or is 'smothered'. Therefore, there is limited opportunity to participate and discuss policies, programmes and projects. Such 'institutional resistance' may be argued to limit any meaningful exchange between public and private bodies and, ultimately, prevents any wholesale transformation of local outcomes (Barnes *et al.*, 2007). As Franco and Estevao (2010) and Menon and Edward (2014) highlight, the lack of public-private collaboration may result in greater risks (for example, customer-related). These can result in a low profile for the tourism destination and, consequently, poor visitor-awareness of the destination linked to low visitation rates to the locality. An outcome of this is an immature inbound tourism and an extremely low tourism industry economic contribution. It is notable, for example, that the inbound tourism industry in the macro-economic indicators of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug were around 0.02% of GDP in 2012 (Department of Youth Policy and Tourism, YNAO, 2015). In relation to this, one representative from PNITOs commented: *"My perception is that we are stuck and do not move, everything goes around and around in loops"* (PNITO2).

### **Decentralisation of power**

Decentralisation of power may be recognized to have resulted in a lack of federal government control over the decisions and actions made by the local government in the region. One consequence of this was found to be that *"the plan of actions proposed in the programme on inbound tourism industry development in the YNAO to be not quite implemented"* (PNITO2). For example, the allocation of financial resources for tourism industry development, financial support of private businesses, promotional support through participation in exhibitions, involvement of "the Nenets" in inbound tourism industry development, and public-private partnership was noted to have been affected.

*“They [meaning the representatives from the local government] just report that the work was done and the money was spent, and that’s it. This is their position, to make an illusion that everything works and the plans are implemented...and this is because there is no control from the Federal government” (PNITO1 supported by PNITO2).*

In this context, the findings of the research are recognized to differ from researchers such as Sharpley & Telfer (2015) and Buckley *et al.* (2016). They believe that a shift to a regional planning of tourism industry development would require decentralisation of power because otherwise *“tourism growth may not be sustainable and contribute to the national development”* (Tosun and Jenkins, 1996: 530; in Telfer, 2002). From their perspective, decentralised power will facilitate a move towards a more participatory tourism industry development policy and this may assist a locality in making timely decisions regarding tourism development.

In contrast, the findings of this study are more aligned with Pandey (2004) who emphasised that there is a central responsibility of the federal government to ensure that the duties are carried out properly at the local level, that the funds are used properly, and that decentralisation is implemented through means which adequately support local communities. Without this their remains a preserved power imbalance.

### **‘Representations of inbound tourism industry development’ of the representatives from the local, private non-indigenous tour operators.**

It was identified that the inbound tourism industry is also underdeveloped in Yamal because of the influence of two additional macro conditions - geographical (remoteness of Yamal) and environmental (harsh and changeable climate) conditions. As one of the representatives from the local, private non-indigenous tour operators commented:

*“It is possible to develop the inbound tourism industry in Yamal. However, in order to get there from Salekhard, it will take around an hour by helicopter or from eight to twenty-two hours by boat (from Aksarka or Salekhard respectively). This means that the main target group of tourists should be VIP tourists. Thus, we can’t say that the inbound tourism industry is currently being developed in Yamal because of the remoteness of Yamal, resulted issues with tourists’ safety and price of the trip there” (this view is supported by R17);*

*“The cost of the tickets is very important because it impacts the tourists’ flow to Yamal. There are lots of people interested in travelling to Yamal but when*

*we send them the cost of the trip to Yamal, we get a response that it is very expensive. Thus, they choose to travel to a cheaper destination”* (PNITO1 supported by PNITO2; ITA1);

Thus, as stated by one of the representatives from the local, private non-indigenous tour operators, the inbound tourism industry is currently being developed at the locations closest to the capital city of the YNAO, Salekhard, where the infrastructure is well developed. Therefore, whilst in principle tourism development was initially well received, the lived experience creates very different outcomes. Due to the difficulties developing inbound tourism industry in Yamal: *“the inbound tourism industry development does not bring good income on a constant basis. We spend more than we earn”* (ITA2).

Consequently, the representatives from the local, private indigenous travel agencies and non-indigenous tour operators are ready to stop participating in inbound tourism industry development and start looking for other, more profitable economic activities. The participants are not specific about the nature of alternative activities however these could include small-scale agriculture, service industries related to the settlements or areas of public administration. Consequently, their efficacy (‘power within’) is grounded in the resources they possess: ‘knowledge’; ‘experience’; and ‘education’ in the case of the representatives from the non-indigenous tour operators; and ‘knowledge’, ‘education’ and the ‘means of production’ (reindeer) in the case of the representatives from the indigenous travel agencies.

## **Conclusions**

This study considers the institutional, regulatory and socio-cultural trends of the local indigenous people of the Yamal peninsula, North Siberia as being largely influenced by the political economy regime in the country. In particular, it presents conflicts through space resulting from differences in the mental maps of the region between state/local government, and the local indigenous people/stakeholders. The aim of the study is to explore the spatiality of power surrounding the indigenous reindeer herders (“the Nenets”) and their involvement in the local inbound tourism industry development. Initially this is perceived as a means to help empower their use of space however the macro and micro environmental, political and economic conditions result in tourism industry development having an equally constraining

effect on cultural spatial practice. This is examined through the role of space in power relationships and its influence and utilisation in tourism industry development. Lefebvre's social construction of space supplemented by Gaventa's (2006) 'power cube' facilitates a more nuanced appreciation of the spatiality of power in relation to the tourism industry and the ways in which space may be transformed through social action.

One of the key influential factors of social space production in Yamal is the macro-historical, politico-economic factor; namely, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The process of '*Perestroika*' has triggered the country's transition from a Socialist, centralized economy, to a Capitalist, decentralized economy, and has resulted in the preserved power of the federal government and the significance of its 'representations of space'. For example, the spatial objective for the state government may be seen as one of control and transformation of the space of Yamal to serve its economic interests. The introduction of tourist activities is described firstly as a means to maintain the traditional social and economic structure of the indigenous reindeer herders, "the Nenets". However, the study underlines a more complex and problematic context for tourism industry development. Here tourism may be considered as a strategy to support the development of extractive industries. Therefore, evaluating the benefits of tourism development in this context is complex and certainly many participants are highly critical of the way that it is being pursued in the Yamal peninsula. One participant summarises the feelings of many by suggesting that: "the inbound tourism industry development does not bring good income on a constant basis. We spend more than we earn".

Secondly, the local government may be seen to have failed in its commitment to decentralize the political economy decision making and is using the State to rationalize and commodify; "enabling the continuation of the relations of domination". From Gaventa's perspective the observed 'closed' spaces of public-private partnership and the 'smothered' discourse spaces for citizen engagement illustrate the stark differences between Lefebvre's representations of space (i.e. the conceived space of democratic process); spatial practice (i.e. the legal documentation and physical forums relating to such democratic engagement spaces), and; spaces of representation or 'representational space' (i.e. the lived realities including smothered

and inaccessible space). In this geographic context the findings contrast somewhat with those calling for greater decentralization to support regional planning of tourism. The research observes that this region may indeed benefit from greater centralized responsibility for ensuring local power imbalances are mitigated. This is an area where landscape, people, and economic concerns are inseparable and where power resides in the multi-layered enactment of spatial practice. This is a delicate balance and one which requires sensitivity to the spatiality of power and shared understandings of landscape to achieve sustainably.

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