



The MASD stakeholder meeting took place in Murmansk, the administrative capital of Murmansk oblast and the largest city in the Arctic. PHOTO: Dag Avango

Dear reader,

Light is returning to the Arctic expanses, heralding the fast approaching spring. In this first newsletter of 2017, we share some observations and reflections from a field trip to Murmansk in late October of last year. Dag Avango reports from the field trip:

Research visit at the Kola Peninsula

From October 18-20, 2016, MASD organized a series of meetings and field visits in Murmansk and beyond at the Kola Peninsula. A team of eight MASD researchers were involved: Dag Avango, Julia Lajus and Urban Wråkberg and PhD students Andrian Vlahov, Vasiliy Borovoy, Corinna Röver, Ekaterina Kalemeneva and Daria Smagina. The objective was to present and discuss the MASD program with stakeholders from the Murmansk region and to visit two sites which offer different windows into some of the challenges that communities at the Kola Peninsula face.

Stakeholder meeting in Murmansk

The group left Stockholm for St Petersburg on the October 18 and arrived in Murmansk in the morning hours the following day. The main event of the day was a meeting with stakeholders, which took place at the Azimut Hotel in Murmansk. Most of the participating stakeholders were actors from various NGOs, museum curators and researchers within the human, social and natural sciences from universities in Murmansk and Apatity.

Policies from the South applied to the North

Julia Lajus, HSE St Petersburg, opened the meeting by welcoming the guests and introducing the presenting researchers. Dag Avango, KTH Stockholm, gave a summary of the MASD program with some highlights of its results. Urban Wråkberg, UIT Kirkenes, presented one of the ongoing book projects within the program. After these overarching presentations of the program, the PhD students presented their thesis projects: Vasiliy Borovoy on the history of Russian coal mining at Svalbard in the inter-war period, Andrian Vlahov on the current process of re-thinking the future of Russian coal mining at Svalbard (coal mines intimately connected with the town of Murmansk), Corinna Röver on the economization of reindeer husbandry in post-war Sweden, Ekaterina Kalemeneva on the changing trends of Soviet planning for Arctic industrial settlements, and finally Daria Smagina, who presented her work on social ecology and marine certification in the Russian north.

A spirited discussion

The presentations triggered a spirited discussion and many questions. A prominent theme concerned our use of the term internal colonialism, a term used for colonization processes taking place within borders of states (as opposed to external colonialism conducted outside of state borders). Researchers studying the Arctic have normally used the concept to describe processes where actors from the south appropriate natural resources in the north, in areas used and populated by indigenous peoples. Stakeholders in the audience asked for a wider usage of the term, to also include the way southern actors in the present impose new policies on the north, which do not only effect indigenous peoples but also non-indigenous local residents.

One of the examples highlighted were a new generation of managers for large resource extraction companies in the north, who implement neo-liberal ways of managing extractive industries, focusing on core elements of their production while discontinuing social responsibilities towards the northern communities in which they operate.



(1) Residents at Teriberka discussing the community, its history and its possible futures with MASD researchers. (2) MASD researchers visiting the ice breaker Lenin in the port of Murmansk, formerly a corner stone in the shipping infrastructure of Murmansk and now a resource for generating tourism incomes. (3) Waterfall at Teriberka, a resource for the tourism industry. PHOTO: Dag Avango



The Gazprom road to the Shtockman gas field harbor, now the legacy of an abandoned future vision. PHOTO: Dag Avango

How to handle transitions to post-extraction economies

Another prominent topic concerned transition processes in northern communities in north-western Russia and beyond: how can communities handle the closure/discontinuation of economic activities, typically resource extraction or fisheries, on which they used to be based? How can such communities develop new self-understandings, economies and development perspectives, beyond extractive industries? The meeting participants called for more research efforts on this theme, particularly exploring how to develop tourism, how to transform material legacies of past activities from being negative symbols of lost futures into resources for local identity, such as cultural heritage and eventually tourism incomes. There was a call for collecting success stories on transition processes from across the Arctic region, comparing cases in Russia with cases elsewhere, but also failures. How can we explain success or failure in transition processes?

Former ice-breaker Lenin

The MASD team also conducted field visits to two sites that, in different ways, provided food for thought on the research problems noted by the stakeholders. The first was the former ice-breaker Lenin, which from 1959 to 1989 cleared transport routes off the coast of the north-western Soviet Union and beyond in the Arctic. Today Lenin is run as a museum in which visitors can experience the ice breaker itself as well as exhibitions narrating the history of not only the ship (Lenin was the first nuclear powered ice breaker in the world), but also the historical role of Murmansk as a base for Soviet and Russian ice breaking in the Arctic Ocean. As a museum and heritage site, Lenin is an example of how communities in the Arctic can repurpose disused artefacts from the past as a resource to support certain self-understandings and local identities and to generate new income from tourism.

Visit to Teriberka

The second visit we conducted at Teriberka, a settlement on a Barents Sea coast, which for more than a hundred years was based around the fishing industry. From the late 1920s, the Soviet authorities collectivized this industry and farming, reindeer herding and a shipyard, and in the post-WWII period, these industries had their hay-days, while the Soviet state supplied Teriberka with new infrastructures, service facilities and housing. From the 1960s, however, new developments in the Russian fishing industry in the Barents region put the Teriberka fisheries gradually out of

business, the village lost its 2000-head reindeer herd and environmental degradation from the construction of a hydropower plant in the 1980s knocked out salmon fishing.

Today Teriberka is struggling with these losses of income opportunities and is searching for a new future. Some years back Gazprom planned to build a harbor facility for the Shtockman gas field in the Barents Sea, bringing hope for new incomes to the community. During our visit, the only remains of this future vision was an oversized road leading to nowhere. Other future visions, based on a potential cultural tourism, have been formulated after the recent and internationally well-known Russian movie *Leviathan* was recorded at Teriberka. The movie generated an increased public interest in the site in Russia, but has generated few visitors so far, beyond groups of hipsters from Moscow and St Petersburg who have gathered for festivities in the village in the summertime. The only tourist magnet so far is a waterfall located some kilometers beyond the village. Teriberka is an example of the challenges faced by many Arctic communities that are undergoing transitions to new economies and self-understandings. The vitality and wonderful hospitality of our hosts at Teriberka also reveal the massive efforts that local people in the Arctic make to build a meaningful life on the legacies of their pasts.

Next stakeholder meeting

Instead of a regular stakeholder meeting before summer, local and regional stakeholders will be invited to attend all Mistra Arctic sessions on Friday June 9 at the large international Arctic social science conference ICASS 9 in Umeå, further presented on Umeå University's website:

<http://www.arcum.umu.se/english/?languageId=1>

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Teriberka, a former hub for the fishing industry, seeks new opportunities for sustaining the community. PHOTO: Dag Avango