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Title Transportation infrastructures and development: tracing socio-economic and climate change in Tiksi, Northern Russia

Last Name of PRESENTING Author Povoroznyuk

Middle Name or initials of PRESENTING Author

First Name of PRESENTING Author Olga

Country of PRESENTING Author Austria

Institution, organization or general address University of Vienna

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Author list (in order) Povoroznyuk, Olga

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Abstract - text box

The town of Tiksi, founded in the heydays of Soviet development of the Arctic, is still proudly called “the Arctic sea-gate of Yakutiya” and is a maritime and riverine transportation node. However, the current modernization program of the Northern Sea Route so far remains an unfulfilled promise: the major bulk of foods and goods is supplied to Tiksi from Ust’-Kut by the Lena River during the navigation season, and from Yakutsk on winter roads during the ice season. The complicated delivery system and curtailed state support of the so called “northern supply” that was introduced in the Soviet period result in high local consumer prices. While indigenous and mixed population of the neighboring villages is drawn to Tiksi, the residents of Tiksi move to Yakutsk and to the cities on the “Big Land” leaving empty houses behind. The growing climate change (coastal erosion, thawing permafrost and sea ice) effect subsistence activities, mobility and seasonality of supply of necessary products and foods by winter roads. Overshadowed by socio-economic concerns, they are publicly discussed mostly in cases of major economic losses and extreme weather events, while environmental problems experienced on a daily basis seem to be paradoxically ignored. I argue that throughout the Soviet and Post-Soviet periods, different groups of population (fishermen, herders, sedentary town residents, etc.) have developed complex strategies of adaptation to rapid socio-economic and environmental change that contribute to overall community resilience.

The poster will combine different sets of qualitative (such as interviews, participant observation) and quantitative (population dynamics and socio-economics, night light imagery and remote sensing) data in order to trace local socio-environmental adaptation strategies.