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DISSERTATION

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“Making a viable city:

visions, strategies and practices”.

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This manuscript is dedicated to my family.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Functioning, sustainable and efficient development of urban areas is the principal goal of urban planners, decision-makers and urban economists worldwide. Social characteristics and economic factors that contribute to the well-being of inhabitants are the two explanations of local success. Taking one step farther, this dissertation explores how situatedness of a settlement in the extra-local economic networks and power relations shapes strategies, practices of and views on the city development. The theoretical contribution of the present work to the urban geography is the application of the concept of city viability in conjunction with the concepts of positionality and path dependence to improve our understanding of how the notion city viability is constructed, perceived and implemented in general.

The search for sustainable scenarios is especially pressing among remote industrial localities of the regions of the Russian Far North. The majority of these settlements were established through a Soviet planning effort, specifically in order to provide extractive industries with manpower resources. Economic and political dependence on core regions, mono-profiled economic basis, reliance on resource extraction and geographic remoteness from the markers results in a limited spectrum of available livelihoods. An example of a settlement experiencing these challenges is the city of Vorkuta – the case study in this dissertation.

The results from extensive fieldwork in Vorkuta bring new insights to the theoretical discussion on city viability in post-Soviet conditions. I show how dominant approaches to creating a viable city have transformed over time by looking at the city's evolution from a GULAG camp to a modern community. It is sometimes claimed that new Soviet towns cannot be livable due to their misallocation, history of forced settlement and incredibly high maintenance costs (Pivovarov 1995; Pivovarov 2002; Hill and Gaddy 2003; Hill 2004). In this context, the dissertation demonstrates how these localities developed into places for permanent habitation and what principles and practices allowed them to persist during the reforms of the early 1990s. Soviet principles that underpin city viability were revisited, which resulted in the cost-efficiency approach to the local development and programs aimed at socio-economic, demographic and spatial restructuring of the northern periphery. Recent interest in the Arctic region has given rise to new ideas and practices to link northern communities to the markets and federal funding. Empirical findings from Vorkuta show how seemingly incompatible strategies and visions simultaneously co-exist and are used as cards of different suits in the play for a better future.

This dissertation brings the voices of different actors and examines their contribution to the city-making process throughout three different historical periods.

It is evident that the prospects of northern localities are to a great extent influenced by the socio-economic settings and practices inherited over time. Although path dependence imposes some limitations on the city development and leads to negative restrictions in some spheres, continuing legacies also provide potential for community well-being. Based on the example of Vorkuta, this work shows that path dependences can be utilised as a resource used for manipulation of remaining economic networks and power relations. Moreover, prosperity of the place is not merely a product of local forces, but is shaped by its position within extra-local political and economic relations and the ability of a city to reposition itself in a new situation.

Key words: City viability, positionality, path dependence, single industry town, post-socialism, urban geography, Arctic.

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FOREWORD

For as long as I can remember, my life was strongly connected to the North one way or another. My parents arrived to the region in 1983 and have lived there ever since; it became a second home for them. While studying at the university, I always travelled up North to visit the family during the semester breaks, instead of enjoying warmer places. Later the North, and particularly the development of the northern industrial communities, has become a subject of my research interest and the topic of scientific investigation that drove me to move to Vienna and then to Rovaniemi. This is how I met my supervisors Dr. Heinz Fassmann and Dr. Florian Stammler whom I would like to thank for their academic guidance, intellectual input, for long and fruitful discussions about my field findings and overall administrative support which cannot be overestimated. Without their help this piece would not have reached its current form.

During the past three years I have spent four months in the mining community of Vorkuta – the case study of this research. I was often asked what I found so fascinating about Vorkuta to write about it. My first encounter with the city occurred through the pages of the "The Gulag Archipelago" by Alexander Solzhenitsyn and then in the World Bank report (2001) which I analysed for the MOVE INNOCOM project on resettlement policies in the Russian Far North. The first book is abundant with historical examples and critical reflection about Stalin's forced labour camps, which were used to implement massive industrial projects across the Soviet space, including the North. The World Bank's report provided an unemotional analysis of the localities considered to be one of the most economically devastated areas of the country. I remember looking at the map of Russia and thinking about people living there; obviously, conclusions offered in both publications did not satisfy my curiosity but raised more questions.

The third document which shaped my research agenda was published by the American journalist David Holley in "Los Angeles Times" (2004). It starts with the words: "The GULAG is gone, but its prisoners remain". The author described the difficulties of life in Vorkuta and depicted its residents as present-day prisoners who are "locked" in the North by the Soviet state and who dream about leaving to the South but cannot afford relocation. I wondered: What does the place that everybody tries to escape look like? What is it like to live in a city with the feeling of being trapped? I was attracted by the exotic story of Vorkuta, its geographic remoteness and black rumours circling in the newspapers. Soon after joining the research project "Lives on the move" at the University of Vienna I took my first trip to Vorkuta to find out the real state of affairs. As I prepared myself for interviewing people who

were left in the North without a hope to move out, I found out that many of those I met do not consider Vorkuta as a "prison" but a place to which they attach hopes for the future. I was very fortunate to get to know different people who are sincerely concerned about the future of Vorkuta and invest their energy, knowledge, spare time and financial resources into making this city a better place. Because of them this study dismantles the stereotype of Vorkuta as a "godforsaken place" and brings some fresh insights about the life on the periphery. I would like to thank Margarita Getsen, Oleg Gudovaniy and Irina Vitman, Mikhail Rogachev, Semen Mostunenko, Yuriy Mezheritskiy, Vyacheslav Tokmyanin and many others for sharing their stories and allowing me to look at the city through their loving eyes.

It is a personal book in the way that I tell the story of my home region and the places built during the Soviet era by people like my parents and their friends. The city of Novy Urengoy – the place where I come from – has a radically different history of urban development, resource extraction and an experience of post-Soviet transformation. Today it is still one of the most prosperous urban centres in Russia, supplying the nation with fossil fuels and providing the state budget with revenues streaming from gas exports. Similar to Vorkuta, which once was an island of prosperity and wealth, Novy Urengoy depends on raw materials and fluctuation of the world prices for natural resources. Today it flourishes and can provide the local population with high income, career opportunities and social welfare; however, no one can definitely say how long this period of prosperity will last. Sooner or later it will experience a painful decline and associated problems, which hit wealthy Vorkuta earlier. In this regards, the study of Vorkuta's development path has practical implications for other resource communities in Russia, both those experiencing the times of socio-economic boom or decay. Thus, I regard my research in Vorkuta as a contribution to better policy planning and practice in other localities in the Russian Far North. I hope this piece will be useful not only for a small circle of academics, but also for planners, decision-makers and northern residents.

Empirical findings from Vorkuta also benefit theoretical debates on city viability and conditions that help a place to reposition itself in the new globalising environment. This latter issue as well as methodological concerns was wildly discussed with my colleagues – Gertrude Eilmsteiner-Saxinger, Ayse Caglar, Alexandra Sindrestean, Tatjana Thelen, Hans-Heinrich Blotevogel, Felix Ringel, Alexander Trupp, Doris Carson and others. I thank them for challenging me with thoughtful questions and comments that helped this research to grow with fresh perspectives.

I sincerely thank Dean Carson and Peter Schweitzer who carefully reviewed my dissertation and provided valuable critical recommendations. I thank Joshua Grigsby, Stefán Erlingsson, Adam Stępień, Lukas Allemann, David Ostman and Sarah Beckham Hooff for proofreading this manuscript and giving a helping hand at the critical moment. I show gratitude to Elena Aleshkevich and Sveta Yasonova for transcribing the interviews, so I could work with the text files. Some statistical information presented in the dissertation was kindly provided by Tim Heleniak, whom I also express my acknowledgments. Thank you, Gertrude Eilmsteiner-Saxinger, for your kind friendship, brain-storming, theoretical guidance, for printing out this book and being a good example of a true anthropologist. Without you my work at the UNI Vienna would not be possible. Certainly not to be overlooked, I express sincere appreciation to Angelika Horvath and Renate Stumptner for the secretarial assistance throughout these years and the most "burning" moments in particular.

This work would not be written without love and support of my female angels – Elisabeth Öfner, Marina Kolupaeva, Maria Katseva, Alla Bolotova, Irina Zhilina, Assi Harkoma, Tatyana Zabaskaya, Eugeniya Glushan'. I thank them for their friendly encouragement and moral support throughout my endeavors. As a final word, I would like to thank my parents, grandmother and beloved brothers who were next to me in every step of the research and on every page of the written dissertation. This work belongs to you – a true northern family.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This research departs from the publicly discussed dilemma of how to deal with Russian northern settlements, established by the previous regime, at a great distance from the major economic, political and population centres. Within these discussions, it has been argued that "Russia's fundamental problem of regional development is not the lack of infrastructure between these cities, but the fact that the cities themselves should not have been where they are in the first place" (Hill and Gaddy 2003: 198). New democratic authorities in Russia, who came to power in 1991, were recommended to concentrate national economic activity in the European part of the country, while utilising northern territories exclusively as a resource base rather than a region for permanent residence (Pivovarov 1995; 2002; Hill and Gaddy 2003; Hill 2004). According to this logic, mining operations, which were previously based on the local work force moved to the North for this exact purpose, should be carried by fly-in fly-out workers permanently living in climatically warmer regions and working in the North in shifts. At the same time, northern cities were induced to become smaller both in terms of population, urban space and social infrastructure. In order to facilitate urban shrinkage, the Russian government developed special programs and provided urban localities with financial means to adjust population size by relocating socially vulnerable groups. It was expected that these measures would protect the state budget from the gigantic expenses for the provision and maintenance costs of the northern towns. The idea of restructuring the Russian North was promoted by international actors, such as the World Bank, and supported by the ministries in Moscow through spatial policies. On the other hand, local political leaders and even beneficiaries of relocation subsidies did not share the same view about the future development of the northern communities. Moreover, dry cost-benefit approach to the North has been heavily criticised on the ground and resulted in some unintended consequences (Nuykina 2011).

It is evident that a rationally calculated plan of changing Russia's economic geography when labour-saving technology replaces people has failed. The Russian Far North is still the most populated area in the circumpolar region and provides home to 8,142 million inhabitants which makes 5,7% of the total Russian population in 2010 (Goskomstat Rossii 2010). Around 78% of northern inhabitants live in the urban communities, which makes cities a crucial part of the social-economic fabric of the circumpolar region. Some of these cities experience population increase, prosper and gain political leverage, while others remain in depression.

Formerly being an outpost of modernity (Thompson 2008) and an important economic player within the system of centralised administrative planning, the declining cities have lost their advantageous position and underwent the process of social-economic reorganisation (Axenov, Brade et al. 2006). What are the driving forces that help municipalities to successfully re-establish themselves? What factors restrain their vitality? These questions are the central concerns of this study. I look at the city-making process from different angles and multiple approaches throughout history. How did the Soviet and then the Russian state design the northern periphery, first, by peopling it with an industrial workers-population and then by resettling masses of people to the South? What is the role of industries in the process of forming and managing industrial towns? How do municipal authorities lead the process of city development by interacting with the extra-local actors? What are the visions and practices of the population with respect to the place they inhabit?

This chapter provides an introduction to the whole dissertation. In particular, it raises research questions and summarises what is to be achieved by the research. I elaborate here research objectives and explain the importance of the studied subject matter, provide the readers with some background information about the problematique and offer a general description of the case. Problems addressed in this opening chapter will be further elaborated in the subsequent sections.

Background information

Today, over 60 % of the national budget in Russia is drawn from revenues linked to mining and the export of raw materials (Inozemtsev 2012). Overwhelmingly, these exports stem from numerous specialized cities often located in northern Russia, which makes up 47 % of the territory of the Russian Federation. Economic and political dependence on a federal government, mono-profiled economic basis, and geographic remoteness from the markers create barriers for a sustainable development of these places. The study of these remote industrial communities, dependent on the extraction of natural resources, is the subject of this dissertation.

Although the majority of mono-profile settlements are concentrated in the Ural and Volga Federal Districts, the attention of my research is directed to the northern resource frontier – remote places built especially for the purpose of extracting and refining natural resources, where half of Russia's export profits and a quarter of tax revenues originate from. These settlements were established by the Soviet planners "to provide a fixed reserve of

labour for factories, mines, and oil and gas fields" (Hill and Gaddy 2003: 91), leading to inmigration of millions of non-indigenous people to the North. As a consequence, the viability of these newly settled communities has been closely interlocked with a city-forming base industry and has been vitally dependent on its growth. The main company served as a source of life in the settlement, from which radiated the city's utilities, schools, health care and cultural centres, planned according to measured norms of allocation and output (Collier 2011). Started from small camps for industrial workers and geologists, these places gradually developed into viable communities despite the degree of geographic isolation and great distance from the central and southern regions – the mainland, as it is called in the North. Since the end of the Soviet era, however, these northern cities have been inherently unsustainable and struggled with economic, social and demographic decline.

With the disintegration of the Soviet planned economy, many northern industries have gone through extensive downsizing in order to become economically competitive under free market conditions. City-forming enterprises have been unable to fulfil their social obligations such as, for instance, building housing blocks for workers, providing families with company kindergartens, or maintaining utility services. As the industrial base contracted, local budgets received lower revenues and had much less financial power to maintain urban infrastructure, public buildings and to deliver social services. The complicated economic situation of mono-industrial areas was aggravated as federal budgetary transfers were scaled down, followed by the centralisation of budget-forming taxes in the federal and regional budget systems, and the reforms in municipal self-government (Federal Law N131-FZ from 16 September 2003). In addition to economic instability, restructuring of city-forming industrial complexes has caused adverse social effects, such as redundancies, early retirement and growing unemployment. Northern municipalities have been affected by increased demand for housing, health services and social assistance from expanding, non-working population (World Bank 2000). Those who had an opportunity to re-establish their life in a different place have moved out of the North. As Heleniak (2009) outlined, between 1989 and 2006 17 % of the population migrated out of the Russian Far North to more temperate regions. As a consequence of this societal restructuring, mono-cities were left highly vulnerable to further economic pressures, and with limited capacity to meet the changing needs of communities.

Contemporary processes of economic globalisation impose new challenges for the Russian northern single-industry towns and facilitate formation of new approaches to city development. Municipal leaders try to improve viability of their communities: first, through broadening of the economic basis, second, through taking advantage of the geographic

location, and third, through utilising formerly established economic relations between the North and the South. Furthermore, in order to increase the well-being and quality of life, local administrations try to defend the interests of the population against the actions of federal authorities. In the conditions of reinforced verticality, the struggle for state funding turns into a creative process of repositioning, when different attributes of the place become a source for new positional strategies. For example, geographic location in the North and proximity to the gas fields on the Yamal Peninsula provided Vorkuta with the positional advantage as an Arctic hub for fly-in fly-out operations. The municipal authorities currently put emphasis on economic diversification. On the other hand, the remaining mono-industrial status of Vorkuta is used as a powerful argument in the competition for resources within the intergovernmental fiscal relations. Grounding my inquiry on the empirical accounts from the Russian North, I look at how resource dependent, isolated places deal with and live through positional changes and what makes these places viable today.

Description of the case

The city of Vorkuta is one of the places of recent settlement, as it was established a decade before the Second World War started. It was named after a small river flowing near the foothills of the Polar Urals – the natural geographical borderline between Europe and Asia. This area is a traditional territory of the Nenets, who belong to the Russian legal category of the so-called "small-numbered indigenous peoples of the North". Moving for hundreds of kilometres in search of better pastures for reindeer herds, they often observed brown bears coming to the river for fishing and therefore called this stream Varkutyakha – a bearish place or place teeming with bears. In addition to bears and fish the area around Vorkuta is abundant in raw materials, such as coal, copper, chromite, lead, bauxite and various construction materials.

The case of this study is located in the far north-east of Europe, 160 km north of the Arctic Circle in the Pechora coal basin and 2269 km from the capital of Russia. Administratively, it belongs to the Republic of Komi and is included in the North-West Federal District. Vorkuta occupies 24 180 km^2 which is almost 6 % of the total territory of the Komi republic and can be compared in size with such European countries like Slovenia or Macedonia. The territory of the urban district extends from north to south between 66° 06' and 68° 27' north latitude, from west to east between 61° 36' and 66° 19' east longitude. It is situated near the western slopes of the Polar Urals and close proximity to the Kara Sea (197 km) and the Barents Sea (200 km) of the Arctic Ocean. In the west and the north Vorkuta

borders with the Nenets Autonomous District of the Arkhangelsk region, in the east it neighbours with the Tyumen region, and in the south and south-west of Vorkuta lies the urban district of Inta.

Before the 1940s, a travel to Vorkuta was only possible by water from Arkhangelsk and it would take about a month to reach the destination. The travel distance was made four times faster when Vorkuta got linked to the mainland by the Pechora North railroad, built during the Second World War. The railroad connection made Vorkuta one of the few Arctic cities accessible by train. The trip to Vorkuta is a unique journey which can be compared to the Trans-Siberian railway route in its attractiveness for the international tourists. Today a trip on the express train from Moscow takes about a day and a half (39 hours 55 minutes), while the duration of direct flights is only three hours. There is still no automobile road linking Vorkuta to central Russia, and the flight connection is constrained by the unstable weather conditions[1]. Therefore, the railway remains the main transportation route, used for bringing both passengers and cargo. Annex 5 contains the map which shows the location of Vorkuta within the regions of the Russian Far North and its inclusion into the railroad networks.

The location of Vorkuta in treeless open space above the Arctic Circle determines severe and unpredictable weather conditions, to which the local population has to adapt. Nature dominates the humans, and it is impossible to ignore its power. During the summer - from the end of May till the middle of July – the sun does not set. Throughout the "polar day" a large amount of solar radiation is spent melting snow, evaporating moisture and warming the soil, resulting in low summer temperature. In winter, in the second half of December, the sun hardly rises above the horizon and the town is enmeshed in the polar night. The shortest day – December 22 – lasts only 31 minutes. The average annual air temperature is -5,5 °C. The cold period on the average lasts for 239 days – from the 1st of October till the 28th of May, while summer in Vorkuta is only 45 days long. As a result, in some years the duration of the heating season in Vorkuta reached 300 days. Moreover, the lack of forest cover in Vorkuta influences the wind speed, resulting in fairly frequent storm winds with speeds of over 15 m/sec, especially in the winter period.

The location of Vorkuta, its remoteness, and extreme climatic environment, determine the town's development path and the challenges it faces. Perhaps, the town would have never been established in such hostile conditions in the "middle of nowhere" if it was not blessed, or as some say "cursed", by abundance of mineral resources, particularly coal deposits. The city has emerged as a result of the Stalinist policy of modernisation of the northern frontier and

[1] There are no flights to Vorkuta during the winter season.

had a supplementary function to the coal industry. In later years it became well-known as a high-income community that pulled in workers from all over the country, who were attracted by the higher salaries and professional opportunities. Designed according to the contemporary urban planning principles of the Soviet era, well supplied with goods and services, Vorkuta provided its inhabitants with higher living standards compared to the national average. Golden years of prosperity and growth have been followed by the period of depression from the mid-1990s till the mid-2000s, associated with shutting down the mining sites and restructuring of the city-forming enterprise, large-scale outmigration and spatial downsizing, living standards' deterioration and increased unemployment. Due to unprofitability of coal production in the free market conditions, six mines out of eleven were abandoned. As a result of post-Soviet transformations, Vorkuta lost its attractiveness to many of the residents and was included in the list of the rapidly shrinking cities; between 1989 and 2013 the population of the city district declined to roughly 120 000 people. Demographic downsizing was also stimulated through state-sponsored relocation programs. The prevailing approach to city development highlights the importance of gradual shrinking through the planned depopulation of non-profitable suburban areas and relocation economically inactive residents to more temperate regions. Due to urban shrinkage, partly induced by the municipal government, and partly resulting from voluntary outmigration, some of the satellite settlements around Vorkuta turned into ghost towns. During the following years, the city regained its allure due to the growing interest in the Arctic resources both by the extractive industries and the state. Vorkuta gradually re-establishes its position as a base town for fly-in fly-out operations taking place further in the North and for exploitation of the fossil fuels. While it remains a mono-industrial settlement mainly based on coal extraction, it takes steps towards economic diversification both within the resource sector as well as through the development of service economy. One can also observe increasing civic activism and engagement in making the place a home. In comparison to the previous period, more and more citizens have decided to stay in the city and invest time, energy and money in a brighter future.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to bring new insights to the theoretical understanding of visions, principles and practices that facilitate the vitality of remote industrial settlements in the globalising economic space. I intend to draw a few broader theoretical points about the conditions under which single industry towns may successfully adopt development paths

leading to socio-economic viability. Three theoretical concepts, namely, city-viability, positionality and path dependence were chosen to form a theoretical frame in order to study how city viability is produced through combination and interaction of large-scale and place-based processes.

The study is based on empirical assessment of a coal mining city located in the Russian northern periphery. This case illustrates well the diversity of experiences and creative interactions of the actors with the place. By adopting a multidimensional perspective I aim to show how ideas and strategies of city viability are formed depending on the positionality of actors with respect to each other and how they are practically implemented. This is a chronological study of processes through which a viable city emerges. My analysis begins with the depiction of the Soviet urbanisation in the North, when several new towns were founded, and concludes with the examination of the present-day dynamics.

Literature review shows a general tendency to analyse city viability by prioritising local forces and place-based characteristics (Gans 1968; Schoenberg 1979; Keczmerski and Sorter 1984). It is evident, however, that place development is not an isolated process but occurs within macro-spaces, within relations and networks. Thus, the second purpose of this research is to demonstrate in what way national and global positioning of a settlement impacts its ability to stay afloat and even prosper. By bringing the concept of positionality (Sheppard 2002) into the theoretical debate on city viability, I argue that prosperity of a place is not merely a product of local networks and actors, but is shaped by dependence on and either powerful or weak position within large-scale relations of trade, finance, migration, etc. I am particularly interested in the process of repositioning within external contexts that influence viability of a settlement and its livelihood opportunities.

The third purpose of this research is to examine the role of path dependences (Liebowitz and Margolis 2000; Martin and Sunley 2006) in confining and also ensuring sustainable development of a locality, with the particular attention to the human agency. To complement this theoretical angle with the empirical evidence, I review the legacies of the Soviet regime in contemporary city-making practices and follow the way they influence economic relations between the leading enterprise and municipality. I also examine the power relations between different levels of governmental authorities, people's expectations of state obligations, relocation policies, centre-periphery interplay, people's collective activities. Findings from the field confirm that present-day life in Vorkuta and its embeddedness in broader political, economic and social relations is based on formerly established relations and practices. The latter can be reconfigured and utilised to provide a place with new prospects.

This dissertation is written from the disciplinary perspective of urban geography. Therefore, spatial aspects of socio-economic and political developments are included into my research agenda. When referring to the city-making process I look at social, economic and political transformations as well as the historical context. The latter gives me an important source of information for elaborating the explanations. Being a typical (but also an extreme) example of many other cases, Vorkuta illustrates a general development trajectory and associated problems of urban places in the post-Soviet space. Moreover, the remoteness of Vorkuta and its heavy reliance on single industry makes it similar to the urban settlements in the resource regions elsewhere. The matter of city viability is especially pressing for the villages and urban settlements in the Arctic. By investigating the case of Vorkuta, I aim to contribute to the theoretical debates on city-making in the conditions of post-Soviet environment, peripheral geography and resource dependence.

Research questions

If earlier policy discussions about Arctic communities questioned the necessity of maintaining these expensive remote places, today one strives to find a formula to make them effectively self-sustained and flourishing. After twenty years of failed attempts to depopulate the Russian North, and despite the frightening predictions of the economists, mono-industrial cities established under the Soviet planned economy are still on the map. What makes them economically and socially viable in the 21st century? By taking a closer look at the single case study, I am particularly interested in forces that position a city for a viable future, ideas that are associated with this process, concrete development plans and grassroot practices.

The first research question addresses how various social actors envision viable development of the settlement and contribute to the process of city-making. In order to accomplish this research objective I aim to capture perspectives of four groups of social actors, including

- big investors represented by coal mining operator Vorkutaugol and the regional branch of Gazprom,
- policy-makers of federal, regional and municipal levels,
- international financial institutions in the name of the World Bank, and,
- the local population represented by fly-in fly-out workers and long-term settlers.

When referring to the local population, I discuss their collective behaviour and collective impact on city-making rather than individual engagement and individual impact. The state here is seen not through the lenses of national security and rational behaviour, but in the role

of a domestic social actor that strives to improve socio-economic environment and creates better living conditions (Scott 1998). Actor-based approach is particularly useful to understand how social processes are set up to defend a specific goal, such as city viability.

In order to answer this overall question, I looked at the following sub-questions based on the case study of Vorkuta:

1) What actors are involved in the city-making process at different historical periods?
2) What are the dominant visions that shape the strategies of city planning and city development? How have these approaches been transformed since the foundation of the city until today?
3) What development strategies were elaborated to maintain well-being of a city in Soviet, early post-Soviet and contemporary periods?
4) How were these development strategies applied and reinterpreted?
5) What practices aiming to contribute to city viability were developed on the grassroot level?

A viable settlement provides its residents with the sources of economic well-being, which means "material living conditions that determine income and consumption possibilities of an individual or a household and their command over resources" (OECD 2013: 27). It includes employment opportunities for inhabitants, decent salaries in relation to living costs, revenues for the local budget, investments in local economy and satisfactory quality of life. Thus, a viable city is the one in which people are able to satisfy their material needs, fulfil their social and personal goals and achieve a sense of purpose in a community. The latter implies a feeling of being a vital member of the society.

There are a number of ways to conceptualise and measure city viability. In the perspective of this study, a viable settlement demonstrates several qualities, the importance of which was confirmed by field examples. City viability is determined through developed networks of relationships between people, social cohesion and a sense of place, common visions and ideas about city development, effective leadership as well as local activism in creating common good. These qualities describe: first, relations between inhabitants and their natural and constructed environment, second, interactions and personal social relations within the community, and third, social contribution to the community well-being.

In order to bring extra-local factors in the overall picture, I introduce two additional "explanatory variables" – positionality and path dependences, which have both discourse and material effects for city development. The former refers to a position of a city in power hierarchies, economic relationships and migration flows. By using a concept of positionality, I

seek to find a role of a city in the macro-level political and economic contexts. The research question is how the positionality of a city in the national and global economic and power relations influences processes of creating a viable city.

Path dependence is mainly associated with the Soviet legacy in economic linkages, decision-making processes, "city – company" relationships as well as state responsibilities for the provision of social services. I question how the legacies of the Soviet regime (both positively and negatively) influence the contemporary socio-economic transformation of a place and the spectrum of available livelihoods. The second part of this question is concerned with the human agency and looks at how agents reproduce and transform the path dependent structures in which they are embedded.

Research objectives

The general objective of this research is to find out what makes a city viable. I follow socio-economic evolvement of the city during the three periods: Soviet, early post-Soviet and contemporary in order to find out the principles lead to a more viable city. It is a research goal to describe how positionality of a place and existing path dependences are connected to the principles of city viability within a selected case study. I apply the concepts of path dependence and positionality especially because they help me finding out opportunities and constraints they provide for city viability. In order to achieve these general objectives, a specific focus needs to be put on the study of particular views, strategies and practices concerned with city vitality. Viability on the ground is constituted through the components that rest in views, strategies and practices of particular individuals, groups and institutions and have an influence on a given society as well as on the urban whole.

Who is responsible for ensuring city viability? Unlike the previously applied command and control approach to urban development (French 1995), the successful implementation of today's development plans involves cooperation between different social actors. It is evident, that city-making is not a responsibility of one actor, but a community-wide effort in balancing and pursuing diverse interests. It is of importance to reach some balance of various interests so that they don't conflict or paralyse each other, but rather complement. One of the specific objectives addressed within this research is to reveal dominant views about viable city development, depending on the actor's perspective and socio-economic macro-context. By mapping diversity of visions, I intend to bring emic views to the theoretical discussion on what is a viable town. The next step is to discuss ideas about city development and highlight the diversity of taken approaches.

Based on the described approaches, I proceed to analyse development strategies proposed by the policy-planners aimed at greater sustainability. Again, by taking a historical review, I show on the example of Vorkuta how a single-industry settlement deals with and works through the change and the challenges posed by macro-level settings. The Soviet approach to the development of northern settlements bridged city-making processes with industrialisation and resource extraction in particular. In this respect, the viability of a city is directly dependent on the growth and prosperity of the main industry and financial decisions taken in the responsible ministry in Moscow. The following period is characterised by the separation of the city-forming enterprise from the municipality, as well as by rethinking the scale of northern urbanisation. In free-market economic conditions, city viability was facilitated through economic restructuring, gradual shrinking of the urban space and the depopulation of northern communities. The present-day strategies are concerned with the positionality of the place and its geopolitical importance. It also gives rise to the diversification plans in order to make municipal economy less dependent on the mining sector. In recent years, single industry towns have started looking for new sources of economic growth and development beyond resource extraction, such as tourism, which will be described in the sixth chapter of this dissertation. The specific research task is to examine key development strategies to maintain the community economically as well as socially over three historical periods.

The next specific research objective is to describe people's practice of place-making. The question here is what people do to keep the city afloat, how they get attached to the place and what makes the community coherent? I examine how inhabitants respond to the official plans and whether municipal policies go in the same direction with people's practices and decisions.

The aim of this research is to find out in what ways the local elites manipulate macro-structures towards the benefit of the city, how they try to engage with the national programs and attract federal funding. To situate local processes in the broad extra-local context, I look at how the positionality of a city within economic networks and power hierarchies benefits or weakens city viability. Mobility of labour is another important factor that links the peripheral community with the large-scale territorial processes and contributes to the positioning of the place either as a sending or receiving settlement. Thus, referring to positionality I mean the inclusion of the city – rhetorically and materially – in economic and power relations as well as mobility processes.

Lastly, I seek to find out the role of path dependence in forming a city development path. This dissertation demonstrates the relevance of post-socialism which continues to influence the ability of the northern Russian towns to position themselves in the long-term. Although

many resource communities in the post-Soviet space have successfully overcome the legacies of the Soviet era and continue developing in the environment of global capitalism, many settlements in the North of Russia continue struggling for survival. It is evident that because of path dependences the positionality of the northern regions is very much influenced by past practices and ideas as the relevance of the structures of the Soviet Union is higher in remote northern towns than in other places. Thus, the successful development of such places is to a great extent constrained by the lock-in path dependence that complicates re-establishing themselves in the new globalising environment, but that also provides benefit with some of the networks which were generated previously.

Definitions and terms

The study at hand operates with the several terms that can be differently interpreted depending on the context and disciplinary field. In order to eliminate any ambiguities, major operational terms are defined below in alphabetic order as they are applied within this research. The glossary of Russian terms is provided in the Annex 2.

City – an entity with economic, social, political and cultural functions. It contains diversity and can be seen as a population centre, a built environment, a combination of set practices, an agglomeration of social actors and administrative units within a vertical power system.

Community – "a group of people who share common culture, values and/or interests, based on social identity and/or territory (Gregory, Johnston et al. 2009: 103).

Economic well-being – material living conditions that determine income and consumption possibilities of an individual or a household and their command over resources (OECD 2013: 27).

Path dependence – legacies of established practices, ideas, and networks that continue to influence new development paths (Martin and Sunley 2006).

Positionality – position in relation to space and time within extra-local contexts (Sheppard 2002: 318).

Post-socialism – period after the collapse of the socialist system in 1989-91 that is associated with democratisation, economic liberalisation, remaking of international networks and reorganisation of socio-economic relationships within societies. It also applies continuity the legacies of socialism, which influence everyday experiences, policies and people's views.

Quality of life – the set of non-monetary attributes of individuals that shapes their opportunities and life chances (OECD 2013: 27).

Remote – "refers to the most isolated and distant locations from core centres which are situated at the outer or extreme end of the periphery. Remote areas are economically more vulnerable than rural peripheral ones because of the greater distance and isolation from markets, a greater lack of access and supply infrastructure, very limited local populations, and a lack of a clear bilateral connection to a specific core centre" (Schmallegger 2010: 16-17).

Social actor – "all stakeholders, individuals or groups, within civil society or public institutions involved in processes and carrying out initiatives in support of community development" (Senecal 2012: 62).

Social capital – "the networks of strong, crosscutting personal relationships developed over time that provide the basis for trust, cooperation, and collective action in such communities" (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998: 242).

Social cohesion – the quality of human relations within community, which can be characterised by social solidarity and trust, common values, sense of belonging, mutual help, etc.

Staples – natural resources, which do not require elaborate local processing and are mainly exported to the external markets (Bertram 1963).

Sustainable development – "is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland 1987).

Limitations of the study

During data collection and analysis, I identified a number of limitations of the employed qualitative approach. One of the main limitations of the data collection process was the difficulty of accessing archival non-digitised data, including statistical information, reports, strategic plans and the issues of the newspaper Zapolyar'e from periods prior to 2010. In general, data sets from Soviet and early post-Soviet periods were not available online and were very difficult to retrieve as hard-copies from the city library, public archives and municipal officials responsible. For example, while newspaper articles could be easily sourced online for the period from 2010, articles prior to this time were only available in printed version in a newspaper archive of the public library. Thus, accessing older articles related to the topic of the dissertation has required a manual search and considerable time. As for the official materials (reports, statistical data, development plans) access to them was possible only through personal non-formal connections. Official requests for public documents were declined by the local administration as they did not keep internal archives or

simply did not like to share the information with an outsider. These deficiencies of the data make my research heavily dependent on the extended field work.

An associated problem in accessing information and developing trustful relationships in the field was related to the high turnover of public sector employees and instability of the political situation in the city. In the three-year course of my research in Vorkuta, there were three municipal governors and three different administrations, as every newly designated mayor assembled a new team of officials. Therefore my contacts established during the first fieldwork were not useful in the new political environment. When I arrived to the city the second time, I had to invest some time and energy into regaining the access to the local elites, their trust and establishing rapport. Soon after I left the field, I found out that the whole administration was re-staffed due to a sudden change of the mayor. Those who previously held leading posts were dismissed. Thus, my access to the municipal administration was terminated once again. The practical outcome of such personnel turnover is that local government employees could provide me with shallow knowledge about events and processes and the real motives behind political decisions. In terms of strategic planning such political unsteadiness has led to the lack of succession and consistency in implementing political decisions. On the other hand, I was able to capture large segment of decision-makers and their perspectives. Insights into Soviet and early post-Soviet events and processes were therefore largely reliant on interviews with a small number of long-term residents and some local government representatives, as well as complementary literature.

As for the statistical accounts, apart from the question of access, the quality and inconsistency of data were the problems I had to deal with. The particularity of the Soviet and Russian system is that censuses have not been fully published for cities. Numbers provided in one source were inconsistent with the information obtained from other sources. Moreover, these documents were often fragmented. Thus, I had to revise data with different sources in order to support my argumentation quantitatively. Deficiency of consistent and continuous statistical data appears to me one of the most crucial research limitations.

Although some of the interview partners had difficulties talking about sensitive issues openly, such as restructuring of the coal sector in the 1990s or power vertical of the Putin's regime, my interviewees were generally confident in talking about sensitive issues and they often admitted that they were happy to share their views with an outsider, somebody who is not related to their environment. Many of them, regardless of their position, were not hesitant to openly criticise how development projects are carried out and gave detailed descriptions

and explanations about the inner processes related to city-making, corruption and the organised crime groups.

Outline of the dissertation

The dissertation comprises of seven parts, including this introductory chapter. The first chapter concludes with the section on definitions and terms and highlights limitations of the study arisen from the applied research approach. The latter is related to accessibility of the information, quality and inconsistency of statistical accounts, translation of the interviews from the Russian language and others. The second chapter frames this qualitative research theoretically. It provides a brief account of the main theoretical standpoint and introduces three key concepts employed within this dissertation – city viability, positionality and path dependence. Chapter three considers methodological problems in treating the proposed research questions. It outlines research paradigm, strategies and research design developed for the study, including data collection tools and analytical methods. In order to locate city processes in the extra-local and historical context, I apply an extended case method, introduced by Michael Burawoy (1998) that adequately suits the needs of my inquiry.

In order to comprehend city-making processes as a flow, I take a retrospective view to city development. Such a historical approach also benefits general theoretical conclusions with greater insights about the studied problem. The core of the monograph consists of three main blocks describing major development turns in evolvement of Vorkuta: creation of the city and the Soviet years, early post-Soviet reorganisation and recent developments. Each block illuminates prevailing perceptions, socio-economic plans and the practices related to city viability. The fourth chapter is devoted to a careful and detailed examination of the Soviet past of Vorkuta. It describes how the settlement was established and how it grew from a prison camp into a flourishing Soviet city. The two subsequent chapters are focused on the post-Soviet years, which can be divided into two periods, namely the one from the 1990s till the early 2000s associated with the reforms of Boris El'tsin and the decentralisation. The second phase started from the early 2000s and continues until the present, it essentially coincides with the era of Vladimir Putin and his leadership both as a president and a prime-minister. Thus, the fifth chapter, concerned with the initial period of post-socialism, describes economic transition from planned economy to free market, everyday difficulties experienced by the residents, changing views on city development, the restructuring of the coal sector as well as demographic and spatial shrinking. Some of the reforms launched in the 1990s were inherited by the current administration and continue having effect on the present-day city life.

Contemporary metamorphoses are presented in the sixth chapter of the dissertation. It delves into details of strategic planning and brings the voices of local people that are often silenced. In particular, the chapter follows the relationships between the city-forming enterprise and the municipal authorities and describes some social initiatives implemented by the company in the last few years. Furthermore, it discusses the position of Vorkuta in the political discourse on the development of the Far North and the attempts of the local elites to promote the town as a base for the industrial operations in this part of the Arctic. Another strategy of city development is related to the economic diversification within the extractive industry as well as via expanding the service sector. This chapter describes two diversification projects, such as the transportation of natural gas and heritage tourism and displays their relevance for the city viability. Moreover, I examine new schemes of shrinkage and the results of spatial-demographic contraction that started in the former period. The last section of the chapter is concerned with home-making and brings five stories of how residents contribute to city viability in different ways. It shows the importance of local leadership and activism, social cohesion and networks amongst people that make them attached in the North. Finally, the closing chapter draws conclusions about the research problem, implications for policy planning and practice, contributions to the theories, as well as implications for further research.

Conclusion

The American writer Stephen Mouzon said that for a place to be viable it must first be lovable, because if it is not loved, it will not last (Mouzon 2010). Love is the force of development and a source of life not only for human beings, but also for urban communities. It is because of love towards the industrial urban communities and a sense of belonging that many current inhabitants of the North have not left. These places constitute for them a home, and they engage in various activities to make them living spaces: from building physical infrastructure, cleaning the streets and creating public spaces, to the organisation of social events. Residents are not alone in contributing to the existence of cities like Vorkuta. A viable city is a product of a variety of forces that come together in different configurations; some of them change, while others enhance path dependence. By examining state approaches, concrete ideas, development plans and grassroot practices, I aim to develop a better theoretical understanding of how city viability is produced, viewed and implemented in general. Examining how present-day socio-economic developments in the city are influenced by the inherited bridging and binding relationships, can help to identify opportunities to

improve strategies to stimulate viability of single industry cities in the North of Russia and elsewhere.

This dissertation is one interpretation of Soviet and the following transformations, yet suggestive for future alternatives of city development. Because of its insights into city-making issues, I believe the results of this qualitative case study research will be of interest not only to the scientific community, but also to policy-makers, urban planners and various stakeholders involved in social, economic and spatial development. Ideally, this study will facilitate designing more specific and people-oriented state and municipal policies, which could contribute further to the prosperity and well-being of remote industrial localities. This calls for participatory planning and careful consideration of diverse views and interests linked to urban development. Lessons learnt on the example of Vorkuta can be also considered in less thriving places. The far-reaching goal of this work is to make communities prepared to successfully meet many of the challenges or at least to have a “pair of crutches” to base on.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The subject of this dissertation is city viability, which I aim to theorize by examining the transformation of one industrial community located in the Russian Arctic. Adaptation to the globalising market economy and securing well-being for the place is one of the strongest concerns for cities not only in Russia but in other parts of post-socialist space, including the northern regions where the majority of the population is concentrated in remote communities. The distinguishing feature of this work from other contributions is the combination of three theoretical concepts – city viability, positionality and path dependence – into one analytical framework, where the last two are treated as independent variables explaining the former. Path dependence is mainly related to the legacies of the post-Soviet regime as they still play a role in the contemporary realities and influence the ability of northern settlements to develop successfully. Positionality refers to the connectedness of different actors (involved in viability-making) in respect to one another in space and time (Sheppard 2002: 318). When analysing city viability, one must consider its position in the hierarchy of economic and political decision-making. By combining these two with the concept of city viability, I seek to reveal explanatory forces behind city viability and the way they work together in practice. Three subsequent sections bring together different works used as theoretical guidance on the topic, while a concluding section describes the "recipe" of city viability the way I use it, including the contributing ingredients.

City viability

In the Russian language, viability is called *zhiznesposobnost'*— the ability to live. During the 1990s and early 2000s this term was seen often on the pages of newspapers and political discussions. The subject of city viability in the context of the Russian North was initially addressed by economists and planners involved in shaping reforms dealing with economic liberalization and restructuring. A new approach to shaping economic geography, however, questioned the viability of places established by plan and force. The emic term was then picked up by Russian academics, who stood up against the neoliberal development paradigm to the Russian northern regions, and was evaluated as a destructive threat to northern municipalities (Melnikova 2006; Voronov 2006; Lazhentsev 2007). Still today this matter of

how to approach city viability attracts the attention of architects, decisions-makers, urban planners and researchers.

In common interpretations, city viability means an ability to stay alive and guarantee the future prosperity of a place and its inhabitants. The concept of city viability allows researchers to capture the city-making process the way it flows. The question for me is how industrial communities carry out their attempts *to be* viable. "A viable community can thus be understood as one in which people feel that they can stay as inhabitants for a period of their lives, where they find sources of income and meaningful lives" (Aarsaether, Riabova et al. 2004: 139). Community viability is based on continuous activities of individuals and groups, local leaders and economic actors within a city. It also results from created and reproduced extra-local links with outside actors regionally, nationally and globally. A more comprehensive definition of city viability differs with the varying economic, political and societal contexts, as will be shown in this dissertation with the example of the Russian northern settlements.

The scope of theoretical approaches that are applied city-viability research is wide. For instance, "coping and survival" literature addresses the problem of community viability through the perspective of resilience and adaptation in regards to ecological and climate changes in the Arctic and elsewhere (Walisser, Mueller et al. 2005; Hovelsrud and Smit 2010; Otto-Zimmermannv 2011). A major topic here is an examination of people's relations to the place and adaptation to the socio-economic and environment conditions. Another separate body of literature deals with human security in the circumpolar region and focuses on various impacts on communities' well-being. Within this framework viability can be linked to "feeling secure" in the long-run (Hoogensen Gjorv 2012). Moreover, viability of a place can be approached from the angle of centre-periphery power relations (Blakkisrud and Hønneland 2000; Blakkisrud and Hønneland 2006). A viable city is the one that effectively cooperates with central authorities and benefits from these relationships. Economists and economic geographers classify a place as viable when it demonstrates success through a "sticking" labour force and financial capital (Markusen 1996). Anthropologists, on the other hand, prioritise place-specific social capital and community bounds as necessary conditions for maintaining the life of the settlement (Brown 1991).

In the field of urban studies the concept of viability was first applied in social and spatial planning in the 1960s by Herbert Gans, a German-born American sociologist. Working closely with decision-makers, Gans suggested using a community viability indicator as an instrument for urban and neighbourhood planning and also for developing public policies. He

criticised the prevailing assumption that if physical structures deteriorate more than the general area does, a community loses its viability and, thus, should plan for resettlement. Alternatively, he argued that a neighbourhood may preserve its social viability and mutually-beneficial relationships between its residents even though the physical environment may degrade. Gans distinguished two types of viable neighbourhoods: the first one is maintained through close intensive interactions between residents, and the other one provides significant economic, social and cultural opportunities to residents who may not have strong ties with each other. Each neighbourhood possesses social value for its dwellers, which may prevail over the physical disadvantages the neighbourhood suffers. Gans argues that "the retention of a socially viable neighborhood can be justified even if it shows signs of physical deterioration and that city planners should take a neighborhood's social value into account when making plans for urban renewal" (Cit. in Keczmerski and Sorter 1984: 196). During the period between the 1950s and early 1960s, when the concern of how to manage declining cities in the United States was at its height, Gans suggested to "measure" the viability of a place through taking into account social characteristics such as population stability, local investments, origin of the population, social climate, civic participation, employment, social interactions between community members and residents' interest in a locality.

Gans' argument was adopted by John Keczmerski and Bruce Sorter (1984), who tested Gans' findings in a study of Baltimore neighbourhoods and came up with a similar conclusion. They illustrated that due to a strong sense of belonging and community coherence "a viable community, worthy of preservation, can exist in a physically deteriorating neighborhood, and that therefore physical measurements alone are not adequate tools in the urban planning process" (Keczmerski and Sorter 1984: 202). The critical contribution of the studies by Herbert Gans, John Keczmerski and Bruce Sorter has been in breaking the correlation between infrastructural decay and social disorganisation.

The work of Sandra Schoenberg (Schoenberg 1979; Schoenberg and Rosenbaum 1980) continues to focus on the internal forces that shape viability of a place. By comparing working-class and low-income residential neighbourhoods, Schoenberg's work highlights the importance of shared agreements on public order between the community and civil society organisations, which allows communication between inhabitants and encourages community leadership. Schoenberg stresses the need for good communication and exchange between different social actors within communities to pursue a collective goal over a long period of time. She argues, "The elements which make up the long-term exchange system are formal or informal networks which create a community memory and report accomplishment of goals by

subgroups in the community" (Schoenberg 1979: 76). Furthermore, Schoenberg reasons that the process of building vivid relations within a community is complemented by the ability of local actors to establish connections to external resource-giving institutions. These linkages are handled through branch institutions or through the local leaders who facilitate the process of "bridging".

Literature analysis reveals that leadership is a weight-bearing pillar of city viability. In the vein of Taylor et al.'s (2011: 413) paper, I define community leadership "within the context of social relationships that involves establishing direction (vision), aligning resources, generating motivation and providing inspiration". Sarah Skerratt (2011: 94) distinguishes two dimensions of leadership based on the reviewed material: first, community-level leadership that is based on the ties and social capital established amongst residents and between people and places. From this perspective, social viability increases with the growing number of persons willing to take responsibility and be actively involved in local affairs (Davies 2009). Second, leaders have to "assert their community's interests in the context of dependency" (Gray and Sinclair 2005: 40) to the extra-local economic and political networks. In the circumstances of raising competition between places, leaders are required to efficiently navigate the trans-local relations and strengthen extra-community ties linking them outwards. Examples from Australia and Canada confirm that good leadership provides communities with an advantageous position compared to other localities with similar characteristics, even if the available resources may not be better. The greater and better leaders are in employing business and political networks, the more viable community is (Skerratt 2011: 94). Community leadership is likely to have greater significance in smaller, remoter urbanities, like those, for example, located in the Russian northern periphery.

By using example of two rural areas, Kristina Ricketts and Lick Place (2009) draw out four essential principles contributing to viability from the perspective of community leadership as a key element to assert positive community action and encourage social well-being. The latter rests upon "effective" communication between the authorities and members of community in terms of close interaction between residents and local leaders and accessibility to relevant information. Furthermore, viability implies development of social capital and connections as well as people's engagement with community life, especially the young generation. Viability is based on strong relations among leaders involved in different spheres (medical, educational, judicial, etc.) *within* the community. Finally, it requires "bridging" the community with the other places to cooperate on mutually beneficial projects and also repositioning itself against other places: region, nation-state and the globe. Thus, the

major contribution of the literature on urban neighbourhoods intersecting with rural studies is the premise that a place improves its chances of survival through strengthening cooperation between the actors, particularly community leadership.

Understanding of city viability depends on a perspective presented by the stakeholders involved. In order to capture a diversity of ideas and practices related to the subject, I apply a multi-actor approach to the present study. Such an approach recognizes individuals (who act as collective), firms, state and municipal authorities and transnational organisations as social actors involved in the process of city development. Furthermore, discussions of city viability have different argumentations and following practices depending on time-specific, socio-economic and socio-political circumstances. Clearly, what is viable in Soviet conditions is not viable in post-Soviet conditions. It is important to consider the dimension of time, since the tactics to construct viability of a town change over time. In this regard, it is also vital to take into consideration historical and institutional legacies. In this vein, I understand viability not as a starting point but as a product of historical processes, governance and social practices. City viability is oriented towards the future, as it searches for ways to adapt to the changing conditions, but it is also about the past and path dependences. The city is viable because of the relationships that were established previously within (and outside) community, which continue into the present.

Positionality

The significance of extra-local connections for community adaptation and survival is mentioned above as an important ingredient of city viability. This is especially true for the peripheral places where such external links may be harder to initiate and maintain but which are even more important due to dependency on political and economic networks (Gray and Sinclair 2005). “Such connections serve to gain access to resources outside the community such as government programs (state and federal), potential employers, funding sources, and information” (Skerratt 2011: 96).

Eric Sheppard amplifies this argument by observing how different localities are situated in the global economic space in relation to external actors and forces and what effect this has on their prospects. This process is described as positionality (Sheppard 2006: 41). “Positionality is a relational construct; conditions of possibility for an agent depend on her or his position with respect to others” (Sheppard 2002: 318). Positionality involves interdependencies and networks of relationships connecting various actors through space and time which can be both beneficial and constrictive. The emphasis is placed on the connections

linking locality to outside resource-givers that improves its opportunities and allows greater positional advantages in the globalising world. Such "bridges" can be constructed through trans-local strategies and cooperative projects.

Positionality involves power relations when certain positions are more influential and provide an entity with greater access to resources than others. In particular, positionality in political, economic and social spaces differently conditions the possibilities available to northern settlements. Thus, powerful positionality within broader socio-economic relationships and competition for resources are important contributors to city vitality. Even within one place different actors have different positionalities with respect to one another, which are reflected in influence and control over decision-making. Actors with greater positional influence produce dominant discourses about what a viable city is and then design development strategies to implement practice.

Positionality of actors in space and time is not fixed. Some pre-existing configurations of networks and relationships that rest upon inequality between more powerful and less advantaged actors are constantly shifting (Sheppard 2002: 41). On the one hand, persistence of positional disparities makes it difficult to overcome path dependent relationships. On the other hand, positionality is also vulnerable to unexpected changes, as happened after 1989 in the Soviet Union, when many northern communities lost their privileged status. Thus, the positionality of a place influences its current and future livelihood possibilities through remaining legacies; at the same time it can be reshaped through socio-economic shifts (Sheppard 2002: 42). In the second case, positional core-periphery relations can be disrupted as peripheral localities find the way to occupy powerful positions.

Post-socialism and path dependence

The transformations in a post-socialist city attracted the academic interest of social scientists in Russia and abroad, who tried to analyse privatization reforms, new movements in civil society, gender relations and other topics. A comprehensive overview of the post-socialist research in the field of anthropology is provided by Chris Hann, Caroline Humphrey and Katherine Verdery in the introduction to the book "Postsocialism: ideals, ideologies, and practices in Eurasia" (2002). Regardless of existing studies (Thompson 2008; Bolotova and Stammler 2010), the question of socio-economic transformation of post-socialist cities is still on the agenda and inspires scholars to come up with the new interpretations.

There are two ways of approaching post-Soviet urban changes. First, it is argued that notwithstanding the vast differences in ideas, politics and economic structure, urban

transformation in post-Soviet countries follows the same path as in the urban places of Western Europe (Enyedi 1992; Enyedi 1998) or even Northern America (French 1995; Brown 2001). Hungarian geographer Gyorgy Enyedi (1992; 1998) argues that despite the legacies of the past and obvious polarities, post-socialist places and Central Europe have the same spatial structures (not necessarily social content) as in the rest of Europe. Enyedi writes that the socialist urbanisation model is not a unique one, because it replicates the stages of one general process. Post-Soviet political and economic changes and increasing globalisation make such a convergence even stronger. A similar position is shared by Anthony French (1995) who argues that the Soviet Union did not produce a qualitatively different town with a qualitatively different way of living, which was its pursued object. He reasons that despite a strong tradition of urban planning, Soviet planning ideas aimed at a "city of a socialist man" were never achieved in practical terms. By adopting more and more capitalist measures to advance urbanisation, Soviet planning evolved to resemble far more closely planning for the Western city, even before the end of communism (French 1995: 199). Kate Brown (2001) also stresses similarities in producing urban spaces and paths of development in the Soviet Union and the United States. Although they have different ideas, different political regimes and different economic systems, and although there were different mechanisms and motivations used for establishing urban settlements and distributing the population, still the spatial organisation of the places and even the feeling they offered to visitors share some similarities. Thus, it is concluded, the histories of the places formed both by socialism and capitalism have no distinctive difference, as there was no creation of specifically socialist or capitalist places; the issues and challenges that cities currently face are similar.

More recent theoretical debates stress an increasing importance of globalisation and internationalisation of the market economy, a key factor affecting local development paths. The market has become a common reality both for western and post-socialist worlds as the global processes bring a transformative impulse to urban communities, especially those located in remote areas. In addition to regional and national factors, cities have been influenced by the wider range of transnational and international processes (Axenov K., Brade I. et al. 2006: 8) that induce modern communities to cope – via innovations and reforms – with internal problems and competition for resources.

One may ask whether the post-socialist framework is a useful instrument for analysing the way urban localities have evolved at all. Caroline Humphrey (Hann, Humphrey et al. 2002: 12-13) suggests to keep the category of post-socialism in order to maintain the relevant field for comparing changes in post-socialist localities until "the generalizations brought up

under Socialist regimes disappear". By post-socialism Humphrey generally refers to the legacies of the socialist regime, including values and expectations associated with the Soviet past as well as political habits like top-down governance, patronage systems, etc. Similar views are expressed by Stenning (1997; 2004; 2008) and Zapf (2004) who stress the importance of regional specificity in economic geography, history, national traditions and people's perceptions inherited from the earlier period. These factors play a greater role in defining development forms and paths than global trends and general similarities in urban systems. Even though post-socialist cities and towns apply the modern capitalist approach towards development, their transformation course does not necessarily take the same direction prescribed by modernisation or transition theories. It may (and indeed does) turn sideways, led away by national economic and political settings and practices succeeding from previous times (Burawoy 1992).

Following the latter, I argue that the term post-socialism remains meaningful for contemporary research on remote communities in the North of Russia, where the role of the state and people's reliance on its support is still high in comparison to other areas. Places like Vorkuta knew no other order than Soviet; they were a result of the extensive Soviet modernisation project and would not have appeared without the state's involvement. In the context of present-day Russia, the attributes of post-socialism refer to the continuity of economic relations between suppliers and consumers, bureaucratic centralism, people's believe systems, centre-periphery relations and social practices inherited from the former epoch. The Soviet past plays a role in the present through the persistence of top-down and order-driven planning practices. Many of the economic networks which were established previously by the state were reinforced on a private basis. As for people, my field material demonstrates that they still believe in the state's responsibility for their welfare and preserve high expectations for public provisions. People believe that by moving to the North they sacrificed their comfort for the national interests and, thus, deserve special treatment. Such views practically result in various tricks people create in order to benefit from state programs (Nuykina 2011).

In short, although the transformation of the Russian northern towns clearly shares many features with the peripheral mining communities of Arctic Canada or even remote settlements of Australia, socio-economic settings and practices inherited over time continue to influence development paths of these places two decades after the Soviet regime has resolved. This phenomenon is theoretically described as path dependence, meaning that "where we go next depends not only on where we are now, but also upon where we have been" (Liebowitz and

Margolis 2000). Current and future development paths are determined by previous processes, decisions and institutional environments. The concept of path dependence is particularly useful in explaining the way some events of the past set off self-reinforcing mechanisms and processes that "lock-in" particular structures and directions of development (Martin and Sunley 2006: 5). Decisions and development strategies, however "small" and "insignificant" they seem at the time they occur can have long-lasting consequences.

The literature outlines several causes of regional path dependence (Martin and Sunley 2006: 18) which are applicable for the study at hand. First, in many cases path dependence is a consequence of relying on raw materials for local prosperity and economic viability. Future development paths either follow resource-dependence, or try to overcome it by diversifying local economies. Second, physical infrastructure and industrial assets remain in use and continue to "shape economic development possibilities, because fixed costs are already "sunk" while variable costs are lower than total costs of replacement" (Martin and Sunley 2006: 18). This barrier was revealed by Stephen Collier and described in the book "Post-Soviet social: neoliberalism, modernity, biopolitics". Collier argues that the physical organisation of pipe networks, constructed according to the Soviet principles of redistribution, acts as structural obstruction to implementation of neoliberal reforms in the post-Soviet urban settlements (Collier 2011). The very same problem was discovered in Vorkuta. Third, path dependence derives from development of specific economic and regulatory institutions, cultural traditions and social capital, all of which embed economic activity into the local contexts (Martin and Sunley 2006: 18). Last, path dependence arises from the structural inter-relatedness between the core and the periphery. It emerges, for example, when local economic development is shaped by distant financial institutions (either state or non-government) and regulations imposed by the political centre.

Another problem addressed by the authors is related to the aspect of human agency that is interacting with, (re-)producing and transforming path dependent scenarios and practices. Martin and Sunley (2006: 8) question how do agents reproduce and transform the path dependent structures in which they are embedded? I have taken these questions into my research agenda and found examples of creation and reproduction of path dependences by the agents, which will be described in detail in the following chapters, especially in the conclusion to this work.

The concept of path dependence is especially relevant for understanding and explaining socio-economic evolvement of a post-Soviet city and its search for a sustainable future. It also helps in understanding why some development strategies to make a city a better place struggle

to be efficiently put into practice. Successful development of such settlements is very much restricted by lock-in path dependence[2] which constrains cities to re-establish themselves in the new globalising and competing environment. Examples of path dependences in the context of post-Soviet Russia are presented (Hedlund 2005) in the book "Russian path dependence: A people with a troubled history". The question for further investigation is how to avoid negative consequences of lock-in path dependence, and how to discover new opportunities for sustainable development.

One of the exit strategies from lock-in path dependence is to diversify the economy and allow entrepreneurship to flourish. This is especially important and more difficult to implement for the places located a distance from the markers and being dependent on one resource or (and) governmental provision of welfare services. Most of the Arctic settlements struggle with finding alternative ways to ensure economic well-being often through tourism and innovations (Aarsaether, Riabova et al. 2004). Although there is a tendency to approach path dependence as an obstacle for local development, as it "traps" initiatives in the trodden ways, it can also be utilised for reaching community viability by restructuring former networks. The past may provide "the institutional resources for change in the present" (Stark and Bruszt 1998:7) and opportunities for places when, for example, formerly established economic networks become demanded and functional in contemporary circumstances. The following chapters will support this statement with practical examples and show how today's transformations are based on a re-arrangement of the remains of the Soviet socio-economic order.

Conclusion

Based on the reviewed literature and empirical findings resulting from fieldwork in the North of Russia, I developed the theoretical framework presented in this dissertation. It embodies theoretical concepts of city viability, positionality and path dependence in order to examine how city viability is composed, perceived and created throughout three phases of history. I define a city as viable when its residents are willing to live in a place and invest their money and energy in shaping its present and future well-being. A viable community is one in which people are able to dwell and prosper both in terms of finding sources of livelihood and self-realization. Previously conducted studies confirm that although a community may experience the deterioration of economic and built environment, cultural and

2 The process of lock-in path dependences "describe the situation where technology, industry or local economy – has become stuck in a particular trajectory or path that has become suboptimal or inefficient in some way" (Martin and Sunley 2006: 28).

social non-material variables can overrule negative trends and help places to survive or even to prosper (Gans 1968; Schoenberg and Rosenbaum 1980; Keczmerski and Sorter 1984; Snowadzky 2005; Thompson 2008; Bolotova and Stammler 2010). These place-based non-material attributes include social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998) and social coherence, a sense of belonging and attachment to a place, active participation in local matters and ideas and visions shared by the actors involved in the city-making process. The role of local leadership is especially important in steering the development of a city and its connectedness to extra-local actors (Ricketts 2005; Davies 2009; Skerratt 2011). On the other hand, the success of a community and its prospects are also based on how well it is positioned within economic relations and power hierarchies and the ability of local actors to utilise these networks in the common interest.

A viable city provides residents with economic opportunities in the form of employment and welfare provision. In order to secure future prosperity, present-day city development strategies are directed towards economic diversification, although diversification is not the only way to keep a settlement alive. Welfare-state subsidies to the northern communities are another mechanism maintaining places that do not have strong market connections. Moreover, the study of urbanities in Russia and other post-socialist countries demonstrates that during the most difficult years with an overall decline in living standards, people rely more on a subsistence economy and informal economic practices than wage labour. In this regard, a local informal economy can be seen as a safety net. Thus, "combination of market-driven processes, a politically governed economy, and informal relations can provide a way to ensure survival" for urban communities (Aarsaether, Riabova et al. 2004: 147).

Perceptions and strategies for viability are always contextual, and one cannot analyse them apart from the socio-cultural, political, economic and historic circumstances that are constantly in the process of change. Fluidity and diversity are two aspects a researcher must consider when drawing conclusions and implications for policy planning. Another characteristic of city viability deriving from the previous two is flexibility. In this sense, I understand viability as the ability of a system to adjust to challenges rather than be overwhelmed by them; i.e., the responses generated by the actors can outpace the threats to the city's future existence (Bossel 2003).

Prosperity of the place is not only merely a product of local efforts but shaped by dependence on and position within large-scale networks of trade, finance, migration, etc. I argue that city viability is conditioned by geographical location and its characteristics as well as economic and political situatedness of a place both nationally and globally. Cities are

engaged in increasing worldwide competition to occupy regionally significant positions which, however, do not last forever. They strive for qualified labour, investments and influence as meaningful spaces. This is especially relevant for the Arctic regions which are restricted by the dependence on raw materials and peripheral positions in the first place (Einarsson, Nymand Larsen et al. 2004). In an epoch when global economic forces play a greater role than ever, re-establishment of a peripheral status into a strategic regional centre is the most important task and challenge for today's Arctic settlements. My analysis shows that sources of local transformations are not necessarily located in the place itself but can be explained by macro processes located somewhere else. Present and future possibilities for a place to prosper depend not only on community initiatives but also on dependencies on other places, institutions and economic forces. Such dependencies can work as a key to prosperity, although they are often regarded as limitations for viability.

Last but not least, contemporary developments at the city level very much rest on the decisions and practices established earlier – path dependence. "The essential argument of path dependence is that small contingent events can have large and long-term consequences" (Martin and Sunley 2006: 10). On the one hand, I use the concept of path dependence to explain how the legacies of the former regime influence today's understandings, strategies and practices of the city-making process. I argue that the Soviet regime is more than just ruins; on the contrary, it continues to live in the mentalities, ideas, expectations and practices people develop in regards to the city. It remains in the spatial organisation of the cities, centralised systems of service provision, state-initiated social engineering policies, relationships between a city-forming industry and a municipality, verticalisation of power relations and many others, which will be followed throughout this dissertation. An important aspect of path dependent transformation is "that it is influenced by the past legacies and open to the possibilities of a new configuration of these legacies" (Císař 1999). On the other hand, my field findings confirm that people not only reproduce but can mindfully deviate from and transform persisting socio-economic structures, practices and development paths.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The majority of existing studies about mono-industrial communities in the Russian resource periphery are limited to the quantitative analysis of urban development and economic understanding of city viability according to economists and planners. These shortcomings in breadth of literature suggest the need for a new methodological framework to understand and explain the process of making a viable city in remote territories, especially those dependent on mining activities. This dissertation adopts a qualitative approach and applies extended case methods (Burawoy 1998; Burawoy 2009) for a multi-actor study of city viability. On the one hand, I aim to depict how different actors are involved in viability-making. In order to do so, I reveal diverse ideas of what a viable place actually is. Interest in changing perceptions, development projects and practices related to city-making are features of my methodological perspective. In addition, I embrace wider economic and political contexts and locate lived experiences within extra-local settings. The question is how the viability of a city is shaped by and simultaneously influences the position of a place within power-and-economic hierarchies.

Contribution of this work to theory development implies "extending out" from the empirical material towards a broader theoretical argumentation. This dissertation is a theory-driven study. It proposes to employ the theoretical concept of city viability in connection with the explicative concepts of positionality and path dependence using the example of one Arctic industrial community. By using this three-pillar framework, I aim to derive new theoretical explanations for city viability based on qualitative accounts from the field. The following sections elaborate on the important ingredients of city viability in regards to their relevance on the ground.

This dissertation is written from the urban geography disciplinary perspective that incorporates spatial aspects of socio-economic and political developments into my research agenda. In the field of urban geography a city assumes a special significance as a unit of inquiry. Efforts to study the city by different disciplines are typically limited to one-facet examination. For example, economic geographers look at the city from the perspective of market relations and define the viability of a locality through its ability to allure labour and investments (Markusen 1996; Hill and Gaddy 2003). Sociologists regard cities mainly as social groups and prioritise social processes over economic ones. Architects and urban planners emphasise the spatial aspects of a city, focusing on physical infrastructures, while

political scientists concentrate on governance. In practice an urban environment is a complex combination of social environment, built environment, market environment, business environment, and political environment that constantly changes. “It includes not only the versions of these environments that exist inside a single city, but also those that are emerging from the interaction between cities” (Romer 2013) as well as other actors. Thus, city is an entity with economic, social, political and cultural functions. It contains diversity and can be seen as a population centre, a built environment, a combination of set practices, an agglomeration of social actors and administrative units within a vertical power system. Within this wider framework, there is no one city for everyone, as for some actors it is more meaningful than for others. This work examines city development from the perspectives of selected actors and tries to highlight the diversity of interests that benefit or hinder city viability. Although for some actors a place has less value, their behaviours play a role in shaping local processes. For instance, fly-in fly-out workers, who stay in the city temporarily and do not develop a strong attachment to the place, directly impact housing prices and the growing number of sex workers in the city (Nuykina 2013). Following the analytical perspective applied by Nina Glick Schiller and Ayse Caglar of migrants’ relationships to cities (Schiller and Caglar 2011: 19) I approach cities as flexible and continuous “entry points” from which to study the processes of generating and negotiating viability. The thematic entry point of my work is concerned with city-making dynamics, while the Russian coal-mining community of Vorkuta is the geographical entry point where I conducted my fieldwork.

This dissertation traces the ways and the contexts in which industrial settlements in the North of Russia develop from small mining communities to viable urban centres for permanent residence. The research idea proposed in this dissertation is to examine various ideas, strategies and practices for viability through Soviet, early post-Soviet and contemporary years by looking at the transformation of Vorkuta and the way it was positioned in macro-level circumstances. When tracing the historical development of Vorkuta, I contribute to the notion of viability in particular socio-economic and political contexts and the ways they were produced. By doing so, I show the flow of viability-making and enrich the theoretical framework with new ingredients.

This chapter particularly emphasises my position in the field and explains how my research was conducted. It describes applied methodological approaches, techniques of data gathering and interpretation, research design, research questions and research paradigm. The chapter commences with the introduction of research questions, both abductive and

retroductive research strategies and a discussion of the interpretive research paradigm adopted for this study. It introduces the readers to the extended case method and my reasons for choosing it. The chapter then describes the research design and methods of data collection used in this work. It concludes with discussing the interpretation procedures and some opportunities as well as limitations of this research approach.

Research questions

Why are certain places successful in sustaining their viability while others struggle with decay? This question excites many authors in different fields of social science who attempt to describe the perfect recipe of viability-making in a contemporary, globalising world. The issue is especially relevant for the settlements constrained by remote location, resource dependence and immaturity in market relations, like the ones conceived by the Soviet regime. What are the prerequisites that make communities, established by the planned economy, successfully living entities once the system is gone? This general curiosity about "difficult places" became a starting point for my research voyage, guiding me throughout the study process. Having a broad interest in city-making and in the Arctic region specifically, I aim to contribute to the theoretical discussion of city viability while adopting a multi-actor perspective. The study at hand provides a qualitative account of socio-economic development of a peripheral urban settlement in the geographical conditions of the Russian North.

This dissertation brings together unique processes on the ground with the theoretical implications in mind. In particular, it applies theoretical concepts of city viability, positionality and path dependence for analysis and explains what makes a peripheral industrial community viable in Soviet and post-Soviet political-economic settings. The fundamental research problem of this dissertation is to demonstrate the usage of theoretical postulates of city viability to explain the transformation of the single-industry settlement of Vorkuta. I propose to examine the transformation of ideas and practices of city development considering the influence of extra-local forces and the situatedness of a city nationally.

The research sets out to address this issue by looking at the following questions. First, I inquire how city viability is composed, perceived and implemented in general. By incorporating different perspectives, I try to discover how various social actors envision viable development of the settlement and contribute to the process of city-making. In order to address this larger issue, smaller segments were studied: What social actors are involved in the process of viability-making at different periods of city development? What are the dominant perceptions and ideas guiding interaction between the humans and the place? How

were they changed over time and what material effect did they actually have? Limitations associated with this work do not allow me to depict all views, and some marginal voices will remain shadowed. My goal is, rather, to outline prominent views of policy-makers, business actors, local population and multinational institutions that directly link with development strategies and city-making practices. I emphasise ideas that play a leading role in determining what city viability is about and, as a consequence, major development projects and practices intended to maintain the well-being of Vorkuta, both begun in the Soviet years and taking place today.

The second major question addresses how the position of a city within the national and global economic-and-power relations influences views, strategies and practices of city viability. With this question I bring into play extra-regional connections and path-dependences in order to situate local experiences within the wider context. On the more abstract level of theory development, I look at how the concepts of path dependence and positionality improve our understanding of city viability and look for the answers that reveal deeper principles of viability-making process.

Research strategy

Abductive and retroductive research strategies are relatively new approaches in qualitative studies compared to more commonly applied inductive theory building or deductive theory testing (Meyer and Lunnay 2013). Both approaches require a researcher to move between pre-defined theory and empirical data in order to refine and/or re-develop social theory. Data that is not part of the initial theoretical framework is not excluded but taken into careful consideration and become significant to the discussion of the field findings and to developing theoretical conclusions (Meyer and Lunnay 2013). While abduction is particularly useful to "describe and understand social life in term of social actor's meanings and motives" (Blaikie 2009: 84), retroduction "requires the researcher to identify the circumstances without which something (a concept) cannot exist" (Meyer and Lunnay 2013: 1). In order to answer my research questions, I applied a combination of these strategies. Used in conjunction, they helped me to formulate new understandings of city viability that go beyond community-specific indicators.

The first research strategy adopted for this theory-driven work uses an abductive research strategy, as I am interested in the diversity of perceptions and understandings of what the city means to different social actors and how each envisions the city's prospects within a particular historical period. Therefore, the first part of my examination describes the variety of

perspectives on city viability from both inside and outside the city. The latter then provided me groundwork from which to focus on the city development strategies and people's engagement into place-making process. I applied semi-structured interviews that asked my field partners about their views and feelings in such a way that they could talk about the city in their own terms. Participant observation, on the other hand, helped me to address the social context in which some of these ideas were developed and applied.

The second stage of abductive reasoning draws theoretical conclusions by linking revealed "insider views" with guiding theoretical concepts. I apply the abductive approach to theorizing the concept of city viability derived from the empirical findings from the North of Russia. As Meyer and Lunnay (2013) underline, abduction is especially helpful to discern data that may fall outside an existing theoretical framework. In comparison to inductive research strategy, abductive reasoning rests on existing theory, which is then revisited and extended through empirical accounts. It corresponds to the extended case method, where case-study observations are specifically used to discover theoretical ruptures and to improve existing theories (Burawoy 1998; Burawoy 2009). In my case, abductive reasoning allowed me to include to the theoretical framework particularly by investigating components that initially were not considered in the recipe of city viability.

The textbook "Designing social research" (Blaikie 2009) suggests using conclusions and understandings developed through abduction in *retroductive research strategy*. The latter helps to discover economic, social and political conditions and contexts that produce particular empirical situations or phenomena (Blaikie 2010: 87). In simple terms, retroduction is a way of interpreting by identifying circumstances and structures without which phenomena cannot exist (Meyer and Lunnay 2013). When using the retroductive research strategy, I place examination of the city-making into a broader picture and link the local spatial and socio-economic processes with the macro structures. At this stage, my explanation of city viability brings the context and the circumstances into the centre of inquiry. The goal is to enlarge theory towards a better understanding of how the positionality of the town within large-scale networks impacts its viability and how decisions and policies taken by the ministries in Moscow correspond with the local ideas, strategies and practices of viability.

Research paradigm

"A research paradigm refers to the basic set of beliefs and assumptions that reflect a researcher's underlying worldview and guide his/her actions and approach to scientific inquiry" (Schmallegger 2010: 78). One can distinguish two prevailing approaches to conducting research broadly termed as *positivism* and *interpretivism* (sometimes also called anti-positivism). This dissertation applies the second tradition of methodological thinking and rests on the ontological belief that there is a no single, external and objective reality to any research question that can be studied irrespective of time and context. On the contrary, social reality is relative and multiple; it is a product of people's experiences and is shaped through the meanings social actors produce (Carson, Gilmore et al. 2001). Social reality continuously changes as actors engage with the world. Thus, the interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the world from socially constructed and subjective interpretations. In order to understand a social process, one should investigate the meanings, interpretations and motives that lie behind it. In this regard, when writing about city viability I explicitly reflect on whose perceptions are used to construct particular understandings of viability. However, rather than attempting to paint a colourful picture of individual perceptions, I try to understand the process of negotiating city viability by identifying prevailing visions of social actors. Because interpretive researchers believe that reality is formed out of people's subjective experiences of the external world (rather than objectively determined), they follow the ontological stance that reality is socially constructed and apply inter-subjective epistemology (Carson, Gilmore et al. 2001). Knowledge is considered subjective and is generated through interaction between researcher and respondents, for example, through interviewing or participant observation.

Geoff Walsham (2006) argues that in the interpretive tradition there are no 'correct' or 'incorrect' theories. Instead, theories should be judged according to how helpful they are to a researcher for developing his/her empirically-based descriptions and explanations. The latter cannot be objectively evaluated or tested. In this way all social investigations reflect this standpoint of combining the pre-existing theoretical knowledge with the position of the researcher in the field. Walsham presents three different uses of theory in interpretive studies: theory-guiding research design and collection of data; theory as an iterative process of data collection and analysis; and theory as an outcome of a case study (Walsham 2006). The use of theory-led research design and collection of data has been applied in this research study, particularly with the help of extended case methods. It differs from the positivist approach to the fieldwork, which aims for objectivity through a researcher's detached attitude to a subject

of investigation and suggests alternative ways of bridging theory and field materials. Description of this method is offered in the following section.

The extended case method

The extended case method was elaborated in the sociological works of Michael Burawoy (1998; 2009) and finds roots in the Manchester School of social anthropology, which first mentioned this term when connecting people's experiences within indigenous communities to world historical transformations (Garbett 1970 and others metioned in Burawoy 1998: 5). My selection of this method was dictated by the topic of investigation. On the one hand, I was looking for a framework to embed everyday processes of city-making within extra-local and historical settings. On the other hand, it was essential for me to use my findings for theoretical interpretation rather than drawing out representative conclusions. The extended case method is particularly useful in both regards, as it requires a researcher to analyse social processes inextricable from the wider array of macro forces and aims to obtain extended knowledge of the subject by beginning the research journey with existing theoretical explanations while enriching them with empirical findings (Burawoy 1998). As stated by Burawoy, the extended case method is an ethnographic research method that focuses on a detailed study of concrete empirical cases with a goal of "extracting" general theoretical principles from specific observations. It is characterised by a theory-guided research process, close and evolving relationships between researchers and studied phenomena, and incorporation of the wider socio-economic context with lived experiences. Based on the *reflexive* standpoint it initiates a "dialogue, virtual or real, between observer and participants, embeds such dialogue within a second dialogue between local processes and extra-local forces that in turn can only be comprehended through a third, expanding dialogue of theory with itself" (Burawoy 1998: 5).

The methodological approach suggested by Burawoy is based on four pillars: "the extension of the observer into the lives of the participants under study; the extension of observations over time and space; the extension from micro-processes to macro-forces; and, finally and most importantly, the extension of theory" (Burawoy 2009: XV). First, Burawoy believes that when conducting research, going into the field and leaving it, a researcher makes an impact on the field situation. "Even the most passive observer produces ripples worthy of examination, while the activist who seeks to transform the world can learn much from its obduracy" (Burawoy 2009: 44). Reflection about my interaction with the city and the residents is given in the tenth section of this chapter where I describe how my positionality

has been transformed in the course of the fieldwork from an outsider to an insider. Second, the extended case method links micro-situations and events to the broader social-economic forces and power hierarchies that provide conditions for the local practices to arise in a particular way. For instance, manipulative money-withdrawing strategies that individuals develop when participating in the state social programs result from the particular path-dependent relationships between the state and the people as well as their understandings about the state serving people versus the people serving the state. Examples of people misusing social assistance for improving their household well-being result from the policies of populating the North in the first place and the Soviet schemes of social engineering. Third, Burawoy suggests that examination of social phenomena in the local situation shall be situated within a broader context of historical forces as well as the socio-economic and political forces that originate beyond the space of the field site. For him, sources of small changes on the ground are directly linked and can be explained by external processes (Burawoy 2009: 49). Finally, extended case method states that the ambitious goal of ethnographic research is extension and refinement of existing theories about the social processes. Following this principle of conducting research, this dissertation proposes to enrich our knowledge about the processes and factors contributing to the well-being of a place that have gone previously unnoticed.

In addition to these four principles, I apply a chronological view of social life, which allows me to capture the flow of the city-making process within the flow of Russian history and to demonstrate the fluidity of city viability by learning time-specific social processes. A chronological approach to conducting research can also explain how the actors' roles in city-making processes and their positionality within power relations changes over time. Practically, this means that there is no single explanation of what a viable city is or how it is generated, because for every historical situation there is a different set of driving forces, perceptions, place-making practices and plans that cumulatively define a viable city. Historical attitude elucidates city viability as a changing flow and presents it as a movement rather than a fixed phenomenon.

Research design

Steve Herbert (2000) suggests ethnography for human geographic research, as it provides the valuable insights into the processes and meanings that are central to the construction and evolution of place. In comparison to other methodologies, ethnographic work helps to illuminate the relationships between structure, agency and geographic context,

and it is particularly significant in examining "how different social groups meaningfully define, inhabit, manipulate and dominate the space" (Herbert 2000: 551). Ethnographic study generally is interested in exploring particular social phenomena rather than testing a specific hypothesis about them. Its objectives are to understand the views and activities of people in a given field or setting and its approach involves close association with, and often participation in, this setting (Miller and Brewer 2003). Moreover, an ethnographic approach considers those naturally occurring situations and the contexts that do not necessarily fall into the scope of study. It helps to reveal less visible forces that induce the process of place-making, forces that are more powerful in some places than others even within the same socio-cultural and regional borders. Moreover, ethnographic analysis is useful when discovering the ruptures between the visions, policy plans and real actions.

Ethnographic studies are criticized by the advocates of quantitative approaches for being unstructured, flexible and open-ended in nature, which leads to unsystematic data collection. On the other hand, opponents of ethnography are concerned with validity, reliability and generalisability of ethnographic accounts. They question whether ethnography can produce valid knowledge since ethnographic descriptions are partial and selective, even autobiographical; they are tied to the particular ethnographer and the contingencies under which the data were collected (Brewer 2003: 101). This critical point is concerned with the role of researchers who themselves become variables, as they are not detached from the subject but rather become part of the study and influence the field.

These critical methodological comments have implications for how to comprehend ethnographic works. In particular they call for greater reflexivity. Nevertheless, in my view an ethnographic approach remains a useful methodological lens through which to study those questions and processes that quantitative methods are unable to assess. For example, ethnographic approaches are helpful in answering questions about how the places are constructed and experienced, what drives place-making, what the truth motivations beyond particular individual and communal decisions are and many others. The abstract categories of survey data and quantitative analysis, which are often prioritised in geographic research, cannot capture the complex, contextual nature of daily life (Herbert 2000: 556).

I use a variety of data collection methods typical for ethnographic work, including semi-structured, in-depth interviews with the social actors involved, participant observations and field notes. Additionally, I have worked with secondary materials. One thing that combines all the used methods is ethnographic fieldwork that studies people "in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary

activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting (if not always the activities) in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally" (Brewer 2003: 99). Generally speaking, "the utility of fieldwork has enabled a window onto disparate social worlds that would otherwise have remained hidden or obscured" (Hobbs 2006: 120).

Fieldwork is an essential part of my research design; it offered me an opportunity to gather in-depth qualitative data as well as access locally published literature and unpublished reports, including statistical data. I was in the Russian North two times while collecting my data. The first field research was carried out in the regional capital of the Komi republic – Syktyvkar, the town of Inta and the town of Vorkuta in April and May 2011. During three weeks I conducted 20 qualitative interviews with the representatives of regional and municipal administrations, non-governmental organisations and local residents, including long-distance commute workers coming to the region for work. The sampling process to recruit interview participants applied a combination of purposeful sampling (some appointments were arranged via phone and letters before my trip) and a snowballing technique (new interview participants were recruited based on recommendations from other respondents). These pilot interviews were relatively unstructured in order to uncover topics and issues important for the region and chosen towns in particular and also to test my preliminary research ideas concerning post-Soviet changes in development paths of northern industrial communities. I was particularly concerned with how governments, on the one hand, and inhabitants, on the other hand, perceive the future existence of resource towns, and what development alternatives to maintain mono-industrial cities they consider. I also paid attention to the practices performed by both parties, although there was not enough time to arrive at a deep understanding of true motivations or to reveal unspoken practices. Face-to-face conversations mostly focused on discussing general socio-economic topics such as past and current city developments, future prospects of Vorkuta, strategies and barriers for viability, relevance of long-distance commuting for the region and its northern cities specifically, resettlement, living conditions and social life in the community. As a result of the first field trip, there was a cooperation agreement completed between the Department of Geography and Regional Research, University of Vienna and the Institute of Socio-Economic and Energy Problems of the North, Komi Scientific Centre Ural Branch of RAS (Russia). This cooperation then resulted in an article on the impacts of long-distance commuting in Vorkuta, published in the regional scientific journal Izvestiya (Nuykina 2013).

After the first field study, it was clear that the scope of interviewees must be extended to include third interest party—representatives of business sector. The second trip was carried out from February until May 2012 in Syktyvkar and the city of Vorkuta predominantly. This study resulted in 36 qualitative face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, observations and informal talks. This time I specified my questions around the issue of viability. Guiding questions to which I oriented myself during the interviews are presented in Annex 3 of this dissertation. Both fieldwork trips were arranged and sponsored through the research project "Lives on the Move", which is based at the Institute for Geography and Regional Research, University of Vienna. Besides two trips to the Komi Republic, I conducted several interviews in Moscow in 2011, and one of them is directly related to the present study.

Selection of research site

My research is placed in the northeast corner of the Komi republic, in the city of Vorkuta. On the one hand, Vorkuta is a typical mining community that exemplifies all the challenges Russian northern cities have faced with and concerns of the local population. As with many Soviet industrial centres, it was established by the GULAG labour force and was a product of involuntary relocation to previously unsettled areas. The same architects and planners that designed settlements in northern regions worked on the layout of Vorkuta, and the same policy principles governed its development. Dreams and hopes about the future of Vorkuta are linked with the economic development of the Arctic region, which causes the city to compete with other northern settlements, such as Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, Naryan Mar, Novy Urengoy and Norilsk. Despite some particularities, boom and bust periods experienced locally are consistent with overall development curve of other localities in the region. The challenges faced by the local population and the government city planners are not much different from the issues neighboring settlements are confronted with. Based on the contextual similarities, the observation and conclusions drawn from this example, to some degree, can be valid to all of the remote industrial localities searching for a brighter tomorrow in northern Russia and elsewhere.

But it was not the similarities with other northern urban settlements that attracted my interest to this case. For the purpose of this study I needed a place where I could capture the process of negotiating and creating city viability in the most explicit and creative way. Vorkuta generously provided me with thought-provoking material, due to its difficultness. First, it is situated in harsh climate conditions that influence people's interaction with the place and with other community members. Second, the geographical remoteness of Vorkuta

makes it hardly accessible, especially during the cold season, distant from the markets and expensive to maintain. Third, the location of Vorkuta limits its economic prospects due to the high costs of production and transportation and thus constrains diversification opportunities. Fourth, Vorkuta is a place that was not supposed to be viable by the very forcible principle by which it was created. Fifth, in the 1990s the World Bank evaluated Vorkuta as one of the most "hopeless" places in post-Soviet Russia and used it as a pilot territory for restructuring projects. It was the first mining city in post-Soviet Russia where schemes to close down unprofitable mines were implemented. Restructuring of the coal sector was realized on the foreign loan that made Vorkuta a "testing ground" of the World Bank policy schemes. Interference of international consultants in directing city development continued with the "Northern Restructuring Pilot Project" when residents were provided with resettlement grants. The World Bank experts visited the city several times and consulted local authorities about market-driven approaches to urban development. Close attention to the city and its transformation by the World Bank made me even more curious about the story of this place.

Thus, it would be difficult to find many localities on Earth that can compete with the "difficultness" of this case. In order to study how city viability is produced, I have chosen a place that is not supposed to be viable "by definition" but proved the opposite. Vorkuta offers rich material to a researcher interested in community resilience and revival and provided me an opportunity to rethink theoretical stands of city viability by introducing two additional concepts: positionality and path dependence. The Arctic context made my research even spicier, as the matter of viability here is one of the key questions northern territories deal with (Aarsaether, Riabova et al. 2004).

Methods of data gathering

Harry Wolcott (1994: 10) suggests three major ways of gathering qualitative data – first, participant observation, which means experiencing local processes by getting involved, second, interviewing and third, examination of secondary materials produced by others. The majority of primary data, the basis for this dissertation, was collected through semi-structured interviews and helped me to obtain in-depth information on selected topics, access the local knowledge and reveal dominant ideas about Vorkuta's prospects. Furthermore, face-to-face, in-depth interviewing was also a source of generating information about unspoken motivations beyond some of the development plans and policy decisions, which would not have been revealed otherwise.

In order to grasp multiple voices I interviewed key officials at the regional and municipal levels, representatives of large companies operating in the city and the residents. The latter category includes long-term settlers and long-distance commuters coming to Vorkuta for a short period of time, but regularly. Within the first population group I particularly distinguish between the working people and retired population who do not consider leaving Vorkuta "for any money". In the framework of the dissertation, I did not have a chance to engage personally with the international experts who ran reforms in Vorkuta. This information comes from my former study, which is to some degree related to the current investigation as it touches upon implementation of the World Bank restructuring project (Nuykina 2011). In December 2008 together with colleague Timothy Heleniak, who was also involved in this project as a demographer at the early stage of planning, I visited Moscow, where we interviewed the head of the Russian Northern Restructuring Project, Andrey Markov, and the project manager, Eugeniy Rupasov, who provided me with practical insights of relocation schemes and project reports. As for the federal level decision-makers, my interaction with this group of actors was mainly via published interviews and participation at the two annual meetings of the Union of Arctic and the Far North Cities in 2008 and 2011 where I was mainly an observer. Both meetings were co-organised with the Ministry of Regional Development in order to bring together representatives of the northern municipalities and the federal authorities and to discuss the pressing problems of the Russian northern cities. Participation in both events gave me the opportunity to access first-hand indoor discussions on northern regional development plans and get in touch with some of the politicians. I was able to observe two conflicting approaches to the issue of how to maintain northern cities and who shall pay for the reforms. Attendance of these meetings of such scale was a unique experience and allowed me to better understand the background and rationale for political decisions and observe how different actors within the power hierarchy were negotiating viability of the northern settlements. As a result of my work in the Komi Republic and Moscow, there were 64 in-depth interviews collected and recorded between 2011 and 2012, including two interviews with the World Bank employees taken in December 2008 in the framework of the MOVE INNOCOM research project.

The sampling process to recruit interview participants used a combination of purposive sampling and snowballing technique, in which new interview participants were recruited based on recommendations from other respondents. Some appointments were arranged via phone and letters (e-mail and fax) before my trip, while the snowballing technique helped in finding useful information and gaining access to other relevant actors. All my interviews were

conducted in face-to-face situations and in an open-ended manner; I interviewed several key informants more than once, as they provided me with valuable insights on the topic. Therefore, the total number of the respondents (53) is different from the total amount of the interviews (64). Some interviews were conducted at the workplace of the informants, while other participants preferred meeting in a café or at home.

In terms of age structure, most of my respondents were middle-aged, actively working people who contribute to community life in some way; seven interviewees were retired persons. I captured the perspective of youth mainly through informal talks and also at the public events, like a youth conference at the Vorkuta Mining Institute where I had the chance to address my questions to a large auditorium. For example at the Forum of Youth I asked how many of the participants wish to return to Vorkuta after completing a university degree and what concerns them the most in the city. The sex structure of the interviewees is presented in the table below, while a detailed description of the interviews is provided in Annex 4. For the purpose of this study I was specifically interested in enthusiastic residents actively engaged with the community and planning to live in the North in the future, while less socially active community members were not included in the inquiry. This research limitation will be discussed in the subsequent section.

Table 1: Sample of interview participants

	Male	Female
Regional officials	3	2
Municipal officials	11	3
Representatives of large companies	5	
Local population	19	8
including:		
long-distance commuters	6	
retired	5	3
working-age population	8	5
World Bank experts[3]	2	
Total number of interviewees		**53**

Another shortcoming of my interviews is that the female perspective is not equally presented in comparison to male interviewees. Female field partners were more willing to talk

[3] Interviews were taken in the framework of MOVE INNOCOM research project.

to me in informal atmosphere; I was allowed to take notes in the course of the interview but not to voice record. For example, after being in the field for some weeks, I got to know a group of women – teachers at the city music school – where I took private piano lessons. I was invited to church to celebrate Easter with them, and we ate together several times. Such closeness allowed me to talk to them informally about the city and their thinking about its past and present developments. In general, I must say that the perspective of women about city viability is not substantially different from the perspective of men, although female accounts provide examples of family life, while men tend to describe overall, public processes rather than talking about private issues.

Although participant observation remains rarely used in geographic research (DeLyser, Herbert et al. 2010), I apply this method to record processes and their significance for local residents as they happen, especially those associated with city life, such as installing a new monument to the victims of GULAG, cleaning garbage from streets, celebrating Miners Family Day at the Palace of Cultures, etc. In general I spent around four months in Vorkuta living there the same way locals do, except for the fact that I did not need to go to work every morning, and my work schedule often depended on the availability of my interviewees. When not conducting interviews, I was walking in the city, learning its spatial organisation and visiting former GULAG camps sites, regularly going to the public library, taking piano classes at the municipal music school, dining with the new friends, reading newspapers, shopping at the city market, going to concerts and various cultural events which happen in the city every weekend, attending conferences, etc. Often in the evenings I wrote fieldnotes and reflected on what happened during the day. I rented a small apartment not far from the city centre, where I lived mainly alone but often visited by guests. There was an inexpensive canteen near my apartment, which became a good spot to observe the gatherings of fly-in, fly-out workers while having lunch. My visit of Vorkuta both times fell in the winter through spring period, so I could access the key people in the community. Being a northerner myself, I knew that during the summer and early autumn the city is quiet, as inhabitants travel to the South and spend their long summer holidays outside the North. My second field trip was much longer, and I could enjoy the awakening of the city from winter dormancy to spring sunshine. As in other places, seasonal change in Vorkuta is reflected in changed discussions; in winter people are concerned with cleaning the streets from the snowbanks, building an ice city at the main square so children can play there, restricted connection to *bol'shaya zemlya* due to limited numbers of flights, shortage of fresh vegetables and fruits in the shops, high utility costs due to heating expenses, etc. The spring brought new topics – repairing the roads

damaged during the winter, spring-cleaning the streets from the garbage that was covered by the snow, fixing playgrounds, etc. Warm days found people spending more time outside, as did I while I was there and got engaged in *subbotnik*. Talking to my neighbors while doing some work in the yard was an important part of participant observation for understanding the overall context of city life and drawing out further interpretations. One of the tasks of my research was to identify typical and prominent views about city viability, and the participant observation helped me to see on the ground how information obtained via interviews corresponded with practice. Without being myself in the field and living there for some months, developing some personal viewpoints, I would not recognize factors that then greatly contributed to theory development.

"Participant observation involves research-led observation of the social world while simultaneously participating in it" (Thompson and Brewer 2003: 223) and is used as a primary tool in the extended case method. Close examination of the daily life and grassroots activities separate participant observation from other qualitative methods such as, for example, interviewing. Through participant observation I found out how people have been "living through" the city, what they *do* in contrast to what they *say*, what truly concerns them. In Vorkuta in 2011 and 2012, I had a chance to experience with its inhabitants how it is to reside in an industrial Arctic city and how people make sense of the events and the opportunities confronting them in everyday life. It was essential for me to develop an insider status in order to come close to understanding views, strategies and actual actions of different stakeholders involved in the process of city making. Thus, I used participant observation as an important technique of data collection for grasping "implicit environment" and revealing discrepancies between stated intentions and actual practices.

While in the field I reflected on the obtained information and experiences by writing fieldnotes. It was important to write notes after the meetings in order to better formulate questions, build links between the interviews and the collected information and notate informal talks. I regard fieldnotes as "the immediate products of fieldwork, which consist of observations and reflections that are representative of time spent in the field" (Hobbs 2006: 120). At further stages of research I have used field notes for developing conclusions.

Secondary data analysis was particularly important for this dissertation because it helped to examine Soviet and early post-Soviet historical periods. It involved analysis of an existing dataset, including published and unpublished materials from local, regional and state government authorities, legislation of Soviet and post-Soviet period, city plans, reports from the city-forming enterprises and the local newspaper Zapolyar'e. Although I have asked my

respondents their memories about the Soviet history of Vorkuta, a great deal of information came from the published sources, including history, geography and economy literature. I must particularly credit the memoirs of the Soviet geologists, historians and GULAG prisoners for early accounts of city development that gave me a living picture of the first years of Vorkuta (Shkoda 1971; Negretov 1977; Negretov 1985; Morozov 1997; Sulimov 1997; Stahorskiy 2009). A book "Vorkuta – the city in Arctic, the city on the coal" edited by Margatita Getsen (2011) – one of very few publications on Vorkuta in the Russian language—was particularly important source of factual information used in the fourth and fifth chapters of this dissertation. Another set of secondary sources are the books and articles generously provided to me by the institute of socio-economic and energy problems of the North, the Komi Science Centre Ural Branch of RAS. It is not an unknown fact that Russian scientists predominantly publish in their native language and books are stored in regional libraries and cannot be accessed from afar; therefore, it was of great importance to familiarize myself with northern regional studies when working at the library of the Komi Science Centre in Syktyvkar during my second trip to the field. Although data-generating methods applied in this study are primarily qualitative in nature, existing quantitative information—statistics and census data—are used as secondary data to provide background information on socio-demographic and general development trends in Vorkuta and beyond.

Interpretation of data

According to the extended case method "conceptualization of the case reflects an *a-priori* theoretical framing" (Tavory and Timmermans 2009: 244), which shall be reshaped in the course of research to fit the field observations. This means, practically, moving from theory to the field and back to theory. Inspired by this approach, my research started with reading theoretical literature on city viability and gaining familiarity with previously conducted case studies in Russia (Thompson 2008; Bolotova and Stammler 2010; Stammler 2010; Collier 2011), Canada (Randall and Ironside 1996; Snowadzky 2005; Petrov 2010) and Australia (McKenzie 2009; Carson, Schmallegger et al. 2010; Schmallegger 2010; Schmallegger and Carson 2010). The literature review, combined with my previously acquired knowledge about the socio-economic dynamics in the Russian North, was summed up in the core postulates of city viability, which were mainly concerned with community characteristics. The main idea concluded from the literature was that a place remains viable as long as it has a social value for its residents, although it may go through economic or physical structures' deterioration (Gans 1968; Keczmerski and Sorter 1984). This argument well

corresponded with what was happening in the city of Vorkuta; despite pessimistic predictions and closure schemes, the city successfully sustained itself through the hardest times of decline. I started my research voyage with theoretical conclusions from cases in North America and Australia in order to find out how the example of the Russian northern community reflects these theoretical stances. While in the field and during the latter analytical work with the collected materials, I distinguished the most relevant aspects of a viable city based on their significance locally, including social capital, social coherence, strong sense of belonging, common visions and ideas, civic activism, community leadership and economic well-being.

Visiting the city for the second time and later examining my empirical data, I became convinced that local characteristics of the community as the main ingredients of viability are not the whole picture. The importance of the extra-local factors and legacies of the Soviet past in the process of viability-making inspired me to include extra-local factors in the overall theoretical discussion. It was not purely a question of contextuality; rather, the positionality of a city within economic and power relations and the way actors interact with the macro forces to ensure prosperity is important. Moreover, I found that development strategies and positionality of the city often result from the legacies of former regimes, which may have both positive and negative impact on the city prospects and can be manipulated in the actors' interests. Again, I returned to digging into theoretical arguments to incorporate my field findings in the revisited conceptual framework of city viability. At this point of research my aim was to merge the concepts of city viability, positionality and path dependence into one theoretical framework. With this purpose in mind I continued analysing and interpreting my field materials, while moving back and forth multiple times between theoretical postulates and empirical accounts.

The process of writing began with descriptions of city developments in retrospective order beginning with the early 1930s and finishing with examples of present-day processes. I follow the story of Vorkuta and related significant events in the order they occurred, with relevant socio-economic and political context introduced as needed. I focus most extensively on the post-Soviet years, as most of my empirical data come from that period. History plays an essential role in this study because many of the contemporary developments derive from the previous processes, decisions and extra-local contexts. Such path dependences are still strong in the case of Russian northern peripheral places like Vorkuta and they influence development pathways through which cities proceed, develop priorities and define socio-economic and power relations with a distant political centre. I use historical analysis in this

work as a part of the extended case method in order to show alongside the empirical accounts that city viability is a day-to-day process flowing according to the conceptions of city development, people's attitude to the place, socio-economic policies, the situation of a city in the extra-local contexts and other factors. Thus, the first step of writing from the empirical data resulted in detailed descriptions of dominant perceptions, socio-economic strategies and practices in a retrospective way with thoughtful attention to the overall socio-economic context.

After the description was completed, I returned to re-reading interview transcripts to reveal the deeper meanings behind the material. The second phase of the writing process aimed to connect descriptions with the theoretical framework and edit the text to include theoretical conclusions. My far-reaching goal was to show how Vorkuta's materials refine the general understanding of positionality, path dependence and city viability for urban geography research. In the final writing step, I concentrated on developing implications for policy planning and practice as well as implications for further research.

All my interviews were conducted in the Russian language, thus some of the pieces had to be translated into English in order to be published in this dissertation. Some words were transliterated from Cyrillic alphabet into the Latin alphabet as used in the English language and then explained in the glossary of Russian terms (Annex 2). For romanizing names written in the Russian Cyrillic alphabet I applied system developed by the United States Board on Geographic Names and by the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for British Official Use which is regarded as the British Standard (Annex 1). The process of translation caused me to reflect on the exact meanings participants assigned to the used expressions and their choice of words. It was important for me, therefore, to check my interpretations with the interview partners to ensure people in the field find them credible and feasible. Member validation included commenting on my field reports and some written pieces of the dissertation. Such feedback allowed for necessary clarifications which were not fully captured while I was in the field.

To conclude, the aim of data analysis and interpretation was to rethink the theoretical framework of city viability by looking at the example of Vorkuta. My research began with and was guided by theoretical postulates which, however, could not fully explain processes happening on the ground, particularly the relationship between local and extra-local forces in regards to city viability. Through fieldwork and later working with the material, I looked for situations that did not fit into the theoretical framework but made me reflect about additional theoretical concepts that would provide a fresh and embedding analytical angle.

Opportunities and limitations of the research approach

The qualitative research approach taken for this study was specifically chosen to obtain rich and detailed data to describe a situation on the ground from the perspective of various actors. I aimed to deepen my understanding of city viability within the case studied. This approach, however, sets some constraints and provides other research opportunities which I would like to discuss further, developing my arguments in the vein of Burawoy's critique of the positive scientific approach (Burawoy 1998). I am particularly concerned with the issues of reactivity, reliability, replicability and representativeness that have been "violated" by the extended case method applied in this dissertation.

To begin with, the reflective approach in qualitative studies is subject to criticism for its subjectivity both because of interviewees who may not necessarily provide reliable information and also because of researcher whose position directly influences the way information is gathered and interpreted. Although it is sometimes believed that researchers must avoid affecting the situation they study, my personal scientific experience contests the principle of *reactivity*. I was involved in the community life, participating in the discussions about city planning, and honestly shared my opinion with policy-planners and residents when asked. Collecting information from the interview partners, I had a strong wish to share my knowledge and in this way "give something back" to the people I studied.

Reliability—the key principle of the positive scientific approach to conducting research—was undermined in the course of my work, as my research questions were reformulated several times until I came to the final version. My initial idea for this PhD research project was to look at post-staple models of economic development in Russian resource towns by comparing two mining communities. The question was, How have post-staple development strategies suggested for modernisation of Russian single-industry towns been locally applied? And what were the outcomes in terms of people's responses to the changes in development paths? I also wanted to find out what determines or impedes the ability of single-industry resource towns to adopt post-staple paths? In order to answer these questions I planned to use arguments of the staples thesis (Innis 1933; Watkins 1963; Lucas 1971; Hayter and Barnes 1990; Halseth 1999; Snowadzky 2005; Petrov 2010) and rest my study on disciplinary stands of economic geography and, primarily, the institutional approach (Amin 1998; Martin 2000; Martin and Sunley 2006). However, my first field trip and pilot interviews clearly showed that there were no such developments in either place I intended to study. Neither Vorkuta nor Inta (the second city I visited in the Komi Republic) were going through a post-staple phase, while most strategies and practices taken on the bottom level

were about further resource extraction and making maximum profit from the coal industry and unique geographic location. In short, I came to the field with some questions and a theoretical framework and left it with the liability to redirect my research towards a greater understanding of what viability means both theoretically and practically. The second trip to the North was guided with the questions aimed to dig into the perceptions, strategies and practices surrounding city viability.

Secondly, due to the budgetary cuts in the FWF project "Lives on the Move", I recieved fewer time and financial resources to carry out a comparative study, as originally intended, and was forced to constrain my investigation to the city of Vorkuta. By limiting research to a single case study I could stay longer in the field and involve myself more deeply in community life, establishing a rapport with the key respondents. Diminishing the scale of investigation was followed by the reconsideration of the methodology; instead of a comparative case study I ended up with the extended case method based on the story of Vorkuta.

DeLyser (2010: 4) argues that qualitative and especially reflective research "begins with the biographically situated, physically embodied researcher", as he or she gets involved in creating and not just describing the world under study. In this sense, the researcher uses himself or herself as a "research instrument" while collecting data, filtering, developing feelings, experiencing and reflecting on field experiences, as well as challenging personal understandings. Following this understanding of the researcher's role, I believe that *replicability* is an imaginary construction because every researcher is conditioned by his or her experiences and relationships with the field, by the personal characteristics, background, theoretical stands and, importantly, historical moment when empirical information is extracted.

I question my role and situatedness in the field, as it influences gathered material as well as conclusions. Being a Russian young woman who grew up in the North and currently lives abroad, I had a position in the field that allowed me to collect information from a particular perspective. I doubt if the outcomes would be the same in the case of a male observer or/and a foreigner. I was not perceived as a local, but I am not viewed as an outsider either. Having been born and having grown up in the Russian North with Russian as my mother language and having solid knowledge of Russian culture provided me with a basis for attaining access to the field and establishing a rapport with people. My personal identity as a northerner helped to gain people's trust as they saw that I know not by hearsay how it is to live in the North. My personal experience also implicitly directed my research attitude towards the studied problem.

I understood some of the particularities of living in the North from my own former work and experience, so these factors did not strike my attention but were "taken for granted", like the ones associated with the difficulties of the 1990s. Others, especially the ones associated with the specifics of the coal industry were completely new to me and thus received a fresh look. On the other hand, my position as an external visitor who has lived abroad for the last seven years, publishes predominantly in English and does not have an interest in settling down in the city of Vorkuta provided me with resources which otherwise would not have been obtained. My initial outsider status allowed people to share their personal opinions and views although it could affect their job positions. Moreover, many of my interviewees expressed their interest in looking at my findings. They wanted "fresh eyes" on what is going on in the city, and they also hoped to use me as a megaphone to amplify their concerns to the regional level and elsewhere.

Ursula Plesner argues that "being an insider and an outsider are not finite positions but constantly negotiated" (Plesner 2011: 480). My field experience fully confirms this argument; My position evolved while I lived in Vorkuta. I began developing sympathy for the city and its inhabitants, especially when being introduced to Vorkuta by the community activists for whom every building held value. After I lived there for several months, people started to greet me in the street; I found a favourite bakery; some of my informants became good friends with whom I still keep the contact. Moreover, during the course of my work, I discovered that my relatives from the mother's side were also prisoners of Vorkutlag and contributed to the building of the city. Gradually, on the "insider-outside" coordinate axis my positionality shifted towards more of an insider, and my connections to the city strengthened.

Age and gender played a critical role in conducting the interviews, especially those with the decision-makers and business actors. Because of my age I was generally seen as unthreatening to the interviewees, especially when meeting with the top level policy-planners. I did not particularly feel like I was not being taken seriously by the older respondents mainly because of my academic background and foreign status. The latter was sometimes seen as valuable achievement and, thus, garnered greater respect and trust from certain people than I would have being "just Russian".

In addition, following the argument of Michael Burawoy that "history is not a laboratory experiment that can be replicated again and again under the same conditions" (2009: 34), I am conscious of the special political circumstances in which my study was undertaken. I arrived during a transformative three-year period when the city had undergone the short governance of three different administrations. Turnover of public sector officers and

overall political instability restrained my access to the municipal administration and conditioned the empirical data I collected. As my research agenda came out of local concerns, a different socio-political situation would produce different interests and, thus, a different set of questions and explanations. Combining all the mentioned points, it is evident that replication of my research at a different point in time and with a different researcher's background would bring different observations. Thus, this study cannot claim replicability.

The question of *representativeness* can be a stumbling block when generalizing research findings. Unlike the so-called "horizontal approach" to generalization that prioritises commonalities among different cases, my work follows a vertical approach and tries "tracing the source of small differences to external forces" (Burawoy 2009: 49). Instead of asking how representative my field findings are to other areas in the North of Russia and elsewhere, I look at how my conclusions, based on the study of Vorkuta, contribute to the theoretical discussion on city viability. Generalization is produced with one purpose—to help elaborate existing theory rather than reaching representation.

Finally, I would like to address the question of so-called silencing. When talking about perceptions of city viability and related practices, I refer to a selected group of social actors, while ignoring the others. Who is left beyond the scope of this study? I was completely detached from the younger generation of the residents, new-wave migrants, those willing to leave the city but remaining stuck, the unemployed and the disabled. Thus, one of the suggestions for the future research would be to include these and other new voices.

Conclusion

This third chapter provides an overview of the research methodology and methods used to explore the process of creating a viable city in the context of the Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. Interpretive case study is considered the most suitable research paradigm to achieve an in-depth understanding of how settlements established by force are being made into comfortable and socially coherent places. I apply both abductive and retroductive research strategies to reveal the dominant ideas and visions guiding place-development versus structural contexts that cause local transformations in positive as well as negative ways. A combination of these approaches is particularly useful for the purpose of this dissertation as it allows improvement of our understandings of the constituting principles of city viability by bringing into the existing theoretical framework some discordant findings related to positionality of a place and path dependence. By using methodological stands of the extended case method (Burawoy 1998), I "extract the general from the unique, move from the "micro"

to “macro” and connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on preexisting theory” (Burawoy 1998: 5).

I use an ethnographic methodological lens and a variety of data-collection methods typical for ethnographic work, such as semi-structured, in-depth interviews and participant observation to explore how social actors comprehend and change northern cities by developing multi-directional strategies and practices. In addition, I also use secondary data analysis that supports my field findings within historical and statistical contexts. When processing the data, I follow the four-step approach of the extended case method: when a researcher moves from theory to interview or set of observations, then to an analysis of particular social processes, then to broader socio-economic structures and finally back to the theory (Tavory and Timmermans 2009: 255). This work helps to enrich the theoretical understanding of city viability by bringing to light new evidence that a place is a process shaped by broader socio-economic and political forces.

CHAPTER 4: FROM EMPTY TUNDRA TO A SINGLE-INDUSTRY TOWN: THE SOVIET YEARS OF VORKUTA

> *"All around is extended watery brown tundra with mosses and lichens, and we were the pioneers of the new polar region, where in the following 15 years, prisoners will build a new town called Vorkuta" (Sulimov 1997: 51).*

Introduction

The seventy-year Soviet epoch was exceptionally successful in terms of modifying the economic geography of the country and filling in space with new urban communities. Between 1926-1989, 1500 newly established towns and 4000 urban settlements were diffused across the territory (Animitsa and Vlasova 2010: 170). The urban environment became a key element in engineering a new socialist society of the working class and modernizing the country. New towns were in this way seen as the fabric from which both the Soviet man and a new social order would be woven (French 1995).

There is a general trend to write about Soviet cities as non-viable by definition, as many of them were "artificially" established by the planned economy in places where they would not appear under free market conditions. New settlements were typically attached to single city-forming enterprises to provide the industry with labour force, often placed in isolated areas far away from market forces, and heavily dependent on centrally-distributed supplies and state subsidies. Some of them grew out of forced labour camps, where masses of people were sent against their will to serve the state. Planned and governed in a top-down fashion, the Soviet city was a result of political and economic decisions made in Moscow, while local actors had little to say. Such a portrait of the Soviet city, painted by some Western as well as Russian authors, emerges from normative view of the values of capitalism and often diminishes the complexity of city life to economic parameters (Pivovarov 1995; 2002; Hill and Gaddy 2003; Hill 2004). I not do deny the "hard facts", but offer a different perspective on Soviet city development and attempt to show: how GULAG camp slowly transformed into an attractive settlement; who engaged in the viability-making of such a settlement (and how); and how newcomers coalesced into a socially coherent entity. Using the example of Vorkuta, I aim to contribute to a Soviet notion of viability that differs from present-day approaches.

The development of Vorkuta during the Soviet years can be divided into two major phases: GULAG period from 1931 until 1960, when the majority of the population was imprisoned in forced labour camps, and the dynamic years of growth from 1960 until 1989. Although this dissertation is primarily concerned with the post-Soviet stage of development, history plays an important role in understanding the origins of some present-day ideas and town-making practices. This chapter provides the essential background for analysing the challenges and turns of today. The period of GULAG is a point of departure for understanding how the town was produced both spatially and demographically, how it was managed, and who was involved in the process of city-making. By describing the Soviet years, I aim to clarify why the question of viability is important for Vorkuta today and how the understandings of viability transformed over time. Furthermore, I trace the evolution of the city to demonstrate in the following chapters the impact of Soviet legacies on contemporary northern Russian localities as they position themselves for long-term feasibility. Recent city transformations and the difficulties cities have faced are very much related (and path dependent) to the idea of what viability is in Soviet terms and practices.

Soviet paradigm of urban planning

In the Soviet era, urbanisation processes were directly linked to the overall development of the national economy. The development of towns as other spheres of life was controlled by five-year plans for the national economy – the so-called *pyatiletka*. The state had responsibility for city development in all aspects, including the rate of growth, size and location of new settlements, their economic functions, number of inhabitants, etc. The role of central government was fundamental for town planning, which was regarded as an integral part of broader economic progress.

Urbanisation during the Soviet period was tightly connected to industrial development, forming one interdependent system. Soviet economic development pursued industrial growth in order to "catch up" with leading capitalist societies. The goal of rapid industrialization required the expansion of existing towns and establishment of new ones. New urban centres were born in the particular political and socio-economic climate characterised by the aspirations of Soviet leaders to modernize the country in the fastest possible way, often at the expense of the freedom and standard of living of ordinary citizens. These towns were an important feature of industrialization projects. They were developed in tandem with enterprises to provide a fixed reserve of labour for factories and mines (Hill and Gaddy 2003:

91). As a consequence, viability of the newly populated areas was interlocked with industrial production and dependent on its operation.

From the very beginning, the city-forming enterprise was in charge of building and managing various aspects of the physical infrastructure of the settlement, such as electricity, water mains, sewerage, transport, housing, and socio-cultural objects. The city received supplies through the corresponding ministry; for example, the ministry of coal industry was responsible for mining communities like Vorkuta. Moreover, a high-ranking member of the enterprise was frequently tasked with governing the town. A consequent product of such tight relationships is a company-town, a model which is not only not exclusive to the Soviet Union but which has even been used as a model in capitalist countries during the late nineteenth century (Mawhiney and Pitblado 1999). At the end of the 1980s, at least 400 cities in Soviet Russia could be classified as single-industry towns (Institut regional'noy politiki 2008: 16).

The mushrooming of many new localities was related to the development of eastern and northern territories, which was especially intensive after the Second World War. In the context of this dissertation I mainly refer to *osvoenie Severa* – specific policies and practices, aimed at settling and industrializing the North. The overall idea of *osvoenie* is rooted in the Marxist dictum to create a "more even level of development, decreasing the colonial core-periphery nature of the country and assisting in the full exploitation of resources for society as a whole rather than for profit" (French 1995: 54). The North was viewed as a strategic region from both geopolitical and economic perspectives, as it allowed the Soviet Union physical control over the vast territory while enriching the national economy with resources and revenues. Financial and human costs of widespread development were not considered as an obstacle and were not regarded as key parameters by which to measure viability.

The policy of peopling the periphery resulted in a rapid rise in the number of urban dwellers in the USSR. In total, the population living in towns and smaller urban settlements grew from 26,3 million people (17,9% of the total population) in 1926 to 18,8 million (65,8% of the total population) by 1989. At the end of the socialist epoch, there were 6216 urban settlements in Russia, 2190 of which were classified as cities (French 1995: 52). 466 urban settlements were located in the North, including 109 cities and 357 urban-type settlements (Heleniak 2008: 33). According to the official definitions, a city required a population greater than 12 000 with more than 85% of the employed labour force engaged in the manufacturing or service sectors.

Table 2: Urban growth in the USSR between 1926 and 1989

Year	Towns	Urban settlements (total)	Urban population, millions	% of total population
1926	709	1925	26,3	17,9
1939	923	2373	56,1	33
1959	1679	4519	99,8	47,9
1970	1935	5504	136	56,3
1979	2062	5914	163,6	62,3
1989	2190	6216	188,8	65,8

Source: French 1995: 52

In summary, governance of the industrial cities rested upon control and responsibility of the centralist state over people's mobility, settlement, and urban growth, while the dominant local enterprise had a special duty to build and maintain urban infrastructure. City viability was generally seen as inseparable from the viability of the town-forming company, which provided a source for employment, economic well-being, and social services. The Soviet planning paradigm effected a top-down approach to the allocation of human, financial, and material resources. Decision-making on local development was held at the upper levels of the power hierarchy, leaving municipalities with little influence. The interests of people were often overridden by the needs of industries, and town-making processes were connected with five-year development plans for the national economy.

The birth of Vorkuta

The birth of Vorkuta fell during the first five-year plan (1929-1933) for the development of the national economy, which was intended to transform the newly established country into an industrial society in the shortest possible period of time. The Soviet Union was in urgent need of both resources and labour. A major instrument for populating the regions and providing emerging industries and construction with "free labour" was the system of Soviet forced labour camps – administrated by the special Chief Administration of Corrective Labour Camps and Colonies (GULAG).

In June 1930, a small geological expedition under the leadership of Georgiy Chernov moved along the Vorkuta River to find energy-dense black coal suitable for metallurgic production. The discovery of unusually high quality coal-bearing layers 70 km from the river head, in an area inhospitable for human habitation, provided the source for industrial development of Vorkuta's coal deposits and the birth of the coal-mining town. Many years later, Chernov remembered:

> "Frankly, in those early years, I could not truly appreciate the discovery. We found coals in every of our visits to Pechora, and this Vorkuta's field situated in the most remote, distant part of Bolshezemelskaya tundra. It hardly seemed to me at that time, that it would interest the coal industry. I had absolutely no idea how the production, and even exploration works can be started in this inaccessible area" (cit. in Vilchevskiy and Sviridenkov 1981: 3).

In the summer of 1931, soon after the expedition of Georgiy Chernov, the first settlers, mainly prisoners of GULAG, arrived. It was a small poorly equipped group of forty-three geologists and mine specialists who had the instructions from the USSR Supreme Economic Council to conduct exploration works on the right bank of the river. Government decree "On the development of a fuel base in the northern territory" from April 21, 1931, planned to establish the first mine during the winter of 1931-1932 to produce at least 7700 tons of coal, while geologists had to continue their investigation of Vorkuta's deposits. One of the members of the first pioneer brigade, a geotechnical engineer named Nikolay Inkin, wrote about these days:

> "On the 2nd of August 1931 we arrived to the place of the future mine camp. We put up the flag, pitched a tent, familiarized oneself with the area. Donetsk miners Pravikov and Andreev dug out three-meter trial pit in the first three hours and bared the first coal layer. The next day three more layers of excellent quality of coal were revealed. On the 6th of August the first day-drift laid down on the fourth coal layer. Thus, we started coal mining in Vorkuta. A handful of courageous people, not on their own choice brought here, came on a deserted shore of polar Vorkuta and at the expense of incredible human efforts and their lives have written the first lines of city's history on the pure, as snow, blank page" (cit. in Yakovenko 1987: 14).

There was neither a clear vision nor plan for development of the town that grew alongside the mines as the works advanced. In the winter period of 1931-1932, there were 350 people, one wooden house, a bathhouse, and a bake-house. People lived first in tents covered with snow and then in earth huts. Day and night they dug out coal, almost using their bare hands in lieu of proper equipment and sufficient provisions. During summer 1932, 3000 GULAG prisoners with some equipment arrived to build a mine. By the winter of that same year, two camp units were established – Rudnik and Vorkuta-Vom – with a total population of more than 1500 imprisoned and free settlers. By March 1933, only 54 people survived, the rest having died of cold, scurvy, and starvation. However, at the end of the year Vorkuta gained 382 wage-workers and 3600 imprisoned labourers to work the mine and construct the

necessary infrastructure. On the 1st of June, 1932, the first coal mine started operation on the right bank of the Vorkuta River (Getsen 2011: 232). In 1938, the number of inhabitants in Vorkuta increased to 16 508, of which 15 141 were prisoners and 1367 were free hired workers (Getsen 2011: 235); the latter part formed the young mining town's administration and militarized guard. In 1939, the number of prisoners reached 18 000 and about half worked in the mines. In mid-1941, the population of Vorkuta grew to 27 393 people (Getsen 2011: 237).

Vorkuta of the early years had a particular spatial organisation similar to other camps. The convicts lived in groups in temporary tents heated by an iron stove self-made out of a barrel. Later, when construction materials were delivered, the tents were replaced by simple wooden barracks. In addition to the housing block, the territory of the camp was comprised of a kitchen unit and dining barrack, a bath-house, a medical unit, a dog house, and an isolation ward reserved for saboteurs. Managerial staff and the militarized guard lived in special barracks located somewhat outside the camp. In the early years, the camp had no proper fencing due to the lack of materials, and it was only after 1938 that its perimeters were fortified with watchtowers and barbed wire.

The first residents of Vorkuta included many professional criminals who were later joined by political prisoners, dispossessed kulaks, those deemed Nazi-collaborators, and ordinary people convicted of petty theft or poor labour discipline. Political prisoners were given longer sentences and carried harder duties in the camp than were criminal prisoners. Managerial staff were recruited through the system of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), and some of them had technical competences; for example, the chief of Rudnik during 1935-1936 (Vasiliy Barabanov) and the first chief of the Vorkutaugol during the Second World War (Mikhail Mal'tsev). Generally speaking, until the mid-1950s the population of Vorkuta primarily consisted of GULAG prisoners, guards, and former prisoners who had completed their sentences but continued to work in mining and exploration. Over time, Vorkuta grew as relatives followed prisoners to their place of exile and as party activists and freely-hired labour (Pilkington 2012: 274) arrived. From 1929-1953, an approximate total of two million inmates were transported to Vorkuta by the NKVD. 180 000 people died as a result of brutal living and working conditions, and about 15 000 more were shot (Fein, Leonhard et al. 2002).

During the years of GULAG, Vorkuta was administrated by Ukhtpechlag, an administrative centre for all the camps in the area, from which it organisationally divided in 1938. Locally, it was governed by the camp commander, "a god, a king and a military chief

all in one" (Mikhail Rogachev, 16 April 2011, Syktyvkar). He had broad responsibilities starting from the supervision of coal production and finishing with the governing of the town. Conditions endured by the convicts and the development path of the town, therefore, directly stemmed from the leadership of the camp commander, his professional qualifications, local knowledge, personal character, and free will.

Vorkuta took shape gradually as coal extraction shifted to the river's left bank and the small mining settlement of Rudnik lost its function as an urban core in 1937. The end of the 1930s was marked by high-speed construction of the town with apartment blocks for new settlers and camp administration. The town gained a water supply system, power station, administrative and public buildings, a diesel power station, a brick factory, and a plant to repair mining equipment. The first school, with three teachers for 70 pupils, soon opened for the children of guards and free hired specialists. In 1937, the first wooden two-stored residential house in Vorkuta was built on Krasnoarmeyskaya Street. Interestingly, the first houses did not have numbers, but were given instead romantic names such as Sunrise of the North, Light of the Miner, and Parisian Commune. The first brick house was erected in the 1940s on Gornyakov Street. It later hosted a kindergarten before being converted into a St. Michail's church. In 1941, Vorkuta's concentration camp and its neighbouring settlements received the official status of a small urban settlement – *poselok*.

Prison town

In August 1943, the central government in Moscow issued a decree that ordered further development of Vorkuta and its transformation into the administrative, political, and industrial centre of the region. In terms of administrative control, Vorkuta was ruled by the city council. In July 1944, the Vorkuta settlement council was transformed into the City Council of People's Deputies, headed by Yegor Golosov. Real power was, however, in the hands of the head of Vorkutlag. Between 1943 and 1947, the head of Vorkuta-Pechora administration of labour camps of the NKVD and the city-forming enterprise Vorkutaugol was Mikhail Mal'tsev. He had near total control and influence over the most important issues in the development of production as well as city-making. On one hand, he represented top-down power in Vorkuta and was delegated there to make sure that orders from Moscow were fulfilled. On the other hand, Mal'tsev cared about the workers, freed many of them from restraints, and tried to create more favourable living conditions despite the near impossibility of doing so within the system of GULAG. Alexander Solzhenitsyn described the independent character of Mal'tsev in his famous novel, "The Gulag Archipelago" (2006: 446): "In the

presence of *chekists* he shook hands with convict engineers and called them by name and patronymic. He could not tolerate professional *chekists* and neglected the chief of the political department, Colonel Kukhtikov. <…> During the years of his governance, says Rappaport, no new cases in Vorkuta camp were made." Former convict Evdokiya Cherneta-Gizatulina (2000) also writes about Major-general Mal'tsev in his memoirs as having a strong character and political will. He knew the system well and could influence decision-making processes to benefit Vorkuta according to his own notions. In one of the true stories described in the book of Cherneta-Gizatulina, Mikhail Mal'tsev explains to the chief engineer of the construction department how to deal with the supply office. He says, "You are a good specialist, as I can see, but you still have confidence in guarantee and clarity of deliveries, that remained from your army times. Here things are different. All needs to be dragged out" (Cherneta-Gizatulina 2000: 33). This principle of "dragging out" resources from the political centre was often successfully used by Mal'tsev, whose main task was to organise extraction of coal in the conditions of war. Leaders like Mikhail Mal'tsev played significant roles in contributing to city viability, as they could unite a community around a common goal and make it "visible" for resource-givers.

The first master plan for city development was laid down by the metropolitan architects and proposed a town for 20-25 000 residents living in the proximity of the mining sites. Emerging urban neighbourhoods were compositionally linked to the bend of the river and the curve of the main street – Lenin Prospect. Heedless of climate and topography, these first residential quarters of Vorkuta evoked the beauty and monometallism of the Soviet and pre-Soviet architecture of other cities. In particular, the architectural image of the town was inspired by the building culture of St. Petersburg, and many of Vorkuta's buildings were designed by imprisoned architects. At the end of 1943, the town included about fifty houses, a small hospital and polyclinic, three grocery stores, three schools, two culture clubs, two kindergartens, and even a musical-drama theatre established by personal order of the camp commander Mikhail Mal'tsev soon after his arrival. Because of Mal'tsev's involvement, the system of Vorkuta labour camps received the status of a city and thus became differently positioned on the national and regional scales. It was recognized as an important coal producing centres in Soviet Russia and a settlement for permanent habitation. Cherneta-Gizatulina writes:

> "Thanks to the exceptional organisational skills of Mal'tsev, his ability to rigidly enforce all decisions without exception, the city got a theatre in the same 1943 year. To be precise, first the theatre was opened and next month, on the 26th of November, Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR

> proclaimed Vorkuta a city. It can be assumed, such Decree was taken not without strategic thinking and contribution of Mal'tsev" (Cherneta-Gizatulina 2000: 32).

Vorkutintsy proudly mention that the first director of the newly created theatre was a prisoner of Vorkutlag – Boris Abramovich Mordvinov, a former principal director the Bolshoy Theatre in Moscow. Master plans did not keep up with the actual evolution of the place; the town continued pulling in more and more inhabitants and already in 1944 there were 7651 free citizens and 33 631 convicts living in Vorkuta (Morozov 1997: 53).

Urban growth and expansion of GULAG industrial production in Vorkuta evolved side by side. Vorkuta's coal became particularly important after the double loss of the occupied Donbas and Moscow-area mines destroyed during the Second World War. The country lost its usual energy base, and therefore Vorkuta had a critical mission to fuel blockaded Leningrad, the entire northwest, and some central regions, as well as the Baltic and Northern fleets. For instance, in 1943 about 72% of the total solid fuel delivered to Leningrad was Vorkuta coal (Spitsyn n.d.). During the war period, the production of coal in Vorkuta increased eleven-fold. In 1946, the annual production of coal in Vorkuta passed 3 million tons.

On the 26th of November 1943, Vorkuta officially became a city of republican subordination. A new urban plan aimed to grow Vorkuta into an urban centre for 50 000 residents. Official recognition of Vorkuta as a city gave it a new impetus for local spatial expansion. The same year, founding of the Gornyatskiy and Oktyabr'skiy satellite settlements marked the beginning of suburbanisation. Satellite mining communities mushroomed one after another, forming a spoke-ring pattern around Vorkuta. The story of these minor communities is mostly the same, with each the result of continually raised production quotas assigned by the federal centre. First, the Ministry of Construction of Heavy Industry of the USSR opened up a mine field and adopted a decree to build a colliery, then the NKVD supplied the place with convict workers placed in the primitively built labour camp next to the industrial site. Construction of the mine started in desert tundra, often with a minimum of technical equipment and a high proportion of manual labour. After production began, a settlement, consisting of simple wooden barracks for the free hired workers, was gradually established. At first, the settlement was known simply by the number of a colliery, and only later received its permanent name. After the liquidation of Vorkutlag, barbed wire was removed and transferred from the prison's property to the city council. The former camp barracks became settled by permanent workers recruited from other corners of the country and

were then replaced by permanent housing blocks (Mikhail Rogachev, 16 April 2011, Syktyvkar).

Soviet historians marveled at how the town sprang into being and stressed the miracle of the Soviet command economy at work. Under Soviet rule, a previously uninhabited area suddenly flourished with modern housing, hospitals, schools, and cultural facilities. The book dedicated to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Komi republic glorifies the process:

> "Vorkuta is growing rapidly; the town is full of movement. Music and Drama Theatre in Vorkuta is the best theater of the republic. In addition to elementary and secondary schools there is a vocational school - the best school in the Republic, Mining College, cinema, House of Party education. <...> The future of Vorkuta is bright, it is provided with more capital investment in the new Stalin's Five Year Plan" (S.A. 1946: 146).

The idea of communism-oriented progress and future-looking development dominates the accounts of Soviet publications on Vorkuta. Writers especially admired the speed of urbanisation, giving a place new meaning, new functions, and a position in the national economy. The city located beyond the Polar circle symbolizes a victory of the Soviet man and the Soviet state that made inhospitable land economically useful for the benefit of the whole nation. The fact that the construction of the city in the middle of nowhere cost a fortune and made scant economic sense mattered little to the Moscow bureaucrats and party leaders. The mistakes of the Stalinist policy of large-scale peopling were only recognized decades later, when the "new town model" (Storey 2010) was replaced by long-distance commuting to industrial sites in the northern resource periphery.

Working with the archives, I found that prisoner-labourers and free migrant workers were differently portrayed. Soviet literature barely mentioned the former, while the second group was described as "hardy pioneers" and modernisers of the resource periphery, sacrificing their comfort for the motherland. Both of them lived and worked side by side, mining and building the city. From the perspective of today, it is difficult to imagine a place where a thin layer of barbed wire separated a town into two parts. Therefore, when interviewing Vorkuta's long-term residents, I wondered how the prisoners coexisted with the free population. Pavel Silonov, who came to the Komi region at the age of five, shared with me his memories:

> "We were talking about my first impressions of the town, so I must say I had a heavy feeling when the guards followed a prisoners' column to work <...> The mine had an access control and was fenced with two layers of barbed wire and guarded by

> the dogs running back and forth in order to prevent prison breaks. Later when I got used to that environment I did not pay attention to the convict labourers, for me it was a usual picture…we had nothing to compare our experience with" (Pavel Silonov, 18.04.2011, Syktyvkar).

In order to create large industrial complexes and urban settlements for hundreds of thousands of prisoners in severe and isolated areas of the North, the Soviet state allocated enormous financial, material, and human resources. The total cost of one convict worker per day in Vorkutlag amounted to 6,50 RUB (Negretov 1977: 572). In addition to these expenses, 99 kopeks per man-day were credited to convict workers as money premiums. Prisoners of Vorkutalag completed about 6,1 million work days each year, with an annual cost of 60 million RUB (Morozov 1997: 49).

Clearly, Vorkuta was an expensive, economically unjustified project and could exist only because of the work of prisoners and patronage of the Ministry of coal industry. Apart from the immeasurable cost in human suffering, GULAG-way of management multiplied the cost needed to create Vorkuta. Looking at the actual loss of money, Negretov (1977) finds that on the projects in Vorkuta in 1937 15 157 RUB were spent, and in 1939 it was 13 405 RUB. In 1940 the total loss came to 14 896 RUB while the planned loss for the same year was a much lower 4927 RUB. Moreover, one finds an additional state subsidy of 8900 RUB (including three million rubbles for winter transport because of navigation disruption) allocated to Vorkuta in 1940, and unplanned losses of 1069 RUB, of which 745 RUB were classified as "deficiencies, waste and theft" (Negretov 1977: 575). All those planned and unplanned expenses were included in the production cost of mining in Vorkuta which was planned at 65 120 RUB in 1939, but in reality amounted to 107 540 RUB (Morozov 1997: 31).

Among other lessons, the history of Vorkuta shows that management structures built on forced labour lead to losses and mismanagement of resources. Reflecting on how Vorkuta grew up, historian and regional ethnographer Mikhail Rogachev told me in the interview when we discussed the roots of the town:

> "You know, everything was done 'by assault', that is why the camp closed down with the millions of rubles losses, about 20 million rubles of losses passed over. The reason is very simple; it developed as an economic structure without any plan. In other words, it was a typical Soviet organisation where the main principle was "Davay!" (Mikhail Rogachev, 16 April 2011, Syktyvkar).

Table 3: Population change in Vorkuta between 1938 and 2013

Year	Vorkuta urban district	Vorkuta	Year	Vorkuta urban district	Vorkuta
1938		16508	2003	133523	86832
1941		27393	2004	130141	84093
1944		41282	2005	127510	82000
1945		55843	2006	123848	79205
1959	179400	84200	2007	120053	76600
1970	184900	89700	2008	116938	74266
1979	199400	101100	2009	113396	71402
1989	218500	115300	2010	110569	69008
1996	170129	102174	2011	95186	
2001	142029	89370	2012	91400	67100
2002	137892	87049	2013	88026	64353

Source: Komistat 2010: 12; Getsen 2008: 235, 236, 288; Morozov 1997: 48, 53; Komistat 2014 online

The Soviet coal resource base

Stalin's death in 1953 and the political reforms of Nikita Khrushchev provided cities and Vorkuta in particular with fresh impetus for development. In the late 1950s, as Vorkuta moved beyond a community of prisoners, individual migration for economic opportunity became the major form of movement to the city. First secretary of the council between 1965 and 1986 – Gerasim Martirosyan – defined three pillars of city viability based on industrial growth, construction, and infrastructure. Martirosyan associated present and future growth of Vorkuta with coal production as the primary city-forming sector. In order to grow industry, it was necessary to provide workers with good living conditions, to attract qualified labour from other regions, and to retain them in the north. Without decent housing this problem could not be solved, and therefore the second priority sector was construction. Lastly, in order to connect Vorkuta with the mainland and to facilitate communication between the centre and the satellite settlements, Martirosyan pushed for further infrastructural development of the city, particularly the construction of roads. These three pillars, expressed by Gerasim Martirosyan in short formula "Coal. Housing. Roads", remained pretty much the same until the end of Soviet regime.

Vorkuta always acted independently from the republican capital of Syktyvkar, due to its distant location and tight economic connections to the ministry of coal. Local authorities were represented by the city council of the communist party, the executive committee, the city committee of all-Union Leninist Young Communist League (Komsomol), and the people's

oversight committee[4]. Although the municipal authorities were officially subordinate to the regional centre, they enjoyed special relationships with the federal authorities. At the top of the local governance hierarchy was the Kremlin and the ministry of coal, while the republican centre played only a minor role.

The marriage between the city and the staple industry was a foundation of city viability. City-forming enterprise Vorkutaugol provided social facilities and housing for the workers, and there was no single house in the city constructed without industry's involvement. One of the key interviewees, Nikolay Gerasimov, who worked in the coal sector for many years, comments about the local influence of the industry:

> "In the North and particularly in Vorkuta the city-forming enterprise was always a first master of the city. And even political institutions like city council and executive committee were, so to say, "side horses". Vorkutaugol "called the tune", decided on the direction of city development and construction. All the public buildings in Vorkuta, even the Palace of Pioneers and the sport complex Olimp were sponsored through the ministry of coal industry. The city was supplied through Vorkutaugol; the company had its own department for procurement of supplies to the workers which were much better in comparison to other. The coal General was the real owner of the city, as all the power and resources were in his hands" (Nikolay Gerasimov, 22.04.2011, Syktyvkar).

In 1957 in Vorkuta there were 22 mines, the majority of which had satellite settlements where workers lived. Annual coal extraction in that period reached 10 million tons. The early 1960s saw discussion about the reconstruction of mines built during the war and immediate post-war years begin, as most were technologically primitive. Moreover, they required the extensive use of manual labour in many stages of coal production. Seven mines were closed down in the process of restructuring, while the construction of new ones inevitably lead to higher prices for Vorkuta coal, which was already not cheap. The first voices were raised in favour of abolishing the town due to the high cost of mining there. Scientists and practitioners convinced the authorities that the price of a ton is not the right measurement value; instead one must consider chemical composition of coal. These parameters affect the coke quality, and therefore the quality of the final steel product. The hard coking coal from Vorkuta contained 0,7% of sulphur, while the coal extracted in the Donetsk basin was 3% sulphur. Practically speaking, the coke produced in Vorkuta had greater mechanical strength.

[4] During the Soviet period, a group of people representing a work collective or the public that made certain a company's action were legal and correct.

Moreover, an increase in sulphuric content by only 0,1% demands an increase in coke consumption by 2%. The smelting of one ton of iron required 599 kg of coke from the coal of the eastern regions, and only 506 kg of coke produced from Vorkuta coal. In the Kuzbass region, production of one ton of coking coal was followed by the extraction of two-three tons of energy coal, while in Vorkuta almost all extracted coal was suitable for the needs of the steel industry. The combination of these arguments justified construction of new, modern coal mines in Vorkuta. Reconstruction included expansion and technical upgrading, and with the formation of a new type of mine the city continued to grow (Getsen 2011).

After the camp was closed in 1960, thousands of discharged prisoners left the city, though some stayed. I wondered what could possibly keep a person in a place where he or she was brought and held by force, in a place that could seemingly only be associated with painful moments, years of hard work, and family losses. I addressed this question to one of the former convicts, Anna Krikun, born in 1922, whom I was lucky to interview during my first field work.[5] She was quite surprised by the question, as the answer was obvious to her. She explained that two of the reasons to remain in Vorkuta were the limitations of the existing mobility regime and the disenfranchisement imposed on former convicts. Even after being released, they still were not allowed to settle in the major cities, neither could they get proper employment or rent an apartment. Because of their criminal record, it was often the case that former GULAG prisoners were excluded from social benefits such as subsidised meals in the workplace. In contrast, in Vorkuta these same people had developed social networks and gained reputations that helped them grow professionally and become fully integrated in social life. In a place where roughly half of the population had been imprisoned, Anna Krikun and her friends were not regarded as deviant members of society, but rather fully accepted. As a result, those people who did not have connections in other regions and could not return to their previous place of residence remained in Vorkuta, as Anna did. “I had no place to go”, she said, “so I stayed in Vorkuta and continued working in the same mine where I previously worked as a prisoner” (Anna Krikun, 01.05.2011, Vorkuta).[6] The story of Anna Krikun is typical for Vorkuta and was heard again in various forms during other interviews. An important theoretical conclusion from this story is that place-based social capital and personal attachment to a place are the pull factors influencing a person’s decision to stay.

[5] There are currently 235 former GULAG convicts remain in Vorkuta.

[6] Similar account I have found in the work of Katherine Brown (2001) who compared experience of the place in Kazakhstan and Montana.

Rehabilitation of the victims of political repression and mitigation of criminal legislation reduced the size of the convict labour force in Vorkuta's mines. As a result of shrinking manpower, the collieries were faced with the need to recruit highly productive and experienced labour. The second wave of residents was dominated by people beginning their professional career, including demobilized soldiers and residents of other mining regions. They came to the North to experience a different environment, to escalate professionally and earn "quick and good money". In the 1960s, an average wage level in the Soviet Union was around 1270 RUB per month, while in the mine sector in Vorkuta it was twice that number (Dobryakova 2000). Some people coming to Vorkuta for the job contracts were inspired by communist propaganda and soon became disillusioned by poor living conditions, a lack of public infrastructure, and the harsh climate. The romantic picture of the North painted by the mass media was far away from its reality, and therefore many of the newcomers returned home after several months. Their places were taken by the next cohort of migrants from central and southern regions of the Union, and the story was repeated.

"The hardships associated with living in the North mean that social policies and services are important to the well-being of the population" (Rasell 2009: 93). In order to retain specialists, the Soviet state invented a special system of northern benefits, including higher salaries, job-related privileges, earlier retirement age, paid vacations in the South, and other social services. The northern wage and pension multiplying coefficient *(severniy koeffitsent)* ranged from 1,15 to 2,0, depending on the territory, and guaranteed a substantial increase of salary as compensation for the high costs associated with work and residence in the northern regions. Besides the high salaries, incremental wage increases of up to 100% were offered as incentives to remain in the North on a long-term basis, thereby reducing labour turnover (Rasell 2009: 93). During the economic shortage, when citizens queued for cars, apartments, furniture, or household appliances, northern residents enjoyed an exceptionally good supply of food and consumer goods. The northern benefits were one of the state personnel policies to retain people in remote high latitude areas, particularly after the mass release of GULAG prisoners, and to prevent a shortage of skilled workers, especially of engineers and technical professionals.

The third-wave migrants to the northern settlements were often members of the Komsomol organisation driven by patriotism, romanticism, and enthusiasm. They worked on the construction of new cities, transport infrastructure, electrification of territories, and extraction of mineral resources. It is also true, however, that many of those who came voluntarily did not have much choice of where to go (Bolotova and Stammler 2010). Along

with Komsomol, a practice of obligatory job placement for new graduates was introduced. After graduation a person would be "distributed" by a committee to a particular region anywhere within the Soviet Union to work there according to his or her profession. Soviet propaganda encouraged young professionals and graduates to move to strategically important and often isolated parts, such as the North, where workers were needed the most. Such jobs typically came with a three-year contract, after which the door was open to stay and continue working or to leave for another job or region. Many people developed strong attachments to the place and became rooted, like one of my key interview subjects Nikolay Gerasimov:

> "I am a geologist by profession and graduated the faculty of geology at the University in Moscow. Graduated as one of the best students, but I had an interest to begin my scientific career from working on the ground. I have chosen a work in the North by myself, came to Vorkuta initially for three years but stayed for twenty five years. My best years were spent there" (Nikolay Gerasimov, 22.04.2011, Syktyvkar).

As a result of active pro-northern campaigns and policy measures, the population of Vorkuta was constantly increasing. In 1959, it had 179 400 residents (Getsen 2011), and nearly 200 000 twenty years later (Komistat 2010). Vorkuta has always been an international and multicultural city. Prisoners of different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds locked in GULAG camps shaped the unique character of the city. To give an example, in 1951 the camp unit N6 comprised over 4000 persons, 1800 of whom were Ukrainian, 800 Lithuanian, 300 Russian, 200 Estonian, and 190 German. In 1959, of 23 miners working in mine N29, 11 were Russian, 6 Ukrainian, 3 Lithuanian, 2 Belorussian, and 1 Mari (Dobryakova 2000). Free inmigration to Vorkuta diversified the ethnic composition of the population even more as specialists came from all corners of the Soviet state. This confirmed the popular local image of Vorkuta as "the capital of the world".[7]

The more the city developed, the more prestigious and attractive it became because of the high income, career advancement opportunities, and availability of consumer goods. Vorkuta in the 1970s was described as a wealthy island in contrast with southern towns of the Komi Republic and even the regional capital. Myths of enormous wealth and northern milliners passed from mouth to mouth and created an aura around Vorkuta as a desirable place to live. My respondents in Vorkuta repeatedly provided examples of how they could fly to the theatre or football match in Moscow on a weekend without creating a visible loss in the

[7] The saying "Vorkuta is a capital of the world" was invented in the 1990s by the local mafia groups to show the city's unique position and relation to the core.

family budget. Working as ordinary geologists or miners, they enjoyed exceptionally high living standards:

> "We had exceptionally good provision of goods and products, because the Ministry of Coal Industry had its own workers' supply administration separate from the national. So coal settlements, like Vorkuta, were provided with the food and manufactured goods, which one could not access even in the republican capital. We had a decent life. Often, when we traveled for vacations, locals thought we were rich people, maybe because of the spending we had in contract to those living in the south. Clearly, we could afford much more than they did and had longer holidays. For example, I could by a TV from my monthly salary or a refrigerator, for two salaries I could buy a set of furniture. We had enough money to satisfy the needs" (Pavel Silonov, 18.04.2011, Syktyvkar).

The 1970s are described by historians as the golden age of Vorkuta (Getsen 2011). Social, cultural, and industrial spheres flourished. Reconstructed and newly opened mines delivered more and more coal. According to Vladimir Il'in (1998), in the period between 1970 and 1990 production of coal increased by 36,3% (from 21,5 to 29,3 million tons). 80% of extracted coal went to the steel industry in Cherepovets, while 10% was consumed by the Novolipetsk steel enterprise. These economic dependences between a coal producer and steel companies were and are crucial for the city's viability. Furthermore, the companies in Vorkuta produced construction materials, electricity, milk products and sausage goods, grew vegetables, brewed beer, sewed clothes, etc. Nikolay Gerasimov refers to that time with nostalgia:

> "In that epoch, the city was self-sustaining in all aspects. We had the best schools and cultural life. Children had access to the hobby groups almost free of charge and can receive good education. Every year our children recreated at the Black sea in the summer camps. The best teachers were sent to the North, the best miners. It was a city where one wants to live, despite the harsh conditions. We had the best supply system, if one compares with the rest of the Union. We had three or more times higher salaries" (Nikolay Gerasimov, 22.04.2011, Syktyvkar).

In 1971, the monthly income of a qualified coal miner in Vorkuta was around 600 RUB, while an average Soviet salary did not exceed 126 RUB (Pensionniy Fond RF n.d.). The standard scholarship at a college or institute, including minimum subsistence income, was 40 RUB. A symbol of a prosperous life, the car VAZ 2101-Zhiguli cost 5620 RUB (or 45

average salaries) and GAZ 24-Volga had a sticker price of 8500 RUB[8] (Russkiy portal n.d.). Although northern supply of goods had greater assortment than elsewhere, a choice of where to spend money in Vorkuta was limited, and people saved their income for summer holidays on the Black sea. As many interviews show, it was typical for *Vorkutintsy* to spend all saved money in a couple of weeks of drinking and partying. Because of such behaviour and the desire to "live beautifully"[9] *Vorkutintsy* earned a privileged reputation and were referred to as "northern kings" in one of my interviews. An anecdote illustrates the life style of *Vorkutintsy* in the way they spend money:

> "Our miners would leave for summer holidays and soon, after two or three weeks, send a telegram: "Please, transfer us the money". Since people usually had some savings, they chipped in together and sent them a sum for a return ticket. It was ordinary to party 700, 800 or 1000 rubles in two weeks and return home empty" (Mikhail Rogachev, 17.04.2011, Syktyvkar).

Life in Vorkuta was built around work, and it was work that glued the community together. I was often told in interviews how people going on summer holidays could not wait to return to Vorkuta where they had "things to do". Vorkuta was developing at full speed and people's commitment to work was one of the essential conditions of its growth. Everything needed to be built from scratch, starting with mines and finishing with community sport centres. Nikolay Gerasimov says:

> "The North is about commitment, hard and passionate work, pushing your own limits, especially for a man. If I put it in one word, the North is about work and all the other is accompanying processes. <...> Traditionally, from Murmansk to Chukotka the North has pulled in those ready to work in the severe conditions North received good money and longer holidays in return. So it was a deal" (Nikolay Gerasimov, 22.04.2011, Syktyvkar).

Outdoor works – *subbotniki* – played an important role in the viability-making process. These were jointly organised by city administration, housing committees, schools, city-forming enterprises, and other organisations. Days of community works, typically on Saturdays, took place mostly in spring, when the snow had melted, to clean the streets of garbage, repair public amenities, paint houses, and plant trees. Moreover, settlers were

[8] Prices are given for 1971.

[9] It is a translation of the saying "*zhit' krasivo*" which in this context used to refer to a prosperous and extravagant lifestyle.

actively involved in establishing infrastructure and building houses and places for public use. The whole city came together to work collectively. "Even though the rhetoric might have been inspired by Soviet propaganda, it was not only ideology that stimulated people to participate, but their wish and an obvious need to improve common conditions of living in the new town. Much work was done fully voluntarily" (Bolotova and Stammler 2010: 207). My interviews with *Vorkutintsy* abound with illustrations of communal activities. A pensioner and the former head of a coal mine, Pavel Silonov, who now lives in the regional capital, looks back at his experience:

> "When I studied in technical school, we designed a city park and planted trees. There were no trees growing in Vorkuta, so we needed to transport them from Inta. I also took part in building the swimming pool, student dormitory and other objects. It was interesting to live at that time; we were working together for the city" (Pavel Silonov, 18.04.2011, Syktyvkar).

The importance of collective practices in developing people's attachment to the place was emphasized in the research conducted by the scientific project "Assessing senses of place, mobility and viability in industrial northern communities" (MOVE INNOCOM) (Bolotova and Stammler 2010; Nuykina 2011). The feeling of contributing "with the own hands" to the transformation of the place from simple barrack houses to modern multi-storeyed buildings, from walkways to paved streets, from a wild landscape to an industrial sites, made people willing to settle there for a longer time and to return if they left. Although many of today's residents did not initially intend to stay in Vorkuta more than a few years, they found a home in the North. In their minds, this formerly harsh and hostile place had become a comfortable, modern, and nice place to live as a result of their efforts (Bolotova and Stammler 2010: 207). And they themselves were the masters of the North.

On the other hand, the North has agency and transforming power. It is perceived as a place that transforms people and changes personality. The young geo-technician Anatoliy Trushnikov, who was distributed to Vorkuta after graduation, wrote to the fiancée about his experience:

> "I came here for the money, but what I found...I have found here something more important, much more important. And not just me, probably. The North changes a person; and not for any money in the world you can get this or understand [yourself better] anywhere else. Here one cannot be a scoundrel, a traitor, an egoist, you cannot be greedy, and you cannot be a villain. All this will "wind away", even if it was in you before. I sometimes think that it is no wonder that since the Czarist times

> criminals have been sent to the North. The North purifies a man" (cit. in Stahorskiy 2009: 250).

Long-term settlers, who went through the hardships of life beyond the Polar circle, say that the North selects people; it is a place "for the chosen". Those who were not strong enough to stand the hard work, the long dark winters, extreme cold, or imperfect living conditions, returned to the more comfortable South. Others persisted and felt proud of their achievements; work was the backbone of the new Soviet population (Bolotova and Stammler 2010: 206). In descriptions of the North, the region is perceived as a living organism that interacts which humans. To be viable in northern conditions means to be physically and mentally strong, cooperative and hard working – all these qualities were at the forefront of newly forming communities.

Having grown up in the neighbouring Tymenskaya region with similar stories, I wondered how different the *Vorkutinskiy* character is. If one assumes that people belonging to one community may share some noticeable features, then *Vorkutintsy* have a distinctive one, from the point of view my interviewees. Inhabitants of Soviet Vorkuta were generally described as boastful due to their material welfare, but also as a big-hearted and close-knit people who would help each other at the first sign of need. The harsh climate and hard industrial work imprinted themselves on the people's character; miners were the ones shaping the identity of the place. They were positioned (and perceived themselves) as heroes living in an area where no trees grew, risking life every day going underground to hew coal from the earth. Miners in Vorkuta were politically active and proved their strength when they went on strike and picketed the Red Square in Moscow to stand up for their interests in 1989 and early 1990s. They were also described as noisy and impudent. An illustrative story comes from a plane ride from Moscow to Sykryvkar on my first visit to the region. The flight was delayed, and then we did not take off for another hour after boarding the plane. Some young men began to complain loudly. My neighbour, looking at them, said curtly, "*Vorkutintsy*". Identifiable qualities of character have become an essential point of discussion concerning city viability. Because of their fighting spirit, *Vorkutintsy* did not surrender when the bust of the 1990s hit the country, and they managed to sustain the city.

Another element that positively influenced community viability and contributed to place-based identity is collective competition of Vorkuta with other coal settlements. Unlike capitalist competition between individuals, socialist competition connotes cooperation within a unit, a company, or a city for displaying creative energies and reaching a common goal (Friends of the Soviet Union. United States Section. 1929). Party leaders encouraged personal

interest in work, and fostered community spirit and pride for the city. Although socialist competitions were induced by the state to increase the speed of development in construction, agriculture, mining, and other spheres, interview subjects recalled them fondly. Pavel Silonov described relationships between Vorkuta and other towns:

> "We had socialist competition between the cities in order to keep up the high production rates and efficiency indicators, such as labour productivity, output norms for coal extraction. And Vorkuta was very active in these competitions. Based on the results, miners have been receiving large bonuses paid by the Ministry of Coal Industry, and it was a very good incentive. We felt like winners and of course it was good for the city. Yes, we were proud of being *Vorkutintsy*" (Pavel Silonov, 18.04.2011, Syktyvkar).

The better the industry operated, the more the municipality benefitted from the corresponding Ministry. In 1966, the city-forming enterprise Vorkutaugol received the Order of Lenin for exceptional achievements and successes in the field of economic development and technical advancement. Three mines – Oktyabr'skaya, Vorkutinskaya, and Vorgashorskaya – were awarded with the Red Banner of Labour. Good performance of workers in the coal sector directly effected an increased level of subsidies to the local budget.

Picture 1: Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on awarding Vorkutaugol with the Order of Lenin

Source: Picture taken by the author

Picture 2: A street stand of Vorkutaugol dedicated to the heroes of socialist labour

Source: Picture taken by the author

City growth has resulted in the spatial extension of urban structures. The last Soviet master plan of Vorkuta, designed in 1978, was based on the principle of spatial matryoshka, including "residential region – microregion – quarter". In this regard, Vorkuta was no different than any other socialist urban settlement and consisted of several microregions that functioned as the basic spatial units of planning and building since the end of the 1950s. A microregion consisted of a group of housing blocks, kindergarten, grocery stores, consumer service centre, school, polyclinic, and some form of entertainment or leisure centre. Private housing was a rather small portion of the total urban stock and was more typical of smaller towns, while newly established urban communities were characterised by four-sided apartment blocks – quarters – with interior courtyards (French 1995). Thus, the microregion as a neighbourhood unit can be seen as the most significant feature of the fine-grain spatial development and layout of Vorkuta. At the higher level, in the urban structure, several microregions were grouped into a residential region with a greater level of service provision.

Functional zoning of the territory attached residential areas to the work places, so that workers would require minimum effort to get around. Specific climate conditions dictated a more compact layout of housing blocks in order to reduce intra-urban highways, economize engineering systems, and ease cleaning the city of snowdrifts. Motor vehicle transportation was largely pushed outside of residential areas so that it traced the eastern edge of the city along the railroad, where utility and storage areas and bases and enterprises of the coal industry are situated. According to the general plan, most of the streets were oriented according to the prevailing winds, and the rest are designed with an asymmetric transverse profile with a shift to the leeward side, which leads to less snow in the streets during the winter season (Getsen 2011). The city was growing step by step, extended with one or two microregions every year. Barracks from GULAG times were replaced by modern high-rise buildings specifically designed for the northern conditions.

Picture 3: Buildings in the form of continuous closed structures to minimize adverse effects of the northern environment. The urban settlement of Vorgashor

Source: Picture taken by the author

The master plan organised all of the settlements into a single urban organism, with a clear centre and mining communities at the periphery. By the end of the Soviet epoch in 1986, the population of the Vorkuta city district had reached 218 000, 115 000 of whom lived in the central part of Vorkuta, which is circled by a 70 km ring road (Komistat 2010) that begins in the Shakhterskiy district of Vorkuta and connects satellite settlements with one another both by highway and by railway. This system was very expensive to maintain and thus places that were better positioned enjoyed a higher level of services. Inequality between the core and periphery within the city structure became more visible when the system of centralized welfare provision was abolished. Places that were better positioned managed to survive restructuring, while weaker entities were subject to closure.

Conclusion

The birth of Vorkuta was a result of civil-industrial intervention by the Soviet state in its northern frontier in the early 1930s. Because of the hard forced labour of GULAG prisoners, one of the most remote corners of the Soviet Union became home to an industrial settlement. Nomadic people who had formerly inhabited this territory were replaced by the mining workers and geologists deported to the far North with the economic task of exploiting the Pechora coal basin in spite of the inherent difficulties and enormous human and economic expenses of doing so. Gradually the prison camp evolved into a mining city of over 200 000 residents.

The process of Soviet urbanisation included peopling the territory for the production of raw materials and transferring the "immense tundra" from indigenous to industrial hands. Like the European settlers on the North American continent (Brown 2001), Soviet planners approached vast northern territories as empty spaces waiting to be populated and stores of resources waiting to be harvested. The main factor for placing new towns and villages in the middle of nowhere was the availability of raw materials, while the economic costs of distance were ignored. "From the perspective of today's market-economy imperative, looking back over Russia's history reveals that misallocation was the dominant characteristic of the Soviet period" (Hill and Gaddy 2003: 3).

The economic development of the tundra linked resource-rich peripheries with central regions by previously nonexistent transport connections, circulation of extracted resources and consumer goods, and mobility of the population. From its inception, Vorkuta earned fame as a "prison town" and was linked to the world through people sent there to serve a sentence. Later, connections between the city and other areas within and outside the Soviet Union were strengthened by influxes of wage-workers and their families. Because of the multinational and multiethnic background of its population, Vorkuta developed a locally-asserted identity as the "capital of the world".

"As in other parts of the Soviet Union, transport was heavily subsidised to connect smaller settlements and to provide links with major towns in central Russia" (Rasell 2009: 93). Because of state involvement in keeping transportation costs affordable, the mobility of people and commodities was relatively easy to maintain. Vorkuta sent its coal and minerals to processing plants in the heartland in exchange for fuel, consumer goods, materials, food, and machinery – a so-called "northern shipment". These economic, demographic, and spatial linkages allowed the city evolve into one of the richest Soviet cities and a desired place to live in. It was fully integrated into the national economy as an important supplier of hard coking coal. Moreover, in terms of state sovereignty, Vorkuta, like other northern communities, represented Soviet authority over a geographic area physically as well as symbolically.

At the same time, there was neither long-term vision as to the direction in which Vorkuta should progress nor efficient planning. The city was an appendage of the main enterprise, coal mining, and its initial function was to provide a permanent pool of labour. As in other remote territories (Brown 2001), Vorkuta was platted into being by planners and economists from metropolitan locations whose main concern lay in mining operations. In particular, decisions regarding the growth of Vorkuta were dictated by the interest of the Soviet state in coal and driven by the Ministry of coal industry. Decisions taken in Moscow

provided the city and its industry with a labour force, materials, money, food supplies, and even development plans. The matter of the economic and human value was discounted; national interests overrode local concerns. Thus, the main forces contributing to the viability of the city were the national government, the Ministry responsible for the coal sector, and the mining company.

Such Soviet-era city-forming companies, in the terminology of Caroline Humphrey (Sneath and Humphrey 1999: 78), were "total social institution(s)" that directed and organised most aspects of community life. Unlike Western firms that were primarily economic organisations, Soviet *gradoobrazuyushchee predpriyatie* combined economic with numerous political, social, and cultural functions. They provided employees with high wages, living accommodations, medical facilities, pensions and social insurances, shops, paid vacations, kindergartens and schools, and recreation facilities. Moreover, the city-forming company was responsible for central heating and water supply, electricity, local roads and other infrastructure, and was funded through substantial state subsidies. It was also a force in shaping place identity. For example, Vorkuta has always been perceived as a coal mining city even though a major part of its population was employed in sectors unrelated to coal. Thus, understanding the concept of city-forming enterprises and their significance for city viability allows better comprehension of changes that came after the erosion of this model. "The economic reforms of the early 1990s, which aimed to privatize these institutions, were not just simply economic reforms but undercut the whole way of life" (Sneath and Humphrey 1999: 78).

The municipal authorities presented by party leaders and bureaucrats were mainly responsible for implementing orders locally and had little to say about city planning. To advocate the interests of the inhabitants, they traveled to Moscow to push selected ideas through their own personal connections. The matter of how much money the city would get directly depended on the ability of local leaders to promote their interests and bargain or beseech the state for budgetary transfers. It must be said that Vorkuta was generally successful in obtaining greater privileges and additional funds than were other places in the Komi Republic. Much of the city's success can be attributed to the active lobbying of local leaders.

In addition to economic reasons that link people to the place there are non-material factors. People developed emotional connections to the place and a place-based identity arose through working together, building the city with their own efforts, and collectively overcoming hardships and difficulties (Bolotova and Stammler 2010: 217). "On the one hand,

it is the heroic survival that "glues" people together; on the other hand it is the attachment to a microcosm that successfully protects from these hardships and creates a framework for finding oneself and one's place in the community" (Bolotova and Stammler 2010: 217). The source for community viability lay not only in industrial achievements of the main enterprise or enormous budgetary transfers and northern bonuses, but in people's will to transform the city into a better place and permanently settle there. This engagement in the creation of physical and social space led to feelings of attachment and developed the unique collective character of *Vorkutintsy*.

In 1931, Kaganovich, the chief architect of Moscow, formulated the main principle of Soviet urban development: "Under Soviet conditions it is not the market that is the main factor determining the growth of cities, but the planned development of industry, the growth of large-scale socialist economy throughout the whole country and systematic development and distribution of the productive forces of the country" (Kaganovich 1931: 91 cit. in French 1995: 63). This principle was put into practice and resulted in new permanent settlements, including Vorkuta. A top-down approach to town-making, combined with a lack of strategic planning for the community, a totalizing focus on coal production, and dependence on external subsidies led to massive urban infrastructure with extremely high maintenance costs. The cost of living in the North became a central issue in the post-Soviet period. The next chapter aims to identify how this issue was tackled and which challenges to city viability were imposed by a shift from the command to a market economy.

CHAPTER 5: AFTER THE CRASH OF THE SOVIET REGIME

Introduction

The last decade of the 20th century brought new challenges to the Russian North and the city of Vorkuta in particular. Like many northern communities, Vorkuta was affected by a severe economic decline, a full-blown crisis in the coal sector, large-scale outmigration, the deterioration of living conditions and a wide variety of social problems. It experienced a painful downfall from its former status as a "city of prosperity and wealth" to one of the most depressed areas in the northern latitudes. Local residents, who could previously afford to have high living standards, sought new paths to social and economic security, as did the municipal administration. The question of community viability and the future existence of the settlement became a pressing issue discussed in the local newspapers, elite social circles and the kitchens of ordinary residents.

This chapter continues the story of Vorkuta and describes the transformation of the city after the collapse of the Soviet regime's vertical governance structure and command economy. In order to alleviate consequences of social and economic deterioration, Vorkuta in the second half of the 1990s moved towards closing the unprofitable mines, abolishing economically-declining suburbs, concentrating habitation in the central part of the city and relocating the economically unproductive population. On a discourse level, restructuring of northern industrial settlements intended to create competitive, commercial industries operating without large-scale state subsidies and to strengthen the vitality of localities by making them smaller and more compact (World Bank 2001). Reaching community viability through economic, demographic and spatial restructuring was at the core of exercised post-Soviet reforms. As often happens, however, the results of implementing plans designed to provide continuous development were less than satisfactory. In particular, the application of economy-driven approaches to city-making had unintended consequences.

Again, as in the previous chapter, the narrative of Vorkuta is supported by three theoretical pillars, including city viability, positionality and path dependence. Based on the examples from the Russian Arctic, this chapter enriches our understanding of city viability and its constituent parts during the early post-Soviet years. A dominant theme that runs through the following sections is that of loss and change; loss is associated with the decay of the social welfare system and economic decline, while change refers to the practices and coping mechanisms developed locally to adapt to new realities. In this chapter, I specifically look at how the ideas and practices of city development have changed as compared to the

previous period. I start by describing the state's approach to northern development and reforms suggested for improving city viability. The latter included industrial, population and spatial shrinkage in contrast to Soviet expansion. Another question concerns the responsibilities and relationships of social actors involved in the process of city-making. Furthermore, the disintegration of the Soviet system, the breakdown of former networks and the opening up of the country led to a transformation in the city's positionality (Sheppard 2002) and core-periphery relations.

Post-Soviet approach to northern development

Large-scale industrialization and urbanisation of the northern region, supported through massive governmental investments, was at the heart of the Soviet approach to northern development. This required extensive subsidies to cover the high costs of production and living associated with severe climate conditions, a lack of local foodstuffs, and remote location. Following market economy principles, new Russian authorities strove to restructure the far northern frontiers based on the economic potential of the community and immediate short-term interests which often were destructive for communities in the long run. On the one hand, the North was perceived as a burden consuming governmental funding with its enormous appetite. On the other hand, it represented a valuable asset due to its untapped natural resources (Blakkisrud and Hønneland 2006: 25).

Northern economies prepared to join the market by cutting federal subsidies to the northern industries, restructuring enterprises through the divestment of social assets and adoption of industrial rationalization, introducing contractual labour practices and decreasing state support of transportation infrastructure (World Bank 2001: 2-3). At the municipal level, downsizing processes were launched and economically non-viable communities were abolished, which reduced the subsidised supply of food and fuel to the northern regions *(Severniy zavoz)* and eroded the system of special benefits and privileges previously enjoyed by northern residents. "Besides its material value, the in-kind benefits system included symbolic capital that became an important source of pride and identity among recipients, with Soviet society coming to believe that the *l'gotniki* deserved and were legitimately entitled to these special privileges" (Wengle and Rasell 2008: 741). Therefore, the phasing out of the state from public support and the abandoning of established northern compensation systems meant in practice eliminating the northerners' exclusive position in Russian society.

Development reforms from plan to market in Vorkuta and other places were shaped by the theory of market transition (Nee 1989). In this view, early post-Soviet years aimed to

become a “bridge” from socialism to capitalism. Restructuring projects and reforms intended to adjust Soviet enterprises and entire sectors, settlements and regions towards the *textbook* version of *capitalism.* However, as projects were put into practice, it soon became evident that the complexity of individual activities, social networks and mentalities, as well as a broader uncertainty and confusion, led to various unintended results. The descriptions below clearly show the limitations of the type of linear thinking taken for granted by the national authorities and promoted by the international advisors of the reforms. A transitional approach “that operates on the assumption that all societies are parts of a global developmental continuum based on a free-enterprise-driven global economy” and shall arrive at the same destination through a complete break with the past (Buyandelgeriyn 2008: 236) did not work in practice. Plans remained on paper while realities on the ground were widely divergent and often chaotic. My field research shows that a contributing factor to the failure of restructuring projects was the prevailing belief that market rules work the same way everywhere. City viability was maintained not because of market forces, but due to the strength of the community bonds, social capital and commitment of political leaders. The subsequent sections will show the disparity between the neat failure of rational planning and the productive chaos that helped the city function.

Scenarios for Vorkuta

The disintegration of the Soviet Union engendered separatist sentiments among some municipal politicians. Members of Vorkuta city council suggested separating from the Republic of Komi to which the city was administratively subordinate. A proposal was motivated by the fact that many times Vorkuta had been unfairly deprived of supplies, equipment, machinery and consumer goods centrally distributed by the regional authorities in Syktyvkar (Tolina 1991). Whether real or imaginary, the perceived unfairness of supply policies served as a catalyst for the growth of ideas of independence that had long existed in the community. Having enjoyed unique treatment and positionality in the republic as well as strong bonds to the central regions, *Vorkutintsy* saw themselves as alien to the Komi region. It was often mentioned in the interviews how different they are and how little connects them to the region that “lives on the revenues coming from the coal sector”. Self-perception as being “an adopted child” goes back to the history of local city-building. Therefore, the first response to the collapse of the Soviet Union was an initiative of municipal council to gain independence from the Republic of Komi. This proposal, however, did not find much support among ordinary inhabitants and was abandoned as soon as an economic downturn hit the city.

Economic crisis gave rise to new discussions concerning closing down the city. It was argued that in the current circumstances of low demand for coal and high costs of production and transportation, Vorkuta has to be closed down as it is practiced in other parts of the world, for instance in Canada. Supporting rhetoric invoked the extreme expensiveness of maintenance costs, the negative health effects of the severe climate, isolation and "artificial" nature of the city's birth, as Vorkuta owes its origin to the Stalinist system of forced labour and state-controlled economy. This position is still articulated today by some experts in the capital of the Komi Republic:

> "Inta and Vorkuta are the mistakes of high-powered work of the Soviet times. It was not necessary to build these cities right from the beginning, in my opinion. Because these places were senseless, they became a headache for the republican government as soon as GULAG was eliminated. Because supporting those places was worth gold" (Mikhail Rogachev, 17.04.2011, Syktyvkar).

According to this logic, the city should be converted into a base camp for fly-in fly-out mining operations in the Arctic where workers live temporarily without their families. Such ideas have been strongly criticised by the local scientific community because they foster consumer attitudes concerning the place and its resources. Moreover, it was generally seen to be technologically impossible and inefficient to carry out underground mining activity on the basis of long-distance commuting (Baranskiy 1995).

This rather extreme proposition was never fully implemented; however, the idea of "growing smaller" has had an influential impact on post-Soviet development. Responding to the question of the future prospects of Vorkuta, former mayor Alexander Segal, who governed the city from 1990 till 1998, expressed his vision in the short formula: "In the North should live only those involved in the production sector and service workers. Irrelevant people are not needed here" (Segal 1992: 1). The shrinking of Vorkuta was steered through pushing out "superfluous" parts of the population, especially those who were no longer active in the job market, and concentrating remaining inhabitants in the central core. Relocation programs provided *Vorkutintsy* with state-subsidised housing in central and southern parts of Russia in exchange for their northern apartments.

The plan of maintaining the viability of Vorkuta also included structural adjustment policies that sought to restructure the local coal sector by closing down loss-making collieries and keeping the mining industry at a smaller, more sustainable scale. During the short period between 1995 and 1998, Vorkuta lost five deep mines out of 13, including Promyshlennaya, Yuzhnaya, Yun-Yaga, Yur-Shor, and Halmer-Yu. Workers who chose to stay in the North got

new jobs in the neighbouring collieries, while others left the city for the middle latitudes. Thus, the post-Soviet strategy towards industrial, demographic and spatial shrinking was applied and crystallized through various projects that will be discussed later in this chapter.

The process of shrinking in Vorkuta was happening naturally as people left the city by choice, and it was also encouraged by the federal government and international experts (on behalf of financial institutions such as the World Bank) who assessed Vorkuta from a liberal economic perspective and decided to downsize the city of over 200 000 people to 50 000 permanent residents predominantly involved in mining activities and related spheres. Planned reduction of employment in the coal sector would decrease to 50-75% of the former level and should be followed by a decline in production output. According to this logic, Vorkuta's identity was that of a resource city, since the potential for other industries was limited by the harsh environment and economic distance from major markets.

Though sharing similar opinions of Vorkuta, market-oriented economists from Moscow and municipal officials differed in answering the question of the state's role in maintaining community. The former advocated the principles of a market economy and cost-efficiency to guide local development towards economic self-sufficiency. Representatives of the North, however, portrayed the region as a "suffering periphery" and expressed the pressing need for state participation in assisting the cities and industries. It was argued that over the last decades the national centre has exploited the natural resources of the North at the expense of thousands of people who struggled with discomfort while contributing through hard work to the national welfare; therefore, the state must make amends and support northern settlements and their residents. The advocates of state protectionism referred to the examples of circumpolar communities and mining industries in the West that are largely subsidised by their governments. To such advocates, the Russian North must not be depopulated, as suggested by some economic geographers (Pivovarov 1995; Pivovarov 2002; Hill and Gaddy 2003), but protected and sustained (Agranat 1998; Melnikova 2006; Voronov 2006). It is stressed that due to specifically Russian aspects of economic geography, in the form of severity of climate, vast distances and transportation costs, a strictly liberal market approach cannot be applied to the problem of Russian socio-economic development, especially in the North (Nuykina 2011). "Ultimately, the neoliberal undertones exhibited in federal social policy may be inappropriate in the region, where markets and individuals cannot be expected to sustain well-being" (Rasell 2009). Considering geographic factors, the Russian state must play a central role in supporting its northern peripheries (Lynch 2002). Following this logic, municipal authorities and top-managers of Vorkutaugol several times required subsidising the

coal industry and the reduction of transport tariffs for shipping coal. Without substantial state support, they said, Vorkuta and its city-forming enterprise would not be able to survive transition or support the local community (Kopasov 1992; Segal 1996).

To conclude, the 1990s could be described as negotiating what viability meant in practical terms in post-Soviet era, how it could be ensured and who should be involved in steering the process. Within and without the northern localities, the diversity of ideas concerning city viability and future development options is one of the dominant characteristics of the early post-Soviet years, when established relationships and the composition of actors involved in the city-making process were no longer relevant and long-standing arrangements were being critically re-thought. The task of finding a compromise between actual needs and capabilities was being taken up by new authorities in Moscow and in the regions as well as by city-leading industries.

Shrinking economy

Crises in Russia's coal sector overlapped with the general economic downturn of the early 1990s. Due to the liberalization of prices and opening up of the economy, coal extraction became highly unprofitable; in 1993 the wholesale price of coal covered only 15-20% of production expenses. Moreover, since the largest consumer of coking coals is the metallurgic complex, decline in steel production had an adverse impact on the market for coal. Between 1990 and 1992, the production of coking coal fell by 46%. The level of steel production drop was also in decline. The sharp decline in volumes of extraction occurred without a corresponding reduction in jobs. As a result, the majority of mines have only been able to continue operations because of state transfer payments.

The national government supported the industry with high levels of financial assistance, but these did not much help the overall situation of decline or alleviate other demands pressing on shrinking national budgets. According to the World Bank (1994), state subsidisation of the coal industry increased from 1% of GDP in 1991 to 1,4% in 1993[10]. In 1993, on the advice of international consultants, the Kremlin decided to restructure the coal sector. This resulted in partial privatization of the industry, closure of uneconomic mines and an extensive downsizing of the industry workforce. Due to the insufficiency of the national budget, the coal reform was undertaken with borrowed funds and policy guidance from international creditors, such as the World Bank. Already in summer 1993, the federal

[10] In 2001 federal subsidies to the Russian coal sector amounted to 0,07% of GDP (World Bank 1994).

government and the state-owned company Rosugol, which replaced the Ministry of Coal Industry after it was disbanded in 1992, adopted a program for abolishing 42 economically non-viable collieries together with workers' settlements at the mines (World Bank 1994).

Over the next few years of restructuring, Russia abolished 136 loss-making mines and significantly downsized the workforce involved in coal production; the overall industry workforce (including workers involved in extraction, on the surface, in administration and social assets, etc.) declined from 877 900 in 1993 to 328 400 by the end of 2001 (World Bank 2003). To finance the physical closure of mines and related social protection and mitigation measures, Russia borrowed more from international financial organisations for coal sector restructuring than Romania, Ukraine and Poland together (Haney and Shkaratan 2003).

The city of Vorkuta became one of the first pilot territories for proposed restructuring schemes. On the one hand, because of its extreme climate conditions and geographic remoteness Vorkuta attracted international attention as one of the most expensive sites to extract coal and therefore the first target area for market reforms. On the other hand, political leaders of Vorkuta took an active position in promoting community concerns at the national level and established the Union of the Circumpolar and Arctic Cities[11], headed by Igor Shpektor, to lobby northern interests (Sichkar 1992). Municipal authorities exhausted every channel through which funds could be obtained to solve Vorkuta's immediate problems without careful consideration of long-term consequences. International assistance in this respect was warmly welcomed by the city and was seen as a "life ring" in circumstances of general economic decline.

Geological and economic experts found a number of problems with Vorkuta's mines, and this became a starting point for subsequent reforms. General problems included outdated equipment, poor sector management, excessive employment, low productivity levels in comparison with other basins, wretched health and safety conditions and a high level of accounts payable (Haney and Shkaratan 2003: 7). In addition, the coal industry in Vorkuta particularly suffered from inauspicious geological conditions leading to methane outbursts and mining accidents. The city already had several accidents with fatal casualties in 1964, 1980 and 1995 (Spitsyn n.d.).

The first site selected for shutting down was Halmer-Yu, situated 67 km away from the central part of the city and connected to Vorkuta with the railroad. The coal fields of Halmer-Yu were all but exhausted and now deemed economically unprofitable. 46,931 billion RUB

[11] The Union of the circumpolar and Arctic cities exists until today as a lobbying instrument for the northern municipalities. President of the Union since its creation is the former mayor of Vorkuta Igor Shpektor.

(in the prices of 1993), including the costs of relocating miners and their families to other regions, were allocated to close Halmer-Yu down. As part of migration assistance, residents could freely decide on their new place of residence and were provided with flights to the South where they could evaluate new housing before moving away. In actual practice, closing down the mine and resettling around 1600 families cost the city administration of Vorkuta, the federal agency for coal industry Rosugol and the local enterprise Vorkutaugol approximately 146 billion RUB, three times that of the initial estimates (Soshnikova 1995). Delays in funding and a lack of coordination between different levels of the power hierarchy disrupted the relocation schedule, and thus stretched resettlement out over a longer period of time. The elimination of Halmer-Yu colliery and its settlement was supposed to be completed by June 1995, and yet at that time 230 families still remained in the North. The last residents left Halmer-Yu in October of the same year and the settlement was eventually closed down (Borisov 1996).

Yet again, the reality of the project led to practices unforeseen by the initial plan. The labyrinth of interactions between the many actors provided opportunities for various machinations on the part of administrative officials and profit-seeking residents. Interviews with locals and municipal officials revealed that some people, after getting housing in central Russia, invested their unemployment benefits (amounting to as much as 6 months average salary) in the purchase of apartments in Vorkuta. Depending on the condition of housing and location, a one-bedroom apartment in 1995 had a price of 6-15 million RUB (Zapolyar'e 1995: 4), while compensation packages were twice as high. Others affected individuals registered at the city department for employment (*otdel zanyatosti*) to access rather large statutory payments[12], or tried to get a job at one of the other closing mines in Vorkuta with the hope of obtaining additional benefits from the government. It was also said in interviews that some flats in the South allocated for the residents of Halmer-Yu did not reach beneficiaries, but became distributed between upper-level employees of Vorkutaugol.

The phenomenon of how people used social programs and resources to manipulate public welfare programs was described by Caroline Humphrey in her example of the Soviet collective farm. She calls it "manipulable resources" (Humphrey 1998: 195). The nature of such money-withdrawing practices, as in the case of Vorkuta, was not completely illegal, but could be described as non-legitimate. My interviews indicate that people "milked" state

[12] By the law, the first 3 months after being laid-off, redundant workers were provided with 75% of their base salary. During the next 4 months they were paid 60% of the previous income. Next 5 months they got 45% of the most recent salary, provided that this amount was more than a minimum national salary.

programs, as they believed they deserved better treatment. I became acquainted with this social phenomenon while analysing the implementation of northern resettlement policies in the Murmansk region and Yamalo-Nenets Autonomus District (Nuykina 2011). During my fieldwork in 2008, I interviewed municipal officials and was given a precise explanation of why people tricked the state. An anonymous respondent in Apatiti commented: "Yes, the program is not used correctly. It is also difficult to say, because people worked, their length of work in the North is over twenty years. They have the right to get a subsidised apartment and they have the right to use housing subsidy how they want". Similar reasoning was repeated in subsequent interviews that explained relationships between the state and the people, but also between the core and the periphery, as local officials managing the programs are usually aware of these tricking strategies. By choosing to stay in the North instead of relocating to the more comfortable South, residents contribute to city viability, although the practices they develop may contradict the program's objectives.

To conclude, Halmer-Yu served as a test model for the closing of mining sites in post-Soviet Russia, and because of its extreme expensiveness it was never repeated. Today, the area is employed as a training ground for the Russian air force. In remembrance of *poselok*, former dwellers of Halmer-Yu created a web-page called "Halmer-Yu is alive" where they communicate and share photographs and videos about the place they once lived in. They also organise informal meetings of the former inhabitants of Halmer-Yu in different cities in Russia.

The second mine in the Vorkuta urban district that was closed in the mid-1990s illustrates how the process of liquidation was accompanied by a number of violations of legal and procedural measures. For example, the decision to close the deep mine Promyshlennaya was taken without either governmental order or technical-economic feasibility study. The latter was finally issued at the meeting of the interdepartmental commission in July 1995, after the mine had ceased production operations and its equipment had been almost completed dismantled (Borisov 1996). Shutting down the mine was done without a schedule approved by all stakeholders or a program of how and in what terms closure must be performed. The question of funding, including statutory payments and allowances, was also ignored. As a result, the process of mine-closing became uncontrolled and turned into "self-abolishment". The deficiencies of the social strategy created in the community of miners an attitude in opposition to Russian authorities and mistrust in restructuring projects. After the strike of miners in December 1995, Moscow authorities adopted a resolution to close Promyshlennaya

officially[13] (Borisov 1996). Consequently, many workers resigned and others were transferred to the operating mine Komsomol'skaya. Job placement was mainly carried out through informal channels and personal connections, which proved to be more efficient than official procedures.

Due to a methane explosion in 1998 at a depth of 900 meters underground, the first "free" mine of Vorkuta – Tsentral'naya – was soon tabbed for closure. Originally established in 1948 23 km away from the core part of the city, its closure process was expected to last until 2001. Post-accident analysis concluded that it would be cheaper to terminate Tsentral'naya rather than restore it (Borisov 1996). Liquidation of the mine resulted in the closure of the entire satellite settlement of Promyshlenniy. During its best years, *poselok* Promyshlenniy had 15 000 inhabitants and served two mining sites, Promyshlennaya and Tsentral'naya. Residents of the settlements were relocated to central Vorkuta and *poselok* Vorgashor, with some choosing instead to leave Vorkuta and the Republic of Komi.

Available reports show that closing the mines was not strongly opposed by the workers. Asked whether they would support closure of the unprofitable mine if the program included protection for the workers, 91% of respondents indicated they would. 83% supported closure as long as workers would receive either another job of equal value in another place or material compensation (Kudat, Borisov et al. 1997: 96). Based on my interviews and secondary literature, I conclude that in the prevailing condition of overall decay and uncertainty, people prioritised their personal and household interests over showing those of the mine or the city. Ordinary citizens for the most part cared most about getting maximum social assistance from the state, which was in their view responsible for compensation and relocation. On the other hand, those most concerned with the restructuring process and its outcome were the leaders of collieries, who had the most practical experience and inside knowledge. They decried these projects as ruinous and wasteful for the whole community (Baranskiy 1995). Rethinking the way reforms were conducted, local experts and politicians today argue that the process of shrinking in Vorkuta was chaotic, unplanned and carried out in haste without regarding future outcomes (Yuriy Sopov, 17 April 2012, Vorkuta). An interview subject of mine commonly argued that by providing Russia with the loan and policy advising, the World Bank pursued its own economic interests rather than local prosperity. The aim of restructuring was not the creation of viable and competitive places and industries in Russia, as was claimed in the

[13] The management of coal sector reform was one of the hottest issues directly influencing political stability in Russia. Miners of Vorkuta staged several strikes in front of the "white house" in Moscow and also in Vorkuta.

documents, but the destruction of a competitor. World prices for coal, reforms of restructuring and the overall economic conditions had very severely impacted the coal sector in Vorkuta. By the beginning of the 2000s, the city-forming enterprise Vorkutaugol was nearly bankrupt.

As shown in the previous chapter, the coal industry (and its subordinate companies) was the major employer of *Vorkutintsy*. In 1992, there were 28 169 people working in the coal mining company Vorkutaugol and 3897 at the colliery Vorgashorskaya, combining for 83% of all employment in the sphere of production (Il'in 1998). Although Vorkuta has historically been a single-industry city, by this time it had diversified its economic considerably and included the production of cement and construction materials, furniture, milk and meat products, bakery products, industrial clothing, alcoholic beverages, mayonnaise sauce, glass-grown vegetables, electricity and other products. In total, there were 31 industrial enterprises operating in Vorkuta.

Table 4: The structure of employment in the sphere of material production in 1992 in Vorkuta

Companies	**Persons employed**	**% of total employed**
coal mining company Vorkutaugol	28 169	72,66
Vorgashorskaya coal mine	3 897	10
construction organisation Pechorshakhtostroy	1391	3,59
Garment factory	947	2,44
Cement plant	597	1,54
Bread factory	309	0,8
Brewing plant	152	0,39
Printing house	48	0,12
Power and heating plant	1219	1,32
Alcoholic beverages factory	269	0,69
Energy supply network Vorkutaelektro	516	1,33
other	307	0,79
Total	38 768	100

Source: Il'in 1998: 114

Reforms of the restructuring and shrinking coal sector in Vorkuta have resulted in contraction of other sectors. For instance, because of the termination of construction works and housing production in Vorkuta advised by the World Bank professionals, the building sector in Vorkuta collapsed; the last house in Vorkuta was erected in the mid-1990s and since then nothing new has been built. The large panel construction plant intended for residential building became useless and soon obsolete (Mintopenergo RF 18.01.1999). Shrinkage of coal mining was accompanied by decreases in geologic works, agriculture, trade, food processing

and other activities. The process of narrowing down the previously diverse economic profile of Vorkuta continued until only recently when it was stopped by newly arrived economic players such as Gazprom.

To sum up, during the early post-Soviet years the main goal of the city was economic efficiency. Rhetorically, the neoliberal think-tankers envisioned Vorkuta as little more than a base from which to extract natural resources. In order to help Vorkuta survive, the Russian government, under the guidance of the World Bank, implemented structural adjustment programs aimed at shrinking and liberalizing the local coal industry. During the early years of transition, seven mines – Yuzhnaya, Yun-Yaga, Halmer-Yu, Yur-Shor, Tsentral'naya, Oktyabr'skaya and Promyshlennaya – were shut down. The production of coal in the Pechora basin in 1996 had fallen to 74,1% of the level of 1990 (Spitsyn n.d.). The contraction of the coal sector accelerated the unification of the local economy and triggered various social problems. At the end of the transition period, the mono-industrial profile of Vorkuta further increased through the bankruptcy of firms previously managed by the city-forming enterprise.

Despite the economic losses of Soviet times and the overall critique of reforms that led to liquidation instead of restructuring, some *Vorkutintsy* benefited from the programs and financial support. Others were supposed to, but allocated benefits sometimes settled in the pockets of individuals with greater social connections instead. My dialogue with locals about the post-Soviet years shows that ordinary citizens were poorly informed about their compensation rights and restructuring programs in general and showed little trust in the welfare system, particularly its allocation and distribution of subsidies. On the other hand, better-informed and positioned individuals developed all sorts of manipulation strategies to take advantage of the public welfare system. Additional complications arose from the lack of consistent information and the confusion experienced by officials responsible for compensations. Practically inexperienced and lacking communication with the core, they were unable to deal with the programs efficiently and often acted out of personal understanding than in accordance with prescribed rules. The gap between the plan and implementation was exploited by resourceful individuals with the skill and energy to go through the complicated paperwork. The key to accessing welfare provision lay in the ability of residents to navigate social programs in order to bend the social system to their private interests. As in other cases, inequality in positionality has resulted in some people benefitting from the reforms and others deprived by them.

Project appraisal documents stated that Russian Northern reformation were aimed at assisting participating territories "to realize the benefits of economic restructuring and

facilitate the implementation of sustainable municipal policies" (World Bank 2001: 2). Although the projects had well-formulated objects, their practical impact was ambiguously evaluated. Today, the reforms of the 1990s are criticised as harmful and short-sighted, while the leaders running these reformed are accused of corruption and fulfilling private interests. The World Bank restructuring plans have been seen as an aggressive promotion of Western economic and geo-political interests in the Russian North on the back of loaned money (Oleg Gudovaniy, 21.02.2012, Vorkuta).

Every-day coping

While local and federal officials were negotiating the future of Vorkuta, ordinary residents struggled for pressing primary needs. It is not an exaggeration to say that for the majority of people the years of post-Soviet transformation became years of survival. Rapidly rising inflation, enhanced prices, long-delayed payment of wages and frequent lay-offs made basic subsistence a common problem. Reforms of "shock therapy" were followed by hyperinflation (2600% at the end of 1992) that essentially liquidated all savings from the Soviet period and further deteriorated living standards, especially in the northern periphery which was cut from the sources of subsistence available in central Russia (Karapuzina 1993). The table below provides an example of how fast prices changed during 1993. An average salary in Vorkuta at the end of the same year was 108 449 RUB, however it was paid irregularly with many-months arrears in payments.

Table 5: Change of food prices in Vorkuta between January and December 1993

	Prices in RUB for 1 kg	
	26.1.1993	27.12.1993
beef	390	2748
butter	821	2548
milk/ 1 liter	45	270
sugar	193	1008
bread	42	325
vodka/ 1 liter	644	5303
potato	56	400
onion	59	897
apples	113	985

Source: Karapuzina 1993: 1

Wage delays in the mining sector were up to 10-12 months, which resulted in street demonstrations and strikes. Government subsidies in the salaries of Vorkutaugol employees accounted for only 1,5%, down from 80% in the early 1990s (Spitsyn n.d.). The downscaling of industry, reduction of state subsidies to the coal sector and the introduction of new economic thinking led to a worsening of living standards for many people. Affected populations included miners and their families as well as the population that relied on mine operations and even those outside of mining. This last group faced perhaps the greatest difficulties as they were denied the social assistance associated with mine closure.

The arguments concerning the problems of employment in resource communities specifically focused on mitigating the effects of mine closure and mass layoffs of mine workers. At the same time, studies of other cases suggest that employees of enterprises and organisations serving the coal industry were not included in government programs, even though their situation was often far worse than that of miners (Kudat, Borisov et al. 1997). For example, shrinking of the coal sector affected the employment of builders and planners in Vorkuta. Another group that was heavily affected is geologists. The sphere of consumer services shrank from 3500 to 1200 persons, while the sector of commerce lost 2000 workers in 1995 (Borisov 1996: 31). According to official statistics, in July 1995 unemployment in the city reached 4000 people (2,27% of the total population) and 71% of the total registered jobless persons were women. However, the real number of unemployed was much higher. According to a sample survey in 1995, few unemployed persons were officially registered and thus counted by the municipal employment service, and only 1% of my interviewees received unemployment payments. Borisov (1996) argues that 67% of unemployed persons he interviewed in Vorkuta reported that they searched for a new job themselves; 39% sought assistance from their relatives and friends, 22% relied on help from the employment office and 8% indicated that they looked for work in local newspapers, TV programs and radio.

Thus, mine restructuring through closure or downsizing not only caused joblessness directly within the sector but also resulted in the narrowing of overall employment opportunities. In general, it is argued that employees of non-mining sectors were even more negatively impacted because they typically had lower wages, higher rates of unemployment, worse living quarters and lower levels of employable skill than miners. In other words, when measured in terms of vulnerability to unemployment and the ability to cope with the shocks of restructuring, non-miners have experienced, perhaps, greater difficulty than miners, much of which has been kept in the shadows of a dominant mining-related discourse (Kudat, Borisov et al. 1997).

In addition, reforms of liberalization provoked a qualitative change in the nature of employment in the city, as informal, insecure forms of employment at lower wages with fewer legal and social safeguards emerged. In light of many-months delays in salaries, people increasingly left jobs that used their professional qualifications for anything that provided some money, usually buying and selling at the local market. A pensioner Lyudmila Tverskaya remembers:

> "It was terrible years, when husband and wife working in our organisation (both of them are geologists) have not received salaries for many months. And they have three children! They did different things to support the family, to survive. In order to bring children to the grandmother [who lived outside the North] for the summer holidays, they were taking days off and went to the local market to sell stuff. They – geologists – were forced to sell at the market to make money for a living" (Lyudmila Tverskaya, 03.05.2011, Vorkuta).

My interview partners often repeated that during the years of economic decline they worked primarily to satisfy simple needs – "to buy food and pay the bills". Statistics indicate that more than 40% of households in Vorkuta with an unemployed member in 1997 were poor, and almost half of these were very poor (Kudat, Borisov et al. 1997). Households with single mothers were affected the most. Local newspaper Zapolyer'e complemented the dismal statistics with stories of real people:

> "I am a doctor and do not get a salary since three months. What do we eat? I borrow money from the parents-pensioners, we eat previously prepared provision. It is not an exaggeration – we are starving! There is no money to buy bread, milk …"

> "I am a teacher and work at school for twenty years. I have university education and the highest professional category. I live with a daughter, she is nine years old. Family budget consists of my salary of 700 000 RUB[14]. This money is enough for bread and potatoes. Milk - not always. I do not buy closing to myself, but only the most needed things to a daughter. <…> Our refrigerator for a long time is turned off; there is nothing to store there. We do not have provision for the coming winter, because for making it one also needs money. This is how we live and so many do" (Kim 1995: 2).

Beginning in 1993, feelings of uncertainty, instability and frustration shone through every issue of the newspaper and were reflected in the titles of the articles: "Vorkuta – the fated city", "Desperation or hope?" "Who said that our city is dying?" "Vorkuta: skeleton of

[14] An average salary in 1997.

the future". Local historian Mikhail Rogachev commented on the shift in ideas of city viability:

> "In Soviet times nobody thought what for they mine coal and how to sell it on the market, to whom, how to get a profit. These questions were out of interest. There was an order given from the top to chop coal as much as possible. The country needed coal. Everything was nationally owned, therefore the problem of economic efficiency and business-making did not bother the miners. Suddenly it became clear that coal they extracted for many decades is no longer demanded <…> suddenly they found themselves in the situation when people who twenty years worked underground were not needed neither by the company nor by the state. Basically, the city as such was not needed" (Mikhail Rogachev, 17.04.2011, Syktyvkar).

The confusion over exactly what was happening and the loss of past security, economic stability and moral order are a common features identified in other post-socialist societies (Bridger and Pine 1998). Catherine Alexander (2004) highlights uncertainty and disorientation as emotional attributes of the privatization reforms in Kazakhstan. Similarly in Vorkuta, faced with the chaos of the new order, people expressed the feeling of being "not needed", or worse that they "have been used", and then "left behind" without satisfactory support by the state that had called them to the North in the first place. In the course of reforms, people came to perceive themselves as victims of a new regime that cheated them and took away the benefits of the Soviet welfare system that they had become accustomed to. Citizens had been granted the freedom to organise their own lives however they saw fit, but with no prior experience in a capitalist environment some of them were perhaps not ready to handle responsibilities that were previously in the hands of the state. That said, for enterprising persons the 1990s opened a door to previously unknown enrichment and socio-economic mobility; it was a time when "everything was possible". This coexistence of loss and gain is one of the paradoxes of the post-Soviet epoch. Success was on the side of those who were able to adjust quickly, while less adaptive individuals were the most disadvantaged.

The new reality compelled citizens to deal with the local consequences of macro-level political and economic upheaval. But how did people cope with these new socio-economic realities? One way was to exploit personal connections including kinship. Social networks not only assisted people financially but also provided them with recommendations and information. This source of support had an important function; however, mutual assistance and reciprocity had limits because people were likely to share the same hardships and similar practical problems. Another way was to access social programs and make maximum use of

their benefits. This could not be done, however, without some knowledge of "how the system works". In order to resolve financial problems, people had to search for alternative employment in addition to or instead of their previous jobs. Some even survived by gathering berries and mushrooms and by hunting and fishing. In August and early September, people were busy preparing self-made marinades and conserves, which they would eat during the winter season. I was told that in order to go to the forest *Vorkutintsy* would take a train in the morning outside the city to the South and then return in the evening with whatever they had found. It was typical to share collected products with friends and relatives, or even sell homemade food at the local market. In the initial years of the free market, people were trying to make additional money by retailing. The local informal economy was a safety net that allowed families to live through the most difficult period:

> "In the early nineties one could observe a following scene: women of uncertain age stand beside a grocery store. In front of them there are boxes as a shopboard. They were selling vodka, cigarettes, a bar of soap and socks. Some would bring salted mushrooms or fresh fish. It was called private enterprise. One could sell what he wanted, where he wanted and how he wanted" (Viktor Bogino, 19.04. 2012, Vorkuta).

Picture 4: An elderly woman sells sunflower seeds in front of the grocery store

Source: Picture taken by the author

Demographic shrinking

Vorkuta is a multinational city that became home to members of 80 different nationalities, with the majority of *Vorkutintsy* having been born or previously lived in other parts of the Soviet Union. According to a sample survey conducted in 1995, only 25% of

residents were born in the city or elsewhere in the Republic of Komi, while 11% were immigrants from the central regions, 12% from Ukraine and 11% from the Volga-Vyatka region (Il'in 1998: 109). Results of this study are supported by a survey conducted by the World Bank (Kudat, Borisov et al. 1997) The demographic situation in Vorkuta is indicative of the overall trend in the Russian northern cities (Heleniak 2010).

From the 1990s onward, the demographic situation in Russian Polar regions and particularly in Vorkuta has been characterised by gradual decline. For example, the total population of the Vorkuta urban district fell from 218 500 in 1989 to 88 026 in 2013, a loss that accounted for about 11% of the total population of the Komi republic to which Vorkuta administratively belongs. The most remarkable fall in population in the city happened between 1989 and 1996, when it lost almost 50 000 inhabitants. Similarly, because of outmigration and a natural decrease in population the number of inhabitants of the Russian North dropped from 9,795 million people in 1989 to 8,242 million persons in 2009 and amounted to 15,3% mainly due to outmigration.

Table 6: Population change in the Russian North, 1926 – 2009 (thous.)

	1926	1939	1950	1959	1970	1979	1989	2002	2009
Population of the Russian North	1 788	3 151	3 567	5 296	6 431	7 716	9 795	8 425	8 242

Source: Goskomstat Rossii, selected publications. Table provided by T. Heleniak

During the Soviet period Vorkuta had been generally seen as a place for work, while retirement was typically associated with the southern regions. The costs of outmigration were handled individually by the residents – people had saved money for building or buying an apartment on the *bol'shaya zemlya* and left when the right moment appeared, often after retirement. When reforms of liberalization led to an abolishment of northern benefits, expanding prices and many-months detention of wages, more and more people lost their desire to remain connected to Vorkuta. The "suitcase mood" spread and caused a wave of outmigration. If people had previously left Vorkuta by choice, now they were scared away by economic and social deterioration:

> "Migration strategy based on personal choice got replaced by non-personal reasons such as economic crises and restructuring of coal industry. Individual out-going grew into overall tendency of running away collectively. People who had a chance to get a flat outside Vorkuta either from the state or from the company and leave were leaving" (Oleg Gudovaniy, 21.02.2012, Vorkuta).

Since 1992, as Vorkuta has experienced constant outmigration, the links between people and place have weakened. In 1994, Vorkuta had a net migration balance of -8200 people (9800 people moved to Vorkuta while 18 000 left the city). In 1995, negative migration reached 10 912 people. Recently, negative migration in Vorkuta has slowed as shown in the table below. Again, the situation in Vorkuta is typical for settlements in the North of Russia. Between 1989 and 2009 there has been net outmigration of 17,1% of the population from the Russian Far North, or one out of every six persons (Heleniak 2010: 14).

Table 7: Balance of migration in Vorkuta, 1995 – 2009

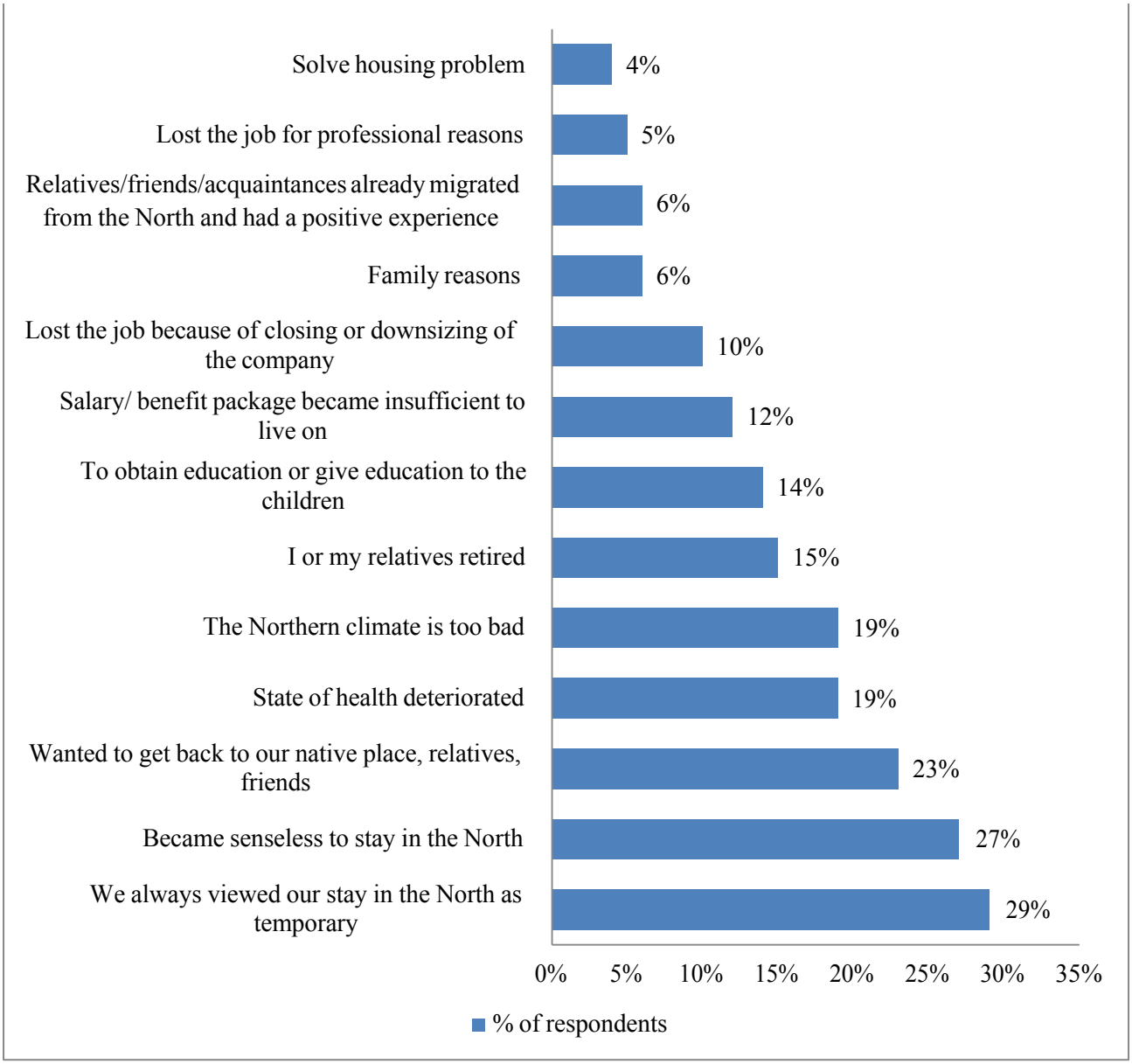
Year	Persons
1995	-10912
2000	-4365
2001	-4141
2002	-4307
2003	-3379
2004	-2518
2005	-3421
2006	-3751
2007	-3177
2008	-3680
2009	-2948

Source: Komistat 2010: 48

What factors have pushed North-South mobility? The decline in extra-monetary rewards for enduring the hardship of life in the North and growing life expenses appears to have been the dominant reason for departure. A sociological survey conducted among 582 participants by World Bank experts in 1997 supports this finding and shows that 27% of inhabitants willing to leave cited a loss of economic viability. Another factor is the perceived "temporality of residency in the North", as people tended to view their stay in the region as short-term (29%) and planned to return to their home region at some point (24%). Other reasons cited include "northern climate is bad" (19%), "retirement" (15%) and "worsening

health" (20%). The closure and down-sizing of northern city-forming companies was another important motivation for departure (10%), though not as high as might be expected (Netherlands Economic Institute 1998).

Figure 1: Reasons to leave the North



Source: Netherlands Economic Institute 1998

Not everybody, however, could afford relocation. Economic crisis and money depreciation denied large number of citizens the opportunity to leave the region and return to *bol'shaya zemlya* at their own expense. In 1995, in order to accelerate outmigration from the northern municipalities and make them more viable, the government of Russia (Government

resolution N700 10.07.1995) launched a social program providing residents with sponsored relocation support. This promised free housing to residents of northern regions affected by the restructuring process, with priority given to those from the closing settlements, laid-off workers and the socially vulnerable (single mothers, pensioners, disabled persons and others). Relocation embraced all corners of Vorkuta urban districts, but it was especially relevant for the mining settlements surrounding the city.

Relocation policies as a means of socio-demographic transformation were elaborated in a situation of economic stagnation and overall uncertainty concerning the future of the North and Vorkuta in particular. Justification of relocation initiatives emphasized the extraordinary living expenses of harsh climatic conditions and thus extra costs for the municipal budgets as well as economic distances between settlements and markets. This included transportation expenses, the cost of supplies, costs associated with the cold such as use of cold-resistant materials and extra energy consumption, plus social and human costs. It was asserted that each resident of the North required four times as much in state subsidies as a regular citizen living in more temperate regions (Hill and Gaddy 2003: 125). According to the World Bank cost estimates, the total federal and regional government budgets and extra-budgetary transfers allocated to support the northern inhabitants accounted for 3% of gross domestic product annually (The World Bank 2001).

Another stated reason for resettlement projects is the overpopulation of Russian far northern territories by 14-30%, depending on the calculation, as compared to other high latitude regions (World Bank 2001; Pivovarov 2002; Hill and Gaddy 2003). It is stated that absolute overpopulation of the Far North at the beginning of 1990s reached 14%. This figure was comprised of 3% unemployed population of working age, 5% pensioners and 6% people with limited abilities (Government resolution N700 10.07.1995). For the reasons of budget deficit, assisted relocation was deemed cheaper than (and therefore preferable to) continuing to subsidise the region. State-induced resettlement plans were supplemented by corporate programs that mainly focused on supporting their employees in moving out. Additionally, there were various programs targeting deteriorating settlements due to mine closure, such as, for example, Halmer-Yu and Promyshlenniy. The latter was independently funded through the Ministry of coal industry and linked with the restructuring of the coal sector, as described in the previous section.

Northern administrations generally espoused the same policies as the political centre in Moscow and argued that resettlement positively affects city viability by cutting unemployment through reduction of the economically passive population, regulation of

migration processes, decrease of local expenses on social compensations, etc. Thus, relocation measures were expected to help municipalities "realize potential economic benefits resulting from a decreased population" (World Bank 2001: 2). Most importantly, subsidised relocation aimed to benefit the most disadvantaged categories of the population that were stuck in the North without jobs or sufficient earnings (Busalov 1998). "In the present-day conditions, the North cannot provide enough jobs like it did previously, industries decline; but we cannot just dump the people," says former mayor of Vorkuta Igor Shpektor, "So first and foremost people need to be relocated" (Igor Shpektor, 24.05.2012, Moscow).

While corporate programs targeted long-term employees, state relocation schemes prioritised the most vulnerable and least mobile population groups. This included five categories: residents of closing communities, people with limited abilities, pensioners with northern working experience not less than 15 years, unemployed persons and, lastly, working persons willing to out-migrate (Nuykina 2011: 32). The people who applied for participation in resettlement projects were ranked according to the length of their northern residence and work experience and arranged into a single queue. In order to avoid unfaithful withdrawing practices, the programs did not allow the same family to receive migration allowances more than once.

Relocation measures were implemented under the umbrella of housing policies beginning in 1992 with Presidential Decree N1122. This ordered the building of apartments in central and southern regions for northern resettlers on the principle of shared funding. The first relocation program, launched in 1995 (Government resolution N700 10.07.1995), provided beneficiaries with a federal grant at the rate of 30% of the commercial house price; the remaining 70% was paid in different proportions of the regional budget, by city-forming enterprises and by beneficiaries themselves. As construction of the "northerners' flats" was coordinated by the state company, program participants were limited in choosing where to settle. With that, a clustered type of relocation enabled northerners to become neighbors in the South and hopefully better adapt to their new environment and stimulated social coherence. Relationships developed by new residents in new places were founded on shared northern experiences and a common past (Nuykina 2011: 34-35).

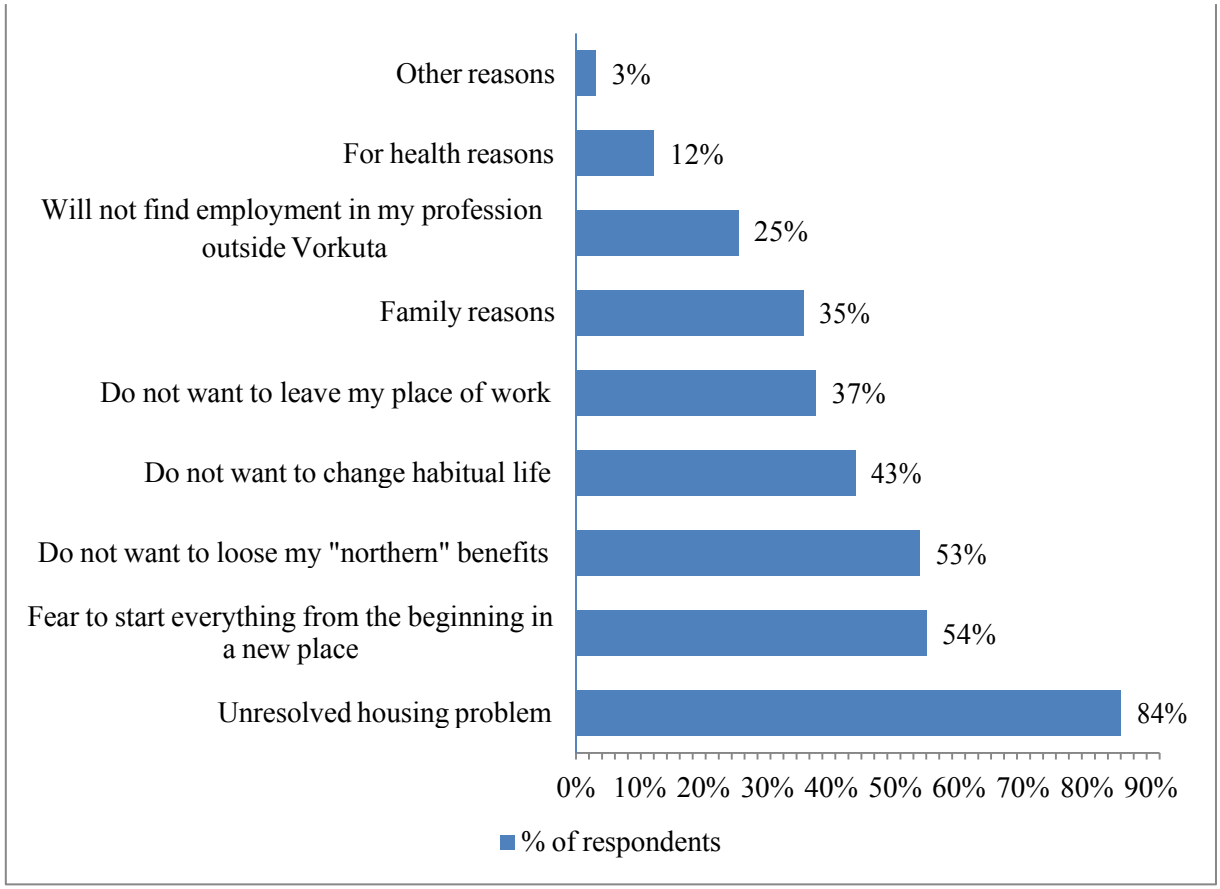
The relocation scheme implemented until 1998 allowed northern citizens to receive housing subsidies in addition to their northern apartment. Since the state subsidy did not cover the full price of the flat, residents had the right to keep their northern flats. Although the mechanism of partial subsidising was designed to stimulate depopulation of the northern region, many participants used this assistance to buy a second dwelling in the South or

elsewhere while continuing to live in the North (Bolotova and Stammler 2010; Nuykina 2011). This program supporting housing construction for northern migrants was in force until 2002 and has been gradually replaced by individual resettlement.

To conclude, before 2002 resettlement from the Russian North was undertaken in the form of collectively targeted relocation. Northern migrants were provided with subsidised flats in newly-built housing blocks in selected regions outside the Polar region. By helping people leave, the state attempted to influence the course of outmigration and population redistribution throughout the country (Nuykina 2011). Relocation projects thus aimed to reduce federal expenses in the long run and served northern municipalities that were unable to provide large numbers of permanent residents with necessary social services. At the same time, resettlement from the Russian North was a scheme for redesigning the country's economic geography according to principles and needs of a market economy. Discussion, provided in the next chapter, illustrates practical results of these efforts as well as local responses to government measures.

Although the prevailing attitude of *Vorkutintsy* has been in favour of outmigration – 68% among miners and 58% among those outside the coal sector (Kudat, Borisov et al. 1997: 94) – not everybody planned to leave. Alasheev, Borisov and Kozina, who conducted a sociological survey of 400 persons in Vorkuta and suburban settlements in September and October of 1995, indicate unresolved housing problems (84%) and fear of starting over in a new place (54%) as leading reasons why respondents remained in the city. A reluctance to lose northern benefits (53%) or change habitual environment (43%) or place of work (37%) followed on the scale of answers.

Figure 2: Reasons to stay in Vorkuta



Source: Alasheev, Borisov and Kozina cit. in Il'in 1998: 119

While reviewing the local newspaper Zapolyar'e, I came across several articles saying that despite the difficulties associated with staying, some *Vorkutintsy* have no intention of going elsewhere as they have "nothing to do there" and "no one is expecting them". Although it has always been a city of newcomers, there are people who grew up in Vorkuta and identify themselves with the place. They invested themselves in making Vorkuta an attractive permanent residence and not only a place for money-making industry (Oganyants 1991: 2). These people willing to invest locally constitute the viable core of the community and guarantee its long-lasting life. When reviewing archives, I found a letter from a poultry plant worker who wrote to the local newspaper in order to share his concerns about the future of the city. The letter was published in the newspaper Zapolyar'e (Domnin 1991: 3) and it finished with the words:

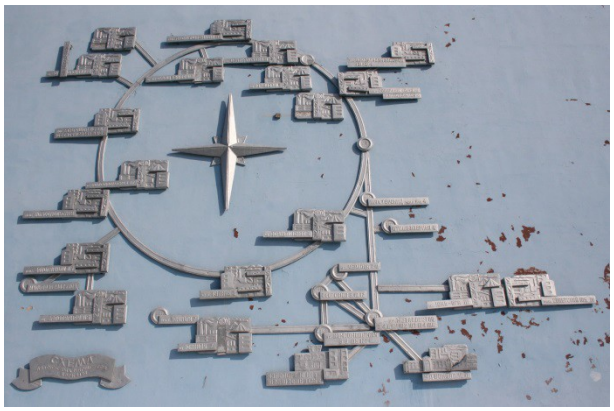
> "Vorkuta belongs to all those (dead and living), who were the first. It belongs to me and people born and grown up in this city. Vorkuta belongs to all those, building and developing this city; who continues labour biography of the city, working underground and mining the coal. And, finally, it belongs to all those, who call themselves *Vorkutintsy*, despite the hardships and adversities".

Kudat and Borisov (Kudat, Borisov et al. 1997: 83) argued that life conditions in Vorkuta, including income, human resources, quality of housing and satisfaction with the living environment, compare favorably with those in other coal settlements outside the North. This explains why those who developed attachments to the city and rooted themselves in the North did not view moving to a new place as a way to improve their well-being. For them, Vorkuta was a place where they knew people, while in the South they were perceived as the outsiders.

Spatial shrinking

I mentioned previously that the transfer of housing and social assets from enterprises to municipalities in the 1990s in Russia impacted local budgets harshly. The capacity of local administrations was overwhelmed; municipal budgets suffered from lower tax revenue due to the decline of industry while their expenditure obligations continued to rise. For example, in 1992 the city budget of Vorkuta was around 2,2 billion RUB, while municipal expenses reached 2,8 billion RUB (Tsitronova 1992). Maintenance costs of the spatially diffuse city exceeded the budgetary capacity. Therefore, in order to provide better services and save expenses, the administration of Vorkuta, guided by World Bank experts, decided to reshape the city spatially by moving its population to the central core and abolishing the outskirts. This process, begun in the mid-1990s and continuing today, leaves the city of Vorkuta surrounded by ghost settlements.

Picture 5: Spatial organisation of Vorkuta presented on the wall of the residential building



Source: Picture is taken by the author

Picture 6: Abandoned buildings in one of the city districts in Vorkuta

Source: Picture is taken by the author

With the collapse of the formal structures of the socialist order, the unequal positionality of satellite settlements as compared to the central core has become more pronounced. Spatially, Vorkuta consists of the core and minor urban settlements located along the ring road that developed from GULAG labour camps. One residential neighborhood was built after another, thus making the city widely scattered across the tundra. Although mining communities were designed according to the same planning principle of "spatial matreshka", communities differentiated in the quality of life they offered. For example, *poselok* Sovetskiy and *poselok* Vargashor enjoyed modern standards of housing and new buildings with all the desired amenities and well-developed social and cultural infrastructure. In contrast, Oktybr'skiy suffered from poor housing conditions; most families lived in barrack-type housing without sewerage. Moreover, inhabitants of the smaller places around Vorkuta differed from those living in Vorkuta's centre in terms of employment structure. Satellite settlements relied heavily on mining and the number of mining families there was three times higher than in the urban core (Kudat, Borisov et al. 1997). Therefore, when the collieries began to close down, these small peripheral places entirely dependent on the coal sector were hard hit. The satellite *poselki* shrank faster in comparison with the central part of Vorkuta, where people had better living facilities and more diverse employment opportunities. The transformation of urban space triggered the spatial segregation of those who could afford to live in the city centre where they could access better services and those stuck in the *poselki*. Obviously, the value of property in these small settlements was and remains much lower than

in the core. This is another obstacle that makes moving away difficult – nobody wants to buy apartments in the satellite urban settlements. On the other hand, the residents of smaller urban communities have a greater chance of receiving relocation grants, therefore it is often the case that they maintain their registration in the *poselok* while renting an apartment in the centre. This has created a gap between official statistics and the on-the-ground reality, leaving municipal authorities without a precise picture of the population distribution within the borders of the urban district. I will touch upon this problem in greater detail in the coming section.

To conclude, the process of post-socialist urban transformation instigated changes in property relations and instituted new principles for the use of urban space. Soviet cities were organised, from the perspective of resource management, in a wasteful way. The settlements were attached to industrial sites and required large investments to maintain their infrastructure, provide heat and clear snow from the roads. When the Soviet regime vanished, however, the physical structures – the product of Soviet planning – remained. New authorities have been searching for ways of managing the massive infrastructural heritage through induced relocation. This strategy has resulted in positionally disadvantaged settlements within the city district gradually turning into ghost towns, while the central core flourishes with new shops and cafes. Rental prices are rising there and people are investing in expensive plastic windows. For those willing to resettle, the closure of a *poselok* promises a subsidised apartment in central Russia, but while they wait for their turn in the queue, residents of Vorkuta's urban fringe must cope with urban degradation and poor services.

Picture 7: Remains of abandoned mining settlement in Vorkuta

Source: Picture taken by the author

Conclusion

Crisis and reform of the coal sector in the early 1990s in Russia has been something of an avant-garde in the general context of the country's socio-economic reorganisation. For Vorkuta, this meant facing the difficulties of post-Soviet transformation and its devastating impact earlier than other places. It also meant that Vorkuta became a pilot territory for testing new development schemes and managed to attract additional funding through state restructuring programs. Steering these reforms was the responsibility of national authorities and World Bank experts. One of my respondents compared post-Soviet changes with orchestral music:

> "The music was composed by Moscow musicians, the orchestra was formed from the local (not necessary skilled or interested in music) actors, including municipal government and city-forming enterprise, while the listeners were the ordinary residents. The later were draining away as the life in the North became senseless and simply unaffordable" (Nina Kurganskaya, 30.03.2012, Vorkuta).

Reflecting on the comparison and reading through interview transcripts, I could see a tendency to portray local people as passive recipients of the reforms, as having no agency. There are numerous contradictory examples, however, from the organisation of strikes to the development of informal economic practices. The creativity of grass-roots responses is also reflected in the way state projects were manipulated by private interests. Some practices conceived in the early post-socialist period have in fact persisted and play significant roles in shaping the present-day order. I cannot conclude that all such practices have benefited city viability, as many were driven by individual profit-seeking. Still, some businesses started as small-scale trade in the streets before growing into companies that contributed quantifiably to the formal economy (Viktor Bogino, 19.04.2012, Vorkuta; Yuriy Mezheritskiy, 09.04.2012, Vorkuta).

Survival of the post-socialist transition was based on established social networks and the mutual help of relatives and friends. Social capital and connections between people helped *Vorkutintsy* find new jobs, receive resettlement grants or simply obtain food. Personal networks were also utilised by local leaders to influence the federal centre and promote the interests of the North. The focus was not on long-term viability, but on immediately pressing needs and basic economic survival. Therefore, when Vorkuta was chosen to be a testing ground for neoliberal restructuring, municipal authorities gladly accepted the plan as it

promised a funding. “The task was to feed and to heat the city and nothing more sophisticated than to persist in falling apart Soviet reality” (Igor Shpektor, 24.05.2012, Moscow).

Vorkuta was always a peripheral place because of its physical location, although the distance was felt differently in comparison to present days. During the last Soviet decades, the city established strong connections with central Russia through the subsidised mobility of residents. Vorkuta’s remote position did not seem to be an obstacle as people had relatively easy access in and out; flights were moderately priced and travel costs were reimbursed. Close ties to the mainland were strengthened through economic and political relations between the centre and the hinterland. Such relations of interdependence maintained demand for Vorkuta’s coal regardless of its price and provided the city with generous subsidies in return. On the other hand, geography mattered when speaking of the special status of the territory in terms of provision, salaries and social benefits. The North was a symbol of prosperity for many and Vorkuta was one of the richest places of the former regime. Partly for that reason, the socio-economic decline of transition created much disillusion and frustration in the community. Compared to other mining localities, residents in Vorkuta showed greater expectations for government intervention (Kudat, Borisov et al. 1997: 97). This was due first to the limited local supply of resources necessary for self-sustainability and second to the previously high level of welfare provision that residents had become accustomed to. Falling living standards in a wider context of insecurity and instability pushed people to develop strategies for coping with losses and concentrate on individual needs. In this regard, the societal expectations of state support, in terms of financial benefits and social services, and mistrust in government institutions can be seen as two sides of the same coin (Rasell 2009).

The 1990s saw a change in the positionality of the city; Vorkuta became even more peripheral when the existing order broke down and led to the decay of existing economic and political bonds. Due to the expensiveness of air transportation and absence of road connections to other towns, people became physically and materially isolated. The old connections with central Russia frayed as well, as many inhabitants decided to leave the North for good while those who remained in the North could often no longer afford to travel or maintain a second home. Economic relations weakened as the price of coal production rose. It was cheaper for metallurgic plants to buy fuel abroad than to transport expensive coal from the Arctic. As a result, seven mines out of twelve were shut down, economic networks between buyers and the city dissolved and the mining enterprise in Vorkuta neared bankruptcy. The paradigm shifted from “how to extract” to “how to sell”. The economic viability of the city relied on federal and regional subsidies as well as international money in

the form of restructuring projects. In terms of political self-sufficiency, the city as an entity lost the former prerogative power that had been based on its tight relations with the Ministry of coal industry and the success of mining. It became one among many settlements in the Republic of Komi and one of many declining (but active) cities in the North of Russia. Because of budgetary cuts, inflation and the economic crises of 1998, the socio-economic remoteness of Vorkuta became associated with poverty and isolation. As a result of all these changes, both the national positionality of Vorkuta and the place-based self-perception of its residents were transformed.

Urban space is a space of representation (Lefebvre 1991). Soviet Vorkuta symbolized successful economic development and security. It proved to be an important energy base during the war period – it was often repeated in interviews that *Vorkutinskiy* coal contributed to the great victory as it was mainly used for producing tanks and weapons. Moreover, Vorkuta represented the triumph of Soviet man against hostile nature and remoteness. Soviet economic achievements and coal as sources of local pride vanished with the collapse of that system. The bust of the 1990s and the disintegration of the Soviet Union became sources of shame and disillusion for the local population. The city lost its earlier importance and exceptional status as an Arctic outpost and joined the ranks of depressed areas struggling to stay alive. "Itself a manufactured product of the Soviet system – carved out of the tundra for the sole purpose of resource extraction – in post-Soviet market conditions Vorkuta is gradually shutting down, its mines closing, its people leaving" (Pilkington 2012: 275).

This dissertation is concerned with the dominant views and practices of city viability in post-Soviet conditions. The understanding of city viability that prevailed in the 1990s was based on economic parameters such as cost-effectiveness, self-sufficiency and comparative advantage. Social aspects of viability were considered important neither by neither federal nor international policy-makers nor by the local administration. An economy-centred approach to development of the northern cities has found its realization through projects that have made Vorkuta a smaller place in terms of its industrial activities, population and territory. The projects dealing with the restructuring of the coal industry, resettlement away from the North and the spatial reorganisation of Vorkuta had the greatest impact on community life and stimulated further decisions and transformations. The process of shrinkage was at the core of these projects and generally of post-Soviet transformations in Vorkuta and other northern places. In this sense, shrinking is a contribution to viability, as its main goal was to create a more comfortable and functioning urban community.

The fundamental changes of the 1990s were related to the very foundation of the city and questioned the validity of its existence. Vorkuta was established because of the Soviet system of redistribution and its command economy. In the new market-like environment, the new democratic city administration was automatically included in global inter-urban competition. Vorkuta as an entity required a justification for its continued existence that would suit the logic of the market. Moreover, the urban transformation of post-socialist places such as Vorkuta was embedded in the path-dependent transformation of the larger northern region, which had been shaped by strong historical legacies of economic and political dependence on the core.

CHAPTER 6: MAKING A VIABLE TOWN TODAY

Introduction

The period beginning with the last years of the 20th century is referred to as "the age of the Arctic" by Oran R. Young (1985) because of the rising political-economic interests in Arctic fossil fuels, security issues, new economic opportunities related to the Northern Sea Route and rapid environmental changes associated with global warming. While federal politicians and extractive industries remain concerned with regional resource potential, municipal administrations are busy rethinking the position of northern communities in globalising space and their prospects for viability.

The city of Vorkuta overcame the economic devastation of previous years and managed to stabilize itself. Positive changes can be seen in the rising value of apartments, new shops and hostels that have opened in recent years, repair works in the streets, construction of a new sport complex, etc. My interview partner Natalia, who resettled in Vorkuta in 2006 due to family reasons, comments on the positive dynamic in today's city development:

> "When I settled in Vorkuta 6 years ago many people wondered why I came here. At that time the city was dying. There was a feeling that I made the biggest mistake in my life. Nowadays there is no such feeling and there are no such talks. I feel that the city has future. I feel safe" (Natalia, 25.04.2012, Vorkuta).

With all these improvements, questions of city viability have not lost their relevance. The city is still economically dependent on a leading enterprise and its plans for future coal extraction. The concerns of local administration are related to the same obstacles as always, such as the lack of physical compactness and the geographic remoteness of Vorkuta, both of which increase production and transportation costs as well as living expenses. The geographic location of the city restricts its prospects for diversification and reinforces regional dependence on state interests in the Arctic territory and its settlements. Vorkuta today relies on the mining sector and as a single-industry town remains vulnerable to boom and bust cycles. Although "city – company" relationships were radically changed when coal mines in the region were taken over by the private sector, efforts to make Vorkuta self-sustaining have not been entirely successful; the municipal budget still relies heavily on governmental transfers from federal and regional centres. A subsidised budget and political reforms on municipal self-government introduced by the Putin administration have resulted in decreased political independence. Moreover, the population of the city is aging and ongoing

outmigration of active working-age people continues to yield a labour deficit. Long-distance commuters from other regions have flooded Vorkuta in recent years to fill this gap, while the city has become surrounded with ghost settlements.

Based on empirical examples, this chapter describes prevailing views and dominant strategies for city viability developed in the late post-Soviet period. First, it examines the role of the staple industry and its contribution to city viability in present-day circumstances. I particularly highlight the attitude of the city-forming enterprise in support of Vorkuta, views on future developments of the city and actual plans to improve residents' quality of life. Although Vorkuta remains a mono-industrial community, new economic activities are promoted to induce diversification, including projects in gas transportation and tourism. Another strategy is related to the positionality of Vorkuta in the context of broader Arctic development. The second part of this chapter brings to light civic initiatives and demonstrates the importance of cohesion and community leadership in shaping every day realities. To illustrate the process of place-making, I have included five stories from my interviewees that show a diversity of interactions between the place and the people. I was fortunate to meet residents who undermined the dominant stereotype of Vorkuta as a place "which everybody wish to escape from" (Holley 2004). Concerns of this socially active group of people go beyond private comforts and instead include the improvement of community life. By examining their experiences, I will show that city viability is directly linked to the desire of people to cooperatively work towards common goals and values.

Coal industry and its role for city viability

My acquaintance with Vorkuta began with the thing that birthed the city seventy years ago and continues to dictate the economic and social well-being of the community. When I stepped off the train from Moscow at its final stop in April 2011, the strong all-permeating smell of coal in the air struck my senses. Later, I realized that coal dust was everywhere: on the roads in the city, on the shelves and furniture in the apartment that I rented, on my face after a day spent outside and in the clouds hanging above the town. The city was decorated with Soviet-like street banners of happy and strong miners. One could immediately feel that Vorkuta is a coal mining city. Today, extraction of coal accounts for 74% of the total industrial production of the city.

Interdependence of the mining industry and the city is the dominant argument when people discuss viability of Vorkuta. Natalia, cited above, said in an interview: "If there are mines, the city will live. It is enough to be calm and not to worry about other changes"

(Natalia, 25.04.2012, Vorkuta). The coal sector still plays a dominant role in forming the local economy and social sphere. It is the biggest employer of the local population and one of the main tax payers; every year it allocated a substantial sum to sponsor socially important projects.

Unlike the neighboring city of Inta, where the coal sector is continuously depressed, the city-forming enterprise Vorkutaugol successfully overcame the decline of the 1990s and regained its position of "bread earner" for the city by reviving economic relations with steel companies in central Russia. In 2003, collieries in Vorkuta were privatized by the second biggest vertically-integrated steel company in Russia, Severstal, which is headquartered in Cherepovets. The new owner comprises three business divisions, one of which is Severstal Resources that manages all of the company's mining assets in Russia and abroad, including the coking coal complex Vorkutaugol. Today, coal mines in Vorkuta operate as a specialized resource branch within integrated corporate strategies and supply Severstal Russian Steel with hard coking coal concentrate – the raw material for the ferrous metallurgical industry (Severstal n.d.).

Since 2003, there are six operating mining sites in Vorkuta: Vorkutinskaya, Severnaya, Komsomolskaya, Zapolyarnaya, Vorgashorskaya and open-pit coal mine Yunyaginsky (Vorkutaugol n.d.). According to the data presented on the corporate website, these mines produced 12,157 million tonnes of total raw coal in 2013 and generate 11% of the all hard coking coal in Russia (Vorkutaugol n.d.). Furthermore, the company owns a mechanical plant that services the mines and repairs equipment, the Pechorskaya central coal cleaning plant, whose function is to process the coal and produce coal concentrate, as well as the transport company that connects the mines with consumers. In total, 7587 people work in the different units of the company[15].

Because of North-South dependence, the future expansion of mining in Vorkuta recently gained promising prospects. In December 2011, Vorkutaugol won the tender to develop section N1 of the Usinskoe coal field, located within the borders of the urban district. The plan is to build there a deep mine and processing plant (Vorkutaugol 22.03.2013) that will require a qualified and experienced workforce. Currently, the company is conducting geological explorations of the area. A similar investment project is carried out by another steel company, NLMK, which was awarded the licence to develop section N3 of the Usinskoe coal field 56 km away from the city centre, near the railway station Kykshor. It is currently constructing the mine, which is expected to start operations in 2015-2016. Thus, building two

[15] Information is given for 2013.

new mines in close proximity to the city (assuming that demand for coal is high) could provide a basis for economic viability.

Picture 8: The office building of Vorkutaugol, Lenina Street 62

Source: Picture taken by the author

Picture 9: Street banner of Vorkutaugol saying "Real men are always in demand"

Source: Picture taken by the author

It is hoped that new activities will positively affect the labour market and provide jobs for miners and industry-related specialties such as drivers, bulldozers, construction workers, electricians, etc. However, a lack of qualified experienced workers may lead to competition between the two companies for human resources, and although companies promise to prioritise *Vorkutintsy* by recruiting from the local labour force, if there is a shortage (either real or claimed) of specialists they may look for the required personnel in other mining regions in Russia or Ukraine. The impact this may have on the viability of Vorkuta can be predicted by similar cases from the gas transportation industry (Nuykina 2013), which hired commuting workers from socio-economically disadvantaged regions in central and southern Russia, who because of their struggle with high unemployment and low wages are more likely to accept salaries smaller than the northern average (as well as the challenging working conditions). This hit northern workers, who already face great competition on the labour market and now had to fear being replaced by inter-regional long-distance commuters, hard (Eilmsteiner-Saxinger 2011: 63).

The intimate relationship between the city and the mining industry in Soviet Vorkuta, when the company was responsible for social welfare of the city as well as its infrastructural and cultural spheres, housing and public utilities, generated a so-called "dependency mindset" (Thompson 2004) that can be observed today among both local authorities and ordinary citizens. The staple enterprise is expected to take a paternalistic approach to city development

and show great responsibility, while representatives of the coal industry express a different understanding of "city – company" relations. Former public relations manager of Vorkutaugol Vladislav Tokmyanin points out two conflicting attitudes emerging from the question of who is responsible for the city's post-Soviet viability:

> "Administration thinks that there is a city, in the city there are companies operating on its territory, mining and selling *their* coal. And they do not get anything in return. In fact, everything was vice versa. If there would not be discovered coal, there would not be GULAG, if there would not be GULAG, there would not be free labourers who built the city and created an infrastructure. As a result, there would not be a city. It is not the industry coming out of the city, but the city is born by the industry. If there will not be Vorkuta, we will still continue operations. We are more dependent on the railway, which has a monopoly, than on the municipality." (Vladislav Tokmyanin, 03.04.2012, Vorkuta)

Efforts to overcome the legacy of the Soviet company town model and rationalize production processes continued with the privatization of the enterprise in the early 2000s. Local historian Mikhail Rogachev commented on this transformation:

> "When Aleksey Mordashov[16] bought Vorkutaugol, he saved the city, as he provided people with jobs. But Severstal is not a charitable organisation; it is one of the biggest private enterprises in Russia. And he bought the mines not because of the city and not to support the city, but to provide metallurgical complex in Cherepovets with coal. So he, of course, dictates the conditions: this mine will be developed and this one we do not need. Vorkutaugol is interested in having good production capacities and skilled labour force to mine the coal, while social sphere is a "millstone around neck" for them" (Mikhail Rogachev, 17.04.2011, Syktyvkar).

In theory, "positionality is continually enacted in ways that both reproduce and challenge its pre-existing configurations" (Sheppard 2002: 318). My research in Vorkuta confirms this argument with empirical examples and links it with the concept of city viability. Despite some financial support allocated to various municipal programs, the relationship between the local administration and Vorkutaugol has endured ups and downs. Since 2003, the company has pursued optimization of production costs by reducing the number of employees and overall expenses and transferring its remaining non-core assets to the municipality, while political leaders attempt to get more money from the coal sector to fund various social projects and cope with unemployment. Since the amount of corporate social

[16] The owner of the steel company Severstal.

funding is lower than desired, municipal authorities express dissatisfaction and accuse the enterprise of having low interest in municipal needs (Alexander Kochergin, 03.05.2011, Vorkuta; Aleksey Chernishev, 03.05.2011, Vorkuta; Marina Sovershaeva, 26.04.2012, Vorkuta). An information war erupted in mass media when both sides began accusing each other of poor behaviour. In order to dismiss the ruling authorities, Vorkutaugol supported the opposition party (the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, KPRF) and openly criticised the city administration for failing to perform its duty. In 2011, the communist leader Gennady Gorbachev defeated the incumbent Valeriy Budovsky in the municipal general mayoral elections. Three days later, votes were recounted and Budovsky, the candidate from the United Russia party, was found to have won the election a single vote. The legality of the election is still in doubt, as well as the role of the republican centre in managing voting results. After the scandalous elections, Vorkuta adopted a new principle of local government, according to which a mayor is chosen not by citizens but by the city council on the basis of competitive bidding and with the advice of the republican government. The new law soon saw Vareliy Budovskiy replaced by Anatoliy Puro, who was assigned by the regional centre (Zapolyarka online 06.12.2012). Changing the nominal head of the city did not help solve confrontation between the industry and local politicians, however.

Another attempt to intervene in municipal political life was made in 2012 and resulted in a shift in positionality. Vorkutaugol used its influence in the city council and republican government to stage a political coup. After a series of big scandals and battles between executive and legislative powers, city manager Anatoliy Puro and his team stepped down. The new administration was formed according to the interests of the industry. Today, actors are differently situated than when I conducted my fieldwork, as half of the city council consists of representatives of the mining industry as well as key political figures of the executive power. The general director of Vorkutaugol, Sergey Efanov, is a member of the regional council of the Komi Republic, and the current city manager, Yevgeniy Shumeyko, is a former coal miner and leader of the miners' labour union. Shumeyko's deputy is also from Vorkutaugol.

The change in positionality in favour of Vorkutaugol increased the city's dependence on its core enterprise, although this is not necessary a negative. The loyalty of political office-bearers to the city-forming enterprise is paid back with better support of the municipality and the willingness of the company to cooperate in meeting social needs. Local analysts argue that without the integration of Vorkutaugol in government institutions the city would not have overcome instability. The local newspaper writes: "political tandem of the new administration and the city-forming enterprise put an end to the political conflicts and inspires a hope for

more efficient solutions to city problems" (Zapolyarka online 06.12.2012). The company promises to co-fund demolition of dilapidated housing as well as resettlement schemes. Together with the municipal authorities, it promises to develop a program to help residents of the closing satellite settlements get decent housing in the city centre (Zapolyarka online 06.12.2012). Although present-day relationships between the city-forming industry and the municipality are built on market rules, the current position of Vorkutaugol in local politics mirrors the Soviet style of city-making, when *gradoobrazuyushchee predpriyatie* played both important economic and socio-political roles. As in the Soviet years, today's corporate managers seek political power essentially to foster industrial goals, the difference is that in capitalist economies coal extraction follows the interests of shareholders instead of centralized economic plans. Local development is approached in business terms, with the city treated as a corporation, although this does not always work in practice. The persistence of path dependences on new market-like terms is central to contemporary concepts and practices of city viability.

The improved positionality and political weight of the city-forming company resulted in a new approach to social corporate responsibilities. Earlier, Vladislav Tokmyanin, who had been a high-ranking employee of Vorkutaugol when I interviewed him, expressed annoyance at the administration's financial requests and described the latter as a panhandler:

> "We [the company] are not obligated to care about social problems of the city. We pay the taxes that are collected specifically for keeping the town going. But we are induced to engage in so-called social policy or you can also call it charitable works. Somewhere somehow we help people, since the municipality is impotent" (Vladislav Tokmyanin, 03.04.2012, Vorkuta).

Later, when the political conflict had been resolved, Sergey Efanov, the head of Vorkutaugol, recognized the significance of cooperation with the municipality concerning social issues:

> "Our participation in the social life of the city is an important element of social and economic development of Vorkuta and generally the Komi Republic. We do it not only through investments in the development of production, taxes, payment of decent wages and improving working conditions, but also by funding specific social projects aimed improving people's quality of life" (Cit. in Vorkutaugol 24.12.2012).

Greater involvement of the company in local social matters can also be explained by the growing activities of Severstal in other countries, which encourages it to adopt international

standards of social corporate obligations. Investments in sustainable development consequently affect the reputation and position of the corporation globally. No matter what the true reason is, the practical result of this policy is increased community well-being and city viability. Vorkutaugol allocates substantial sums for grant financing of socially important projects every year, and the amount of social expenses has increased. The main avenues of social cooperation and commitments of the parties are set forth in agreements entered into by the company and regional authorities and then specified via consultations with municipal authorities (Severstal n.d.). In 2010, Severstal Resources (a mother company of Vorkutaugol) and the republican government signed an agreement for three years, according to which the company allocates 20 million RUB annually (Vorkutaugol 24.12.2012). The firm supports strategic projects in employment and occupational guidance, sport, culture and health care. In 2011, municipal health care institutions received 2,5 million RUB for purchasing medical equipment, 1,8 million RUB were given to municipal schools and 5 million RUB were spent on repairing and equipping the ice sport hall Olimp, and 2 million – on building a snow figures and ice-hills on the central square of the city (Vladislav Tokmyanin, 03.04.2012, Vorkuta).

Among other corporate initiatives, Vorkutaugol focuses on developing young people's interest in engineering and the mineral resource industry (Severstal n.d.). Since 2005, Vorkutaugol has financed special education for children at public secondary school N23 in Vorkuta. Specially selected pupils who show interest in technical occupations and have leadership abilities receive intensive training in natural sciences during the last two years of high school. Students must pass an entry test to be enrolled in this training, ensuring that only the best and most interested pupils are selected. The intention is that these students will later work for the company. In addition to serious studies, students take part in various social projects, participate in webinars with university professors, visit the main production site in Cherepovets and deep mines in Vorkuta and meet with workers of different professions in order to learn about the specifics of the coal industry and decide upon the future profession. When school is completed, graduates enter the Moscow State Mining University, one of the leading technical universities in Russia, with the help of the enterprise. Through five years of university studies, Vorkutaugol supports students financially, provides them with internships and after graduation offers them jobs back in the North. The company invests in "growing" knowledgeable, skilled and loyal workers according to its personnel needs. By assisting students from school days through to graduation from the University and preparing them for the mining industry, Vorkutaugol invests in human capital. On the other hand, this program

provides young people with a secure future, promising them a job after graduation and career prospects. This corporate social initiative is also supported by the local administration; it is viewed as one of the ways to bring back to the city young, educated, interested and ambitious people. With mass outmigration of young adults, even a small number of returnees is celebrated as an important achievement. The results of the first graduation show that over 50% of the former pupils of the Vorkutaugol class returned to the North and now work in the company (Vladislav Tokmyanin, 19.04. 2012, Vorkuta).

To conclude, the town's past, present and future hopes are pinned to its mining heritage (Pilkington 2012: 280). Expansion of the coal sector will likely have a positive impact on the economic viability of the city, as there will be more jobs for local specialists (and greater revenues to feed the budget). Contemporary rapprochement of local authorities and coal enterprise promises Vorkuta access to additional resources and creation of joint social programs. For a place whose very existence is determined by mining, the fact that the city-forming company and the municipal administration managed to find a consensus and perceive future development in a similar way is encouraging. The question, however, is how much the strong emphasis on resource extraction impedes economic diversification, and whether resource dependence is a benefit or a danger for a place that was purposefully built for extracting resources?

Single industry city

New wave of political discussions about the future prospects of mono-industrial cities started in Russia in the late 2000s and immediately attracted my attention. The question on the agenda was how to assist settlements with a "one horse" economy to overcome decline. The most cited statement at that time was "Diversify or die", meaning that local development should be directed according to the economic potential of a community. The research idea of this dissertation developed from reviewing articles and policy papers concerning viability of single industry towns. My primary interest became finding out how strategies for better development designed in Moscow were applied locally. Working in the field, I realized that the brand "mono-town" is not a curse, but can be used (and is used) with varying levels of success by provincial politicians to exploit the federal budget. The case of Vorkuta is a good example of how this all unfolds in practice.

The Russian Ministry of Regional Development (Institut regional'noy politiki 2008) defines single-industry towns as those with a leading enterprise (or group of companies operating in the same production and technological line) that employs more than 25% of the

working-age population and generates 50% or more of the overall production of the town. Practically speaking, this means a town in which a single leading enterprise generates the lion's share of municipal budget revenues and is, therefore, the main source of community welfare. According to data from the 2010 Russian Census, there are 1100 cities and towns of various sizes in Russia, including 342 areas[17] with mono-specialized economies. Many of these arose from Stalinist industrialisation projects and Soviet urban planning schemes in which population centres were intentionally located next to mining sites. These urban areas comprise over 16 million people and account for 10% of the country's total population. They also produce nearly 40% of the Gross Regional Product (Bazel 2014). Most company towns, established to provide a staple industry with human resources, belong to the category of small cities in which the population is less than 50 000 people. The typical size of a single industry urban settlement is about 20 000 people (158 towns, or 47% of the total) (Bazel 2014). In terms of geographic location, mono-profile towns are distributed among 55 Russian regions, but are mainly concentrated in the Ural and Volga Federal Districts. With that in mind, the attention of my research is directed at a settlement located on the northern resource frontier of Russia.

Based on the coal sector's dominance, in 2009 Vorkuta was included in the list of 342 Russian single-industry cities, which had been formed by the Ministry of Regional Development (at the request of the regional governments) in response to the world economic crisis of 2008-2009. During the following two years, 28 of these municipalities received government grants to foster industrial diversification. This model, however, was applicable only in places that have the potential to create new large-scale production, while less promising settlements, including Vorkuta, were ignored. In 2014, discussion about the viability of single-industry towns in Russia was revived. The economic development of a single-industry town has been grouped into three proposed scenarios: first, it remains mono-industrial as along as a product produced by the city-forming enterprise in demand (example of Belogorsk in Kemerovo region); second, it can effectively diversify and escape the "staples trap" (example of Kanash, Pikalevo, Kamensk-Ural'skiy); or, third, go through controlled shrinking or even complete closure (example of Zhireken in Trans-Baikal region) (Bazel 2014).

Single-industry settlements are not a Russia-specific phenomenon. They are found worldwide, and the problems of such communities are well known. The "one horse" principle in economic development exposes a municipality to boom and bust cycles and often traps it in

[17] As of 26.07.2013

path dependent development (Martin and Sunley 2006). When production declines, mono-profile towns are often left with a population greater than their economic capacity, which leads first to outmigration to more prosperous regions and places, especially among working-age population groups, and finally to urban contraction and demographic decline (Petrov 2010). This is precisely what happened in Vorkuta in the 1990s. These "features underpin the stereotype of single industry resource towns as remote, specialized outposts comprising populations with limited social and economic options, and vulnerable to the forces of economic destruction whether originating in globally based restructuring or local resource exhaustion, or both" (Hayter 2000).

As for the case of this study, Vorkuta occupy the 128th place in the top 250 largest industrial centres of the Russian Federation and continues to be a mono-industrial town with coal mining as its leading activity (Zapolyarka online 07.03.2012). The inflow of investments to the local economy is associated with the activities of the city-forming enterprise Vorkutaugol. The "Complex investment plan" of Vorkuta, adopted in 2010 (Administratsiya goroda MO GO Vorkuta 2014), associates the future viability of the city with the mining industry. In particular, it proposes maintaining current volumes of industrial production, further exploitation of the coal fields, production of fuel briquettes from industrial coal waste and technological upgrading of the city-forming enterprise. Thus, according to the suggested three scenarios, Vorkuta has adopted the so-called "steadily developing mono-town" strategy, and the future transformation of the city is dependent on the stable operation of the leading enterprise. All other economic activities, such as tourism and the gas transportation industry, are seen as supplemental but not competing sectors.

Despite being one of the target settlements, however, Vorkuta did not receive special funding. This was due to the socio-economic situation in Komi being in many respects much better than in other regions. Still, local and regional authorities pushed to include the city in the "Federal program of state support of mono-cities" and come up with projects like "Vorkuta – energy efficient city". This project was presented to former president of Russia Dmitriy Medvedev by the republican governor in 2012 (Krasnoe znamya 30.03.2012), and was accepted for further consideration. It proposes to continue the restructuring started by the World Bank and adjust the network of energy supply and residential heating according to the reduced number of permanent residents. Such restructuring is expected to help the municipality save on utility costs and decrease tariffs that are now twice as expensive as in central Russia. Policy planners hope to pilot the project using federal money, and if successful it could then be applied to other shrinking mono-profile communities with similar issues.

Vorkuta in this sense would serve as a "training ground", as it did previously with coal restructuring schemes and northern resettlement policies.

Republican authorities took an active part in promoting local interests by assisting Vorkuta with paperwork and representing the municipality at interdepartmental commissions in Moscow. Olga Konakova specified in an interview:

> "For example, our Ministry of Economic Development has issued a document confirming mono-industrial status of Vorkuta at the national level. We supervised the city at every step of paper works, helped them to write an investment plan. We initiated a series of meetings between the municipal administrations, city-forming companies and the regional government" (Olga Konakova, 03.02.2012, Syktyvkar).

To conclude, peripheral location and a mono-industrial economic profile can be a barrier for balanced urban development. However, city viability directly depends on the success of its leaders in turn these disadvantages into assets, for example by leveraging the mono-industrial status of a city to secure federal funding. To overcome the very practical problem of uneconomical use of power, water and heat caused by the remaining centralized utility systems (Yuriy Sopov, 17.04.2012, Vorkuta), local politicians attempted to situate Vorkuta within a network of other single-industry settlements. Municipal officials offered the city as a pilot territory for testing energy-efficient resource management so that it can be included in the list of beneficiaries. A mono-industrial status has been utilised in response to increased concerns of the federal government for single-industry cities.

New tourist Mecca

Another popular subject among Russian policy-makers is tourism. It has become a common strategy taken by administrations of remote cities in Russia and elsewhere to ensure the economic viability of declining settlements. Tourism "tends to be viewed as a relatively easy economic alternative and an option to generate social benefits for affected communities" (Schmallegger and Carson 2010: 202). Vorkuta is no exception to this growing trend. For several years now, tourism has been intensively promoted locally as an important component of the city development pathway. Today, articles on tourism are on the pages of every second newspaper, in TV discussions and on the agenda of government meetings. Although my main research focus was on the extractive industries, the excitement around tourism attracted my attention and piqued my interest in the impact of tourism on city viability.

A closer look at the subject revealed that tourism in Vorkuta is not seen as a substitute for the staple sector but as a necessary step to greater economic diversification and city viability. As with many other reforms, tourism in the city is promoted vertically from Moscow to the regional government and on down the chain. Komi regional authorities launched a republican program on the development of tourism and provide funding to local administrations and developers to carry out projects on the ground. According to the "Strategy for socio-economic development of the Komi Republic until 2020", along with the further development of mineral resources the region shall increase its attractiveness for Russian and international tourists. It is stated that "tourism must be regarded as an important resource for the territory's development, a source for achieving new socio-economic goals by converting the natural and historical richness of the republic into goods and services" (Government resolution N45 27.03.2006). An emphasis is put on recreational, health, historical and ethnographic tourism in rural zones and in the North. In order to facilitate tourism development, the regional authorities organise an exhibition, "Tourism in the North", that takes place in Syktyvkar each year and brings together tour operators. Furthermore, the republican government provides organisations with subsidies[18] and informational support.

Close attention to the vacation industry on a policy level results from the personal interests and beliefs of republican political leaders (starting with governor Vyacheslav Gayzer) in the transformative power of tourism. Since 2010, the municipal administration has been enthusiastically involved in promoting and establishing the tourism sector in Vorkuta. Maksim Mironkov, a former leader of a tourism working-group in the administration, explained in an interview that the idea of developing tourism in Vorkuta was conceived in the couloirs of the political circles and then descended to the community, which did not initially believe in the initiative. He says:

> "Nobody thought of tourism until it was discussed by the first persons in the city administration. Once they raised this issue, everyone doubted it happening. Now, on the contrary, even the newspapers write, that it is necessary not only to talk about tourism, but do it practically. Tourism is beneficial for the city and definitely stimulates its viability, in my opinion" (Maksim Mironkov, 26.04.2012, Vorkuta).

In the view of municipal policy-makers, tourism requires a relatively little starting capital, allows fast-paybacks, contributes to the preservation of the natural environment and

[18] Firms participating in the program may apply for the 50% reimbursement of their expenses spent on tourism infrastructure projects.

cultural heritage, is environmentally friendly, encourages the development of infrastructure, contributes to the creation of new jobs and also stimulates the development of related industries (Decision of the city council N86 28.10.2011). The economic effect of tourism is measured through the commodity turnover, services delivered in all spheres, creation of new jobs and taxes paid to the municipal budget. The role of administration in steering this development process is to arrange favourable conditions for small and medium-size businesses and advertising the city at (inter)national events as an exotic tourist destination. In order to coordinate tourism in the city and provide visitors with the appropriate information, the local administration created a City Centre for tourism development as part of the general policy.

Tourism in Vorkuta targets visitors with a passion for outdoor activities, northern nature, ethnography and history of the Stalinist regime. Although there are some regional and local tourists coming every year, they plan their trip privately and mainly go for low-cost self-planned tours. This type of tourism is called "wild". Travelers try to save money by all means and therefore avoid contacting a tourist agency, which is seen as a needless mediator. The only thing they may need from the firm is transport, as travel in the tundra requires a special type of a vehicle called *vezdekhod* for its ability to go almost everywhere. This "wild" form of internal tourism obstructs the work of official agencies, but at the same time is the most popular way of travelling.

What is Vorkuta's tourist profile? Based on my interview material, I compiled an ideal type of a visitor. The main target group for visiting Vorkuta is foreigners "who are bored of their usual holiday destinations and all-inclusive hotels and look for some exotics and experience" (Vitaliy Troshin, 11.02.2012, Vorkuta). These people must have money, as traveling to Vorkuta and around is rather expensive, but little expectations in terms of services. The ideal tourist speaks Russian, because there are not yet English-speaking guides in Vorkuta and the services offered by websites are in Russian. He or she is prepared for some unexpectedness, such as a vehicle breaking down in the middle of nowhere, and has a passion for nature and history. Such a tourist might be an ethnographer, a journalist, or a natural historian. The emphasis on "bored foreign tourists seeking fresh inspirations" was expressed both by local agencies and the authorities responsible for the issue at a city level.

"In the future Vorkuta expects to host 70 000 persons annually", says Maksim Mironkov enthusiastically, as current tourist flows in Vorkuta can be compared to slowly dripping water. It must be said that there are no numbers of how many guests are actually coming; neither the local administration nor the statistical office collect such information. The

main operator, Vorkuta tour, provided me with some in-house statistics showing the scale of tourism. Apart from contract works for municipal purposes, it provided services to two Italians and two Swiss in the summer of 2011 and 80 secondary school pupils during the holiday season of 2010. Another respondent told me about a group of Poles who came to the city by car and then were sent out by the Federal Security Service (Oleg Gudovaniy, 21.02.2012, Vorkuta). Unreasonably high expectations of the decision-makers poorly correspond with reality; tourism in such small numbers does not practically benefit the city in terms of either taxes or employment. Tourism, as it is currently positioned, exists only on paper.

Another important question is that of expenses. The tourist leader Tatyana Andreeva openly describes in an interview how prices change based on whether people come from abroad, the capital city or the neighbouring settlements. A week-long tour for two foreign guests can amount to 1400 USD, as they are expected to be wealthier, while locals will be charged less:

> "For example, we organised a tour couple of weeks ago. It included two historical excisions in the city, descent into the mine, recreation at the holiday village (housing and meals included) and a trip to the reindeer herders on snowmobiles. All in total amounted to 50 thousand rubbles for two persons, excluding travel expenses to Vorkuta and accommodation in the city" (Tatyana Andreeva, 20.02.2012, Vorkuta).

GULAG and indigenous peoples are two key themes in discussions about tourism in Vorkuta. The director of the first (and so far only) agency in Vorkuta, Tatyana Andreeva confirms demand for these two topics when planning excursions. In addition to historical and ethno-cultural tourism, planners aim to introduce ecological tourism and industrial tourism for visiting ghost towns that can be used for airsoft games as well as tourism events. Maxim Mironkov extends possibilities for tourism to some holidays specific to the Russian Arctic; in his view these have great potential to become tourist attractions:

> "We have several unique holidays. First, it is the day of reindeer herder, when endogenous peoples come from the tundra to the city to compete in reindeer sled racing through the city centre. No other city in the world has it, but us. Another holiday is related to the Orthodox tradition. People dive in the hole on Epiphany in the Arctic zone. Second holiday celebrated by indigenous peoples is in August on the Kara's seaboard. There they celebrate the end of the year, which finishes with the summer season, dance and play games. It is interesting to see, but difficult to access, as the only way to get there is by helicopter" (Maksim Mironkov, 26.04.2012, Vorkuta).

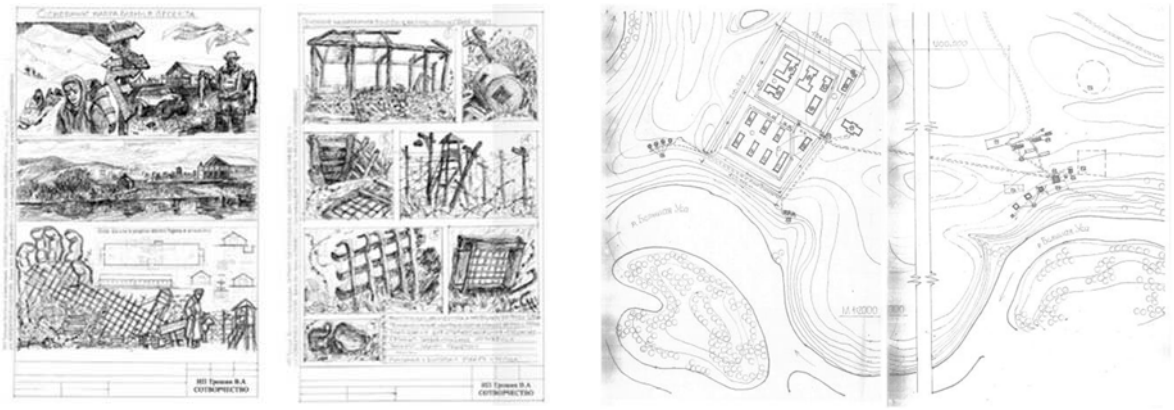
Although there are different ideas and much speculation surrounding tourism, a project related to heritage tourism is in the core of contemporary developments. It originated in the mind of the former city mayor Igor Shpektor and was then advanced by the talented artist Vitaliy Troshin and his collaborators. They suggest using GULAG past of Vorkuta to attract visitors from all over the world interested in or even affected by Soviet forced labour camp systems during the Stalin era. This includes family members of the convicts seeking to find out more about their relatives and visit the graves and remaining objects of GULAG. "For them visiting Vorkuta is a journey to discover family roots and related history" (Vitaliy Troshin, 11.02.2012, Vorkuta). Despite the ambivalent feelings *Vorkutintsy* express about the past, GULAG is promoted as a distinguishing feature that will differentiate Vorkuta from other destinations in the Russian North, though many of them were established by the same methods. The comparative advantage of the city is its history, well known in Russia and worldwide.

Present-day Vorkuta does not have visible indications of the camp's heritage, except of the graveyards and some of the monuments. Almost all real objects of the GULAG camps were demolished in the process of urban expansion, or else naturally collapsed. "Thus, in order to expose the city as a GULAG place, one has to invest into restoring its material symbols, like barracks, control towers, and barbed wire fences", says Vitaliy Troshin. "Vorkuta shall become a museum city". He envisions creating a historical and cultural complex of GULAG that will display how the city evolved from the Stalinist tent camp into the modern city.

The GULAG tourist village, which aims to provide visitors with the atmospheric insights of the correctional labour camp system and the life details of the prisoners, is in the process of being constructed. It is located 70 km away from the city centre in the middle of tundra. Its location on the river and at a distance from the existing settlements refers to Vorkuta's formation when the first settlers arrived in 1931. According to the plan of Vitaliy Troshin, tourists will be taken upon arrival directly to the GULAG village without seeing modern Vorkuta. On the way, they will have a couple of stops to get the feeling and learn about the hardships of the first settlers who walked here for many weeks while carrying all the materials and supplies on their shoulders. According to the author's vision, every step of the journey should provide city guests with cultural and historical background information about the place and its formation. The first part of the tour should finish in the GULAG village, where tourists will have the possibility to stay overnight or even spend several days there (Vitaliy Troshin, 11.02.2012, Vorkuta).

The GULAG tourist village will include several areas. There will be a labour camp built from the architectural plans of the *Vorkutlag*, consisting of barracks for the prisoners and guards, bath and laundry house, sanitary unit, canteen, control towers and other buildings, all enclosed with a barbed wire fence. Although the original barracks were very similar to one another, the way they will be presented for tourists will show the architectural evolution from a simple wooden barrack hastily constructed for the convicts to a communal barrack for those discharged from the prison but still disfranchised. Such a barrack, ironically called "a house for newcomers", later transformed into a tenement house and then into an apartment building. It is planned to exploit these houses both as museum objects and as accommodation for tourists. The GULAG village is designed to have about 1055 sleeping places.

Picture 10: Plans and illustrations of the GULAG village in Vorkuta



Source: Sketched by Vitaliy Troshin.

The second part of this introductory tour will take place in Vorkuta proper, where visitors will be offered, in addition to excursions to the main historical and industrial sites, theatre performances dedicated to the Soviet period. The purpose of such a step-by-step journey, according to Vitaliy Troshin, is to immerse visitors in the history of industrial developments and settlements and have them feel as if they have experienced life there. When the visitors finally approach Vorkuta, they will view the contemporary city from a particular angle (Vitaliy Troshin, 11.02.2012, Vorkuta). It is very important for the developers of this project that the tourists, coming to Vorkuta, not only get to know this part of the Russian North but also feel the place and establish emotional connections.

Construction of the tourist village, started several years ago, was apparently suspended due to lack of funding. Surprisingly enough, the project is sponsored by the company Monolit-group, currently accused of tight relationships with the mafia. Last year, the head of

the company was imprisoned for his role in illegal activities conducted in the 1990s (Murtazin 07.07.2012). The project was frozen and Vitaliy Troshin was assigned to a position of city chief architect.

However, the idea of having a GULAG tourist village in Vorkuta is not forgotten. Municipal authorities hope that visits to the historical sites will contribute to city viability and give rise to ancillary small-scale economic activities. In a way, they are trying to commercialize the old stigmatization of the place and turn into a product for touristic consumption:

> "People will go on a pilgrimage not to Vorkuta (as such), but to the Vorkuta's long-suffering land, where thousands of people are buried. Thus, Vorkuta is more than a city; it signifies people's tragedies" (Vitaliy Troshin, 11.02.2012, Vorkuta).

Planners and developers are not the only social actors discussing tourism; it is touched upon in the kitchens of ordinary residents and the attitudes to such future developments are mixed. Some of my interviewees were positive about tourism's prospects, while others found exploitation of the area's "bloody past" disrespectful to the dead. For them it is a moral issue, and commercialization of the past shows the moral degradation of contemporary elites and their supporters. One of my key informants, Semen Mostunenko, prefers to silence the bloody history of the GULAG years. He says: "I do not know what for to come here? To see the cemetery, where the prisoners were buried alive? In my opinion, one should forget about such history" (Semen Mostunenko, 20.04.2012, Vorkuta). Others think that tourism in Vorkuta is utopian fantasy; they claim that the city cannot compete with traditional tourist destinations in central Russia (Oleg Gudovaniy, 21.02.2012, Vorkuta). My interview partners were generally rather sceptical about tourism in Vorkuta and unsure about using historical heritage as a commercial attraction. "Heritage has been cast in the role of both saviour and sinner" (Uzzell 1996: 219), because while heritage-based tourism can provide declining areas with opportunities for alternative development pathways, it can also lead to the manipulation and trivialising of history in order to better package it for consumers.

In general, the initial perception of the tourist sector as a source of "easy and fast money" proved to be mistaken. Despite the efforts taken and money invested, tourism in Vorkuta is very slow in developing because of several obstacles. First, the top-down approach based on Soviet-style planning has not produced the desired outcome. In order to make tourism work, there must be some knowledge accumulated, commercial interest and people's willingness to step in. One can push it from above, stimulate development of tourism politically, but if there are no agents implementing tourism on the ground it will remain on a

paper as a futurist project (Schmallegger 2010). Second, there is currently a lack of entrepreneurs seriously interested in running tourist-oriented businesses. Tourism today is run by small semi-legal firms and individual entrepreneurs unable to guarantee an appropriate level of services and safety:

> "There are many people working in this sector, but we are the only registered agency in Vorkuta who has the legal right and accreditation. Others – fishermen and hunters – also work as tour guides during the summer; I do not know how tourists find them". (Tatyana Andreeva, 20.02.2012, Vorkuta)

Third, the number of qualified instructors who know the area and have experience and safety knowledge as well as can provide true historical information is limited. The following quote from the previously cited interview illustrates some problems associated with inadequate qualification standards for tour guides:

> "There are not many specialists in the city and I know all of them. All others have no knowledge. If you hear them, GULAG was at every corners and every cross is a GULAG graveyard, they invent stories instead of telling the real once. Sometime I am even ashamed. Two Italians whom we took to the reindeer herders told us about the previous trip last year. I asked them, where have you slept? They said: in *vezdekhod*. It means that the person who took them to Usa river had no tent. On the way back *vezdekhod* broke down and they waited for somebody to pick them four days in the tundra. Of course, they were not insured. Somehow they got closer to the city and called the taxi. At the end, they realized that the one, who was supposed to pick them up, was arrested because of drunk driving" (Tatyana Andreeva, 20.02.2012, Vorkuta).

On the level of policy planning, the development of tourism in Vorkuta is also constrained by a lack of specialists and industry-specific knowledge. According to my field observations, involved public officers learn tourism from text books and other cases, which may or may not be relevant for Vorkuta. For example, planners travel to Italy instead of learning from successful cases in Russia and other Arctic areas or places with similar characteristics. The education and training of staff who could effectively take on the project is supposed to be organised within existing institutions such as the Polytechnic Technical School and the Teachers' Training College; the question, again, is who will provide the lessons.

Another myth that stunts the development of tourism is a belief that "tourists will come anyway once there will be infrastructures, like hostels and hotels". The municipality offers public property for reasonably priced rental costs to developers so they can be turned into

accommodation or recreation centres for tourists. In practice, municipal housing is often transformed into cheap accommodation for long-distance commuters employed in the gas transportation sector.

Fifth, the development of tourism in Vorkuta is driven by the individual perceptions and ideas of political leaders, who often lack a clear view as to who the customers are (or will be) and what they need. It is very much run without considering connections to other places in the Russian North and internationally. Planners have not yet identified a clear competitive advantage, even while emphasising GULAG and history of the city's development. The city waits for foreigners to arrive, but it has no information available in a language other than Russian. Almost nobody currently working in tourism speaks English, and there are no contracts with international tourist agencies for promoting the location. Foreign tourists may find a way to Vorkuta via websites (not translated into English) or tourist agencies in Moscow or Syktyvkar, which then contact local firms or individual guiders, but it is unclear how many tourists the city can expect to draw in this fashion.

It is not the purpose of this dissertation to focus an analytical microscope on why tourism currently fails in Vorkuta. However, I must emphasise that the success of this nascent industry very much depends on local specialists and those leaders involved in the process of city-making and their personal priorities. Leadership is extremely important in the context of a country like Russia and in the North especially. In my opinion, tourism in Vorkuta has a good chance to grow; however, it requires time, effort, community involvement and learning from the relevant successful examples.

Gas transportation hub

The flow of new investments into Vorkuta, in addition to those streaming from the coal sector, is associated with the construction of the cross-country gas pipeline Bovanenkovo – Ukhta, run by Yamalgazinvest, the subsidiary company of Gazprom, whose general responsibility is engineering and construction of gas transportation systems, which is then practically carried out by various sub- and sub-sub-contractors. Control of gas transportation and pipeline maintenance belongs to Gazprom Transgaz Ukhta, the second most important player in this project. The task of the pipeline is to transport the natural gas extracted on Yamal Peninsula through the Baydarata Bay of the Kara Sea to Ukhta, where the pipeline meets with the central Yamal – Europe gas pipeline, and then further south-west to Europe. The total length of the Bovanenkovo – Ukhta trunk pipeline is 1100 km. The project began in 2008 and today there are about 10 500 people involved in the construction process and 205

specialists in maintenance (Aleksey Krukov, 21.03.2012, Vorkuta). Construction of the first pipeline string is completed, with three more lines under way.

The majority of workers involved in the construction phase are long-distance commuters from the central and southern regions of Russia who compete with locals for jobs and affect the city in various ways. My interview partners, including municipal politicians as well as ordinary residents, expressed concern about related employment opportunities and demand for local manpower, as companies prefer to hire inter-regional workers. The main argument is that there are not enough workers in Vorkuta to perform large-scale construction. Furthermore, long-distance commuting offers firms cheaper, less demanding and often more qualified labourers from the southern and central regions (Nuykina 2013).

At the same time, managerial positions in the administrative office are held by *Vorkutintsy*. The project employs local power engineering specialists, heat and water supply specialists and communication specialists who have experience working in the northern conditions. In the future, during the phase of pipeline exploitation, remote sites will be operated on a rotational basis, while Vorkuta's gas compressor station, located 30 km away from the city, will be serviced by the home-grown labour force. In addition to the maintenance station, Gazprom Transgaz Ukhta plans to establish service units, such as a diagnostic centre and repair unit. According to the company's corporate strategy, more than 500 people will be recruited to operate support services (Aleksey Krukov, 21.03.2012, Vorkuta). Furthermore, given that the gas pipeline is inherently high risk, the city will host a special unit for emergency and recovery operations responsible for the consequences of potential accidents at gas pipelines and gas leaks. Gazprom has decided to create a head department for emergency performance in extreme situations with at least 100 city-based employees. In total, different projects of Gazprom Transgaz Ukhta in Vorkuta will employ approximately 2000 residents. In order to expand job opportunities for the northerners, the company offers training and workers' requalification for industry-specific professions in the neighbouring city of Ukhta (Zapolyarka online 22.12.2011).

Operations of the gas transportation industry in the North of Komi republic and particularly the massive inflow of a transient population to and through the city affect domestic life and community viability. The majority of fly-in, fly-out employees stay in special gated villages built outside of Vorkuta, or in tundra next to the work site. Such workers camps are separated from the rest of the city and consist of mobile residential containers that can be easily moved as work progresses. Workers living in commuter camps do not mix with residents. The latter are not allowed in guarded company camps and cannot

enter without special permission. These temporary labourers are isolated from the rest of the community and do not participate much in city life. However, there are workers, especially technical and engineering professionals, who live in dormitories and private apartments within the city. For this reason, demand for housing and accommodation in Vorkuta (and correspondingly, property values) have substantially increased over the last few years. For example, in 2000 a two-bedroom apartment in Vorkuta was worth 3000 USD. Today, a similar apartment is valued at 50 000 USD (Dmitriy, 13.04.2012, Vorkuta).

Escalation of property prices in Vorkuta aggravates the problem of housing affordability, particularly for low-income individuals and young people. There was a case widely discussed in the public while I was in the field, in which the city Museum of Local Lore was evicted because it could not afford increases in rent. This incident triggered protests among the residents. People took to the street to show their disagreement with the decision of the owner of the house in which the museum had been located. Although the landlord had a legal right to increase the rent, he earned a bad reputation in the eyes of citizens. The story ended happily for both sides when the museum moved to a different building provided by the municipality.

Higher housing prices, however, benefit the owners as they can make more money from selling or renting out flats. For renters, the rising cost of dwelling in Vorkuta leads to outmigration without reliance on government programs (Nuykina 2011). In the case of successful sales transactions, resettlers have an opportunity to purchase a flat in a small town or village outside the North from the money raised from the sale. This positive change was well described in an interview with Natalia:

> "A few years ago it was difficult to sell a flat in Vorkuta; people tried unsuccessfully to make a sale for several years. Now, for instance, one colleague of mine retires and moves out to *Bol'shaya zemlya* in one month and a half. She has not even announced the sale of her apartment. She is sure she will handle everything within a month" (Natalia, 25.04.2012, Vorkuta).

More resourceful and business-oriented citizens buy abandoned apartments to convert into simple inexpensive dormitories or hostels for temporary residents. In general, the arrival of inter-regional commuters to Vorkuta has brought a positive impetus to the development of the service sector and small businesses in the city. New businesses generate jobs for local residents and enrich the municipal budget with taxes, causing greater economic diversification and overall prosperity. At the same time, some small-scale enterprises experience labour shortages, especially in the trade professions, as salaries in the mining sector are higher and

thus more attractive. Locals refuse to work for lower wages and often choose inter-regional commuting as an alternative employment opportunity, even if such work is less qualified. The owner of two grocery shops, Viktor Bogino, whom I interviewed at the end of my fieldwork, complained about difficulty of finding sales counter help in Vorkuta. Salaries for such professions are low and people search for employment in other fields:

> "It is problematic to find a sales person. The average monthly salary is around 20 000 RUB,[19] if I raise them a salary it will influence the price of goods. People do not want to work for this little money" (Viktor Bogino, 19.04.2012, Vorkuta).

Although in most cases companies provide employees with free meals and accommodation, shift workers spend money in the local shops on food, mobile communication, laundry services, barbers, cafés, presents for the family, etc. My interviews with long-distance commuters show that the main expenses (when they are on duty) include mobile phone top-ups, cigarettes, food, and personal hygiene products. Konstantin, an inter-regional commuter from Belorussia working at the construction site near Baidaratskaya Bay, explains that he spends an average of 170 USD on each such shopping excursion. Before departing home he goes to a café in the city for drinking and eating together with other workfellows. Such gathering has a symbolic function of celebrating the end of the shift (Kostantin Gradovich, 30.04.2012, train Vorkuta-Moscow). Locals know about this practice and try to avoid commuters' gathering places so as not to get into trouble with drunken *vakhtoviki*. There are occasionally criminal incidents between commuters and locals reported in the newspapers that contribute to negative attitudes towards commuters as trouble-makers.

Picture 11: Long-distance commuters in Vorkuta

Source: Pictures taken by the author

[19] 20 000 RUB for 20 shifts per month. 1 shift is around 12 hours long.

Such cafés are also desired spots for sex workers who try to hook commuters before they get on the train. As in other cases, long-distance commuting in Vorkuta has been followed by an increase in prostitution and sexually transmitted diseases. In addition to local prostitutes, sex workers, like industrial workers, come to the city from other regions and have similar shift systems – after spending several weeks in the North they return to their families and home communities. This problem was publicly addressed by former city manager Anatoliy Puro. He claimed:

> "Prostitution in Vorkuta is traditionally "roofed" by the local organised crime groups. Everyone can see that the city is stoked with "leisure" advertisements. It must be fought not only by the police department, but also by civil society. Because of the recent labour migration to Vorkuta this criminal business is becoming larger and more profitable" (cit. in Zapolyarka online 17.08.2011).

As this topic is taboo and rarely discussed by either shift workers or their employers, it is difficult to evaluate the scale of the problem and the impact it has on the city. I was not able to gather much information about prostitution in Vorkuta; however, I cannot leave this issue completely silenced, as it was often mentioned in interviews as one of the negative outcomes of construction works in the urban district.

Speaking of positive changes in the city wrought by the new population, Aleksey Krukov, the head of Gazprom Trans Gas in Vorkuta responsible for the project implementation, expressed confidence in the contributions of gas transportation (in addition to coal mining) to the future viability of the city:

> "Underfoot of Vorkuta is a powerful energy source. Expansion of gas transportation in the urban district is decided on the federal level; the local leaders do not play any role in this process either positive or negative. Consequently, all other economic developments will be linked to gas. It produces relatively inexpensive heat and light, and thus extraction of mineral products become possible. As for service sector, it is a profitable business to serve the pipeline – digging, dumping driveway, constructing roads and repairing. It interests sub-contractors. Our firm is responsible for gas transportation, all the rest is outsourced, like cleaning, for example. Who cleans our office rooms? A cleaning company does. Who does the renovation in the building? Also some company. Who drives us [employees] around? Who provides air transportation? And who sews work clothes? Where do we wash the work wear? And so on. Smaller business actors respond to needs, particularly to the needs of big industries" (Aleksey Krukov, 21.03.2012, Vorkuta).

The appearance of Gazprom in Vorkuta was accompanied by the mushrooming of industry-related firms. Statistical information in reports by city administration supports this argument. In 2012, the number of small and medium-sized enterprises had risen to 3200 firms from 2957 in 2010, an 8,2% increase. Still, the entire economic potential of long-distance commuting has not yet been considered by local authorities. Speaking the language of economics, shift workers are consumers who have purchasing power and demands that reflect the specifics of their lifestyle. Fly-in, fly-out workers are a new target group for businesses that already exist in the host city, or that plan to open. Therefore, the study of shift workers' needs could identify ways to generate additional income for local businesses and the community as a whole. Although the impact of a temporary population on city life is noticeable even for an outsider, long-distance commuters simply have not been included in long-term planning:

> "While the municipal administration emphasises negative impacts of the recent developments and long-distance commuting, like increase of sexually-transmitted diseases, heavy drinking in the trains, garbage on the streets, fights in the cafés, etc., rapid gain in sales in the supermarket "Maxim" and creation of new job is overseen. Nobody talks about potentials" (Aleksey Krukov, 21.03.2012, Vorkuta).

Apart from adding a transient population to Vorkuta and stimulating economic diversification, Gazprom and allied sub-contracting companies enrich the municipal budget through tax payments. The city budget is composed of both local tax revenue and transfers from the regional budget. In 2001, the city budget of Vorkuta was 3,267 billion RUB, of which 1,523 billion RUB came from locally collected tax revenues (Puro 23.05.2012). 90% of these tax revenues are from individual incomes – a principal source of the city treasury. In the same year tax revenues increased by 30% thanks to gas industry enterprises and the personal tax payments of commuting workers (Sovet goroda Vorkuta 26.04.2013). In 2012 and 2013, the growth continued mainly because of tax deductions coming from the gas sector. In 2012, the flow of revenues to the city treasury, taking into account the funds received from the republican budget, amounted to 4,341 billion RUB. Out of this sum, there were 3,481 billion RUB of taxes raised locally in Vorkuta. In relation to 2011 the increase of tax-related revenues was 23,9% (Sovet goroda Vorkuta 26.04.2013).

Additionally, companies contribute to the regional budget via corporate profit tax, corporate property tax, severance tax and special social payments specified in the partnership agreement. For example, before the construction of Bovanenkovo – Ukhta pipeline began the project developer, Yamalgazinvest, and the regional government signed an agreement on

social cooperation. The company allocated 6,5 billion RUB to the Komi Republic as compensation for expected damage of roads caused by heavy truck transport in the course of establishing the pipeline. “Do you know how much the city of Vorkuta received out of that money for fixing the roads?”, Aleksey Krukov asked me. “80 million RUB. Compare the amount of sums! The money, however, was purposefully given for development of this urban district, as Vorkuta is the most affected area” (Aleksey Krukov, 21.03.2012, Vorkuta). Within the same project between 2009 and 2012, the republican budget received 2 billion RUB from Gazprom Transgaz Ukhta specifically allocated for social infrastructure. These funds were directed to the construction and reconstruction of, respectively, new and existing sports facilities and health care institutions. Decisions on how to allocate these funds was made by the regional administration upon the recommendation of municipal leaders. 350 million RUB were officially devoted to Vorkuta for the period 2010-2013, of which 100 million RUB were reserved for repairing health care institutions and purchasing therapeutic equipment. The remaining 250 million RUB were designated for construction of a modern sports complex with swimming pool. However, as in the first case, allocated funds reached the city only partially. Between 2010-2011, only 13,8 million RUB were invested in the repair and technological improvement of the public hospital and ambulance station in Vorkuta. In 2012, only 32,1 million RUB were allocated for repairs to Vorkuta children’s hospital and maternity home and improving city medical facilities. As for construction of the sports centre, so far no money has been given to Vorkuta from the endowment capital of Gazprom Transgaz Ukhta (Sovershaeva 26.04.2012). The disparity between announced social projects and promised funds vis-à-vis the actual practice leads to complicated relationships within the prevailing power hierarchy. Under Putin’s presidency, republican authorities play a decisive role in managing subordinate communities and influencing their viability. In some cases, decisions taken in the regional capital may put a municipality in a disadvantageous position. Thus, the problem does not lie with companies failing to care about city development, but rather with the money distribution process and budgetary relations between the republic and the municipality.

Finally, gas transportation industry works in Vorkuta enrich place identity with new connotations. No longer only is a mono-industrial coal-centred community, the city becoming known as part of Russia’s largest gas transportation corridor. To construct and strengthen new place identity, the local administration proposed to hold a city festival devoted to workers of the oil and gas industry. Through such celebration, local politicians aim to better integration the temporary population into city life as well as symbolically recognize their presence

(Zapolyarka online 11.04.2012). Vorkuta is no longer merely a coal mining place; it hosts two industries and two population groups, even if one of them remains absent from city statistics and city planning. Moreover, because of recent industrial developments, Vorkuta has gained new socio-economic connections to other regions in the North and beyond. These will be carefully reviewed in the following section.

Shrinking city

In 2006, Vorkuta status became that of an urban district. This includes the core municipality, where most population is concentrated, and the eight urban-type mining settlements of Vorgashor, Eletskiy, Zapolyarniy, Komsonmol'skiy, Mul'da, and Oktyabr'skiy, Promishlenniy and Severniy. The Vorkuta urban district also includes five distant village-type communities (Meskashor, Seyda, Sivomaskinskiy, Khanovey, Yurshor) and two villages (Elets and Nikita) that were initially established to service and maintain the railroad. Due to their outlying position, these seven communities, as well as the settlement of Eletskiy 52 kilometers south of Vorkuta, do not have bus service and are only connected to the administrative centre by train on a day-to-day basis. The urban-type settlements are located in the northern part of the district (except of Yurshor), whereas rural settlements are concentrated in the south (except the village Eletskiy), along the rail road. In total, the urban district of Vorkuta consists of the core city and fifteen smaller settlements.

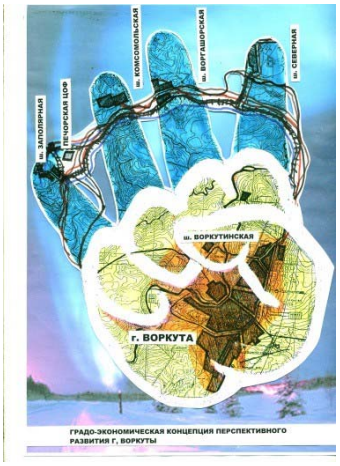
Demographic decline due to outmigration, started in the 1990s, continues today. Official statistics report that 88 026 people currently live in the urban district, with 64 353 of those residing in the city core. Within the last four years, the population of Vorkuta decreased by 10 500 people; in 2013, over 3300 persons left the district. If this dynamic persists, by 2020 the district will only be home to 45 000 people (Komistat 2014).

The demographic transformation of Vorkuta has also resulted in the circular clustering of communities around the central core. Due to continuous outmigration and resettlement measures, Mul'da, Oktyabr'skiy, Promishlenniy and Yurshor recently joined the list of Russian ghost towns. Settlements become abandoned, but there is no budgetary capacity to demolish the buildings and re-cultivate the area. The remaining houses become meeting places for homeless people and young skinheads (Pilkington, Omelchenko et al. 2010). Other declining settlements, where the majority of apartments have been left by their owners, are partially inhabited and undergoing the process of closure. The villages Nikita and Elets accommodate hunters and gatherers during the summer season and remain vacant throughout the winter. In order to economize on expenditures, the current master plan, issued in 2009,

recommends further downsizing the city to 50 000 residents and placing the population in a few selected areas. In the future, Vorkuta will be reduced to the administrative centre of Vorkuta and satellite settlements of Severniy and Vorgashor. Vitaliy Troshin explained to me the process of city shrinkage using the example of a hand with the fingers spread in different directions, with the palm symbolizing the city centre and the fingers the satellite settlements:

> "Imagine that the current spatial structure of Vorkuta is like a hand with five fingers. One has to take care after every finger. But you cannot wear thin gloves in winter, it is too cold and soon fingers freeze. It may end up badly for the whole hand. So to keep warm you make a fist, the same principle is with the city. By making it less scattered, we improve viability and can serve people with better services. We do not have resources "to wear gloves"" (Vitaliy Troshin, 30.04.2011, Vorkuta).

Picture 12: City shrinkage model applied in Vorkuta



Source: Scratched by Vitaliy Troshin.

Picture 13: Advertisement in the local newspaper about monetization of subsidised resettlement certificates

Source: Zapolyar'e 2010

My interviews show that the main concern of the regional and local authorities is improving the efficiency of budgetary resources, and that this is directly linked to the spatial distribution of the population within municipal borders and rearrangement of the built environment and public utilities according to contemporary capacities. As in previous decades, the need to consolidate communal facilities and minimize living costs is still on the agenda. The latter include expenses related to heating, energy supply, road construction, cleaning the city from snow during the cold period, demolition of old buildings and resettling

of the population from the margins to the city centre. As the minister of economic development, Olga Konakova, explained: "While expanding the coal industry, we try to optimize the public expenses related to population size" (Olga Konakova, 03.02.2012, Syktyvkar). Within this logic, guided shrinkage is seen as a positive and necessary contribution to city viability.

All three levels of the power hierarchy are unified in their position on the distribution of the population in northern regions. It was said in my interviews, and confirmed by policy documents, that the number of residents should correspond with the production requirements of the mining industry. In order to adjust the size and structure of the population, the federal centre continues investing in northern resettlement programs that are carried out by Federal Law N125-FZ from 25.10.2002. On the other hand, bottom-up feedback mechanisms activate the role of regional governments in assisting municipalities with delivering their concerns to the Ministry of Regional Development:

> "There is a certain federal amount that is allocated to all northern regions annually. We should support Vorkuta and try to get for our residents larger sum from Moscow. For this purpose we develop all kinds of calculations and reports" (Olga Konakova, 03.02.2012, Syktyvkar).

"Shrinkage benefits both the local population, as they are provided with better services and facilities, and also the local budget, as it helps saving the budget", said the head of the city, Yuriy Sopov, when I interviewed him in 2012. For Vorkuta, it is argued, contraction is not a negative trend, but a win-win situation. Becoming smaller, the city gains greater viability. Yuriy Sopov comments in the interview on the task of the municipal administration in navigating the process:

> "We must think of reduction and cost optimization. In my view the most important thing is to compact the city. There were many settlements on the margin of Vorkuta, much more than five. And, of course, engineering networks, heating pipes, roads have stretched to each settlement. Maintenance of such broad structure is extremely expensive. In the contemporary economic conditions we should "stretch the legs according to the coverlet" and think of cost-saving measures. We should move people to the core of Vorkuta, because only there we can provide inhabitants with a better quality of life, good kindergartens, good schools, cultural facilities, restaurants and so on. All these are in the centre. Almost nothing is left in *poselki*" (Yuriy Sopov, 17.04.2012, Vorkuta).

Started in the mid-1990s as collective relocation from northern regions to targeted areas in central Russia, the outmigration scheme was in 2002 transformed into individual

resettlement. The government phased out its involvement in constructing apartments for northern citizens; instead, market mechanisms regulating mobility were introduced. Program participants were free to choose a suitable dwelling and a region of future residence, and were given greater responsibilities related to preparing the necessary documents, purchasing a flat, transferring their northern apartment to municipal ownership, and sending belongings to the South. Although Federal Law N125-FZ provides recipients with greater freedom, it is also fraught with organisational difficulties, especially for those of old age – the most numerous group of program participants. Compared to the previous arrangement based on shared funding, beneficiaries receive a housing certificate for a certain amount in exchange for their northern apartments that they can use to purchase a dwelling in the central regions of Russia (Federal Law N212-FZ 17.07.2011). State relocation subsidies rose to 80-100% of the total housing value in the recipient area, but these values are based on ministerial calculations, which can differ greatly from market prices. Despite the fact that relocation programs were initiated in the post-Soviet years as an assistance measure, the relevance of the problem has not been reduced due to the high number of people waiting for state support (and the small amount of state funding relative to need).

In addition to the existing national program, the "Northern restructuring pilot project", financed from a loan extended by the World Bank, was introduced in 2002. Compared to Federal Law N 125-FZ, which encompasses all northern regions, the World Bank scheme covered selected Arctic territories – the Susuman district of the Magadan region, Norilsk and Vorkuta – that represent the diversity of the economic and social environment of the Russian North (Annex 6). The aim of the "Northern restructuring pilot project" was similar in all three cases, namely, to induce outmigration of the non-working population as well as downsize and transform chosen municipalities into successful industrial areas (World Bank 2001). The project planned to relocate 6422 citizens (3688 households) from Vorkuta to the South. During the years of implementation, the project provided 5538 persons (2476 households) with housing certificates (World Bank 2010).

The World Bank project's development objective was to apply in practice a set of measures for helping depressed urban areas cope with the consequences of socio-economic devastation. It was expected that the development patterns elaborated and tested by the World Bank in Vorkuta, Norilsk and Magadan regions would be expanded to include other Russian northern communities. City viability, defined by World Bank experts, primarily refers to self-sustained economic developments, reflecting stability in economic productivity and average

material well-being of the population. Viable communities, in this context, are economically flourishing communities (The World Bank 2001).

The Northern Restructuring Pilot Project was closed down in September 2009. Designed as a pilot project, it implemented relocation mechanisms built on a housing certificate scheme and stimulated the elaboration of a new approach towards spatial allocation of people that was further adopted in federal relocation policies. As for creating self-sustained communities – the second goal of the project – there was no significant impact. Moreover, an analysis of the project's implementation showed that city viability cannot be narrowed down to purely economic parameters (Nuykina 2011). The logic of reducing the population size to achieve greater prosperity has not proved sound. In Vorkuta and in other localities, city viability has been demonstrated when people refused to leave and used state funding to serve other interests while they continued to live in the North. State subsidies intended to facilitate outmigration to the South are instead regarded by these people as a tool with which to improve the living conditions in the North (Bolotova and Stammler 2010; Nuykina 2011). In the simplest terms, a place is made viable when residents choose to invest themselves in it.

Because of relocation programs and different assistance measures, the queue of people registered for resettlement from Vorkuta decreased from 24 670 in 2009 to 19 617 applicants in 2014 (out of 88 026 permanent residents)[20]. It is difficult to comprehensively assess the efficiency of relocation policies in terms of viability, because the initial ambitious idea to depopulate the North has had small-scale practical realization. To illustrate, in 2011 only 208 families received state funding. In 2012, the number increased to 323 families, and in 2013 only 196 families were provided with outmigration support from the state (Administratsiya goroda MO GO Vorkuta 2014: 6). The small number of distributed certificates in relation to the number of queuing participants demonstrates the low rate of implementation due to underfunding. Although it was often said in my interviews that "every second *Vorkutinets* is on the list for resettlement", not everyone who applies for relocation subsidies actually plans on leaving. Relocation programs (especially during the last years, when the economy in the North, and Vorkuta in particular, strengthened) are often treated as a means for obtaining funds that can be used to promote an individual's private interests. This is especially visible in areas with healthier socio-economic conditions.

According to local media reports, approximately 20% of the population registered in Vorkuta does not permanently live in the city. Despite making their permanent residence elsewhere, many people do not de-register in hope of receiving northern benefits, such as

[20] As of 01.01.2014

resettlement grants. For instance, it is commonly known that nobody resides in Oktyabrskiy, yet in 2010 there were 280 persons officially registered as permanent inhabitants (Komistat 2010). Such "dead heads" create complications for local officials who do not hold up-to-date information on residential properties. Yuriy Sopov explains that in the 1990s, when housing in Vorkuta "had a price of a flight ticket to the main land" (because of stagnated real estate market and tremendously increased utility costs), residents who had the opportunity to migrate somewhere else moved out, leaving behind their apartments, as it was almost impossible to sell them on the market. This resulted in an enormous amount of empty flats in the city that remained private property. The central heating system in Vorkuta, established by the former regime according to the needs of industry and a population of 200 000, warms an entire building even if only one apartment is occupied and the rest are uninhabited. Needlessly high utility costs must then be paid from the local budget. Yuriy Sopov complains:

> "The main challenge is to shrink the city, but we shall do it gradually and thoughtfully. It cannot be made in a single stroke, because there are people still living in *poselki*. Furthermore there are no enough flats for resettles in the satisfactory state. There just is not. Therefore our task is to make an inventory of residential properties in the city and find out how many apartments we actually have available. Unfortunately, we still do not have a broad picture how many flats belong to the municipality and how many are private. We must search for the proprietors through the courts that may take from three to five years. And it could be so that we will not find them. So before relocating people to the central part of Vorkuta we should decide how to deal with the housing stock" (Yuriy Sopov 17.04.2012, Vorkuta).

While municipal officials are befogged and struggle to sort out legal procedures, the residents of northern declining communities try to solve the issue of relocation on their own. Nadezhda Shefer, director of the garment factory in Vorkuta, tells a story that is typical for many. Previously she lived in one of the small mining communities on the district's periphery:

> "I lived long in the house which was slowly approaching demolishing. I saw that my neighbours fussing and importuning the administration. They tried to get resettlement assistance. I simply waited. I made my apartment look decent from the inside, so nobody could realize that our building is in a deplorable state. Of course when I have been going out, I saw that the house collapses, but in my flat I did not think of anything, as I made it cosy and kept it clean. I did not have time to go to the administration or to wait in a queue. When I saw that my street is almost abundant I finally went to the

> administration and asked. They provided me with several options, so I could choose. But the state of the housing they offered was so poor that I could not believe my own eyes. At that time one can buy an apartment for 200 000 rubbles. The total costs of renovation of my new apartment made the same amount. If I would not rely on the municipality and just buy an apartment myself, I would spend exactly the same amount of money" (Nadezhda Shefer, 27.03.2012, Vorkuta).

This example, again, demonstrates that locals still expect the state to play a central role, despite government's track record of being unable to satisfy the needs of inhabitants. It is clear that present-day northern municipalities have limited capacities and competence for satisfactorily managing shrinkage. Municipal government appear to remain restricted by legislation gaps and financial constraints as well as by inaccurate information regarding the housing stock in Vorkuta.

Urban restructuring has been facilitated through relocation programs; however, it was not resourcefully organised. There is no controlling mechanism for spatial contraction, although the necessity of shrinkage is acknowledged both by policy-makers and residents who complain about worsening housing conditions and public utilities. Local approaches to regulate shrinkage show poor performance and are mostly implemented through North-South outmigration assistance schemes. Adaptive reuse of available urban space is not yet strategically addressed; it is far beyond the real capacities of the municipalities and their current priorities. Ghost settlements are given to the wind, snow and rain that slowly turn previously flourishing and presently available places into ruins. Some are completely uninhabited, while in others *Vorkutintsy* are waiting for their dream flats.

Steered shrinking – a scheme employed for the development of northern regions during the early post-Soviet years and tested in various forms (Nuykina 2011) – is currently recommended for declining mono-industrial cities in other parts of Russia in case of the closure of the city-forming enterprise (Bazel 2014). While the Soviet government heavily invested in the construction of new cities, the administration in present-day Moscow allocates millions of RUB to close cities that are not sufficiently suited to modern conditions. The large-scale social engineering schemes of the Soviet planners aimed at populating the North have been substituted with large-scale social engineering schemes to depopulate the North. Although we cannot compare the forced migration of the Stalinist regime with the outmigration assistance packages of the Putin administration, the principle of population distribution via top-down policies is present in both. The state aims to define key areas for habitation and stimulating (in one way or another) the movement of people accordingly.

Previous research, however, shows that top-down measures enacted by the centralized state are likely to have unintended consequences (Nuykina 2011). The paradox of the northern relocation policy is that neoliberal goals have been pursued through social engineering measures and state-subsidisation typical of the former Soviet regime (Nuykina 2011: 60).

Arctic base town

In December 2013, Russian president Vladimir Putin delivered his annual report to the Federal Assembly in which he defined the Arctic territory as the main target area for further development in the 21st century. As conceived by the federal authorities, the northern areas should become a national resource base and a stronghold of the country. Today, approximately half of Russia's export profits and a quarter of its tax revenues originate in the North. "Moreover, monopolistic and windfall profits in the context of the Russian economy come in the form of resource rents (profits, taxes, duties, subsidies to other sectors and extra costs) from the northern peripheries, i.e. remote places built especially for the purpose of extracting and refining natural resources" (Rautio and Tykkyläinen 2008: 12). "In addition, the area has high strategic significance given the Northern Sea Route and location of several key military and naval base" (Rasell 2009: 92).

Present-day modernisation of the Arctic region is regulated by the "Development strategy of the Russian Arctic for the period until 2020"[21] – the main framework policy document, which proposes to stimulate industrial, economic and social advancement of the northern areas. The main policy instruments for realizing the Arctic strategy – the Federal law "On the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation" and the state program "Socio-economic development of the Russian Arctic zone for the period up to 2020" – are at the time of this writing being finalized by the Ministry of Regional Development. Both papers are subject to a process of public discussion.

In general, development of the North in present-day conditions is based on the principles of vertical governance and an economizing approach to regional development. In contrast to the Soviet years, northern provinces no longer have prerogative power, putting them on par with other Russian regions in the power hierarchy, and many former privileges have been nullified. "The state still provides welfare provisions to its citizens through different social programs; however, the moves to limit consumption of welfare services and to

[21] Was approved by Vladimir Putin on the 20th February 2013.

make recipients bear greater responsibility for their well-being are key aspects of neoliberal governmentality" (Lemke 2001 cit. in Wengle and Rasell 2008: 748).

The socio-economic development of the Russian North is significantly shaped and conditioned by economic and institutional dependence on a distant core. This centre-periphery relationship is the key to understanding elaboration and implementation of northern policies, since the development of the North is still very much driven by the interests of the federal ministries, leaving limited space for local interference (Nuykina 2011: 20). The political centre in Moscow gains economic strength by exploiting resourceful Arctic areas. This economic asymmetry is reinforced by "unequal relationships of power which were instantiated within institutions" (Hayter and Barnes 1990: 160) and "largely defined by the "command-and-control" functions exercised by the métropole over periphery" (Hutton 1997: 70).

The last new town in the Soviet North was founded in the late 1970s, and since then the "new town model" (Storey 2010) has been gradually replaced by greater use of commuting labour forces. This fly-in, fly-out method is not designed to be a substitute for existing municipalities in the circumpolar zone, but is used within the framework "home regions – base town – workers' camp". It is assumed that existing northern settlements with developed infrastructure will become outposts for further development of the Arctic and Sub-Arctic territories. Arctic base towns should possess the following assets: developed North-South transportation network, a convenient transport scheme collecting commute workers, social infrastructure, including the availability of medical facilities with modern equipment, available housing stock, recreation facilities for shift workers, recruitment and training centres, a qualified labour force according to the needs of industry, etc. (Erta 2004). Such towns are logistical centres in frontier areas and pools of skilled workers. They are also used as collection and distribution points for inter-regional shift workers who need places to stay during breaks between shifts. For northern places with high unemployment rates and poor economic prospects, intra-regional commuting to the remote industrial sites may create additional employment and income diversification of the local population. In this case, northern towns are places for the permanent habitation of regional shift workers with families.

To my knowledge, there is no officially adopted list of Russian northern base towns, although there were various attempts to make such a selection. The program of complex industrial development of hydrocarbon deposits on the Yamal Peninsula, designed by OAO Gazprom, identifies Ukhta, Vorkuta, Nadim, Novy Urengoy and Tyumen as strategic hubs for industrial activities on the Yamal Peninsula. The transportation of LDC workers from these

cities will be accomplished by train, airplanes and buses (during the winter period). According to an alternative scheme, offered by the NIIP Gradostroitelstva for the Ministry of Regional Development in 2011, Ukhta, Vorkuta, Novy Urengoy, Norilsk and Magadan are defined as base centres for operations in the North. In both projections, the urban district of Vorkuta is considered an important point of entry for regional industrial developments, as it has well established socio-economic relations with the southwest regions that are reinforced through the movement of people, goods, materials, financial capital and extracted resources.

The city is connected to *Bol'shaya zhemlya* though the personal histories and memories of former migrants, holiday trips, phone calls and letters, friends and relatives remaining in the former home places. In the other direction, there are students who go to the central and southern Russian regions to study and pensioners who move back South for their retirement. Extraction of high quality coking coal has historically connected Vorkuta as a resource treasury to the metallurgic industries in Cherepovets and Lipetsk. The most recent North-South connection comes from the construction of the export pipeline that transports natural gas from deposits on the Yamal Peninsula further south. On the other hand, the central and southern regions supply the city with consumer goods, industry-related materials and inter-regional workers who rotate back and forth. A mobile workforce comes to and through Vorkuta from all over Russia and neighbouring countries, including Armenia, Ukraine, Belarus and even Turkey.

At the same time, the infrastructure and socio-cultural potential of Vorkuta is hardly exploited for the development of neighbouring areas (NIIP Gradostroitelstva 2011). Arctic-Arctic horizontal connections between Vorkuta and other northern territories gradually form along with the development of natural resources in the Polar Urals and the Arctic region. Northern linkages may become stronger in the process of implementation of the federal target program "Development of transport system of Russia (2010-2015)" and inter-regional project "Ural Industrial – Ural Polar". The aim of the latter is to exploit regional mineral wealth, transport connectedness of the northern and the southern parts of the Ural Federal District and overall economic development of the area. The project targets the transport and energy sectors as well as the mining industry. After completion of the long distance railway "Severnyy shirotnyy khod", Vorkuta will be linked with industrial sites on the Yamal peninsula and other northern settlements including Salekhard, Nadym, Novy Urengoy and possibly (in the future) Norilsk and Igarka. If the Northern railway is constructed according to current plans, Vorkuta may become an important passenger-and-freight hub.

Many of those people who chose to stay in the town instead of joining the mass outmigration of the 1990s (Heleniak 1999) began to commute to the production sites of the Yamal Peninsula or to oil-gas fields near Usinsk and Vyktyl. They also work as intra-regional commuters on the export gas pipeline project Bovanenkovo – Ukhta. On the other hand, Vorkuta receives massive inflows of temporary workers for construction of gas transport pipelines for "Gazprom" and to work in oil-gas and construction industries on the Yamal Peninsula. Although inter-regional commuting is a rather new phenomenon for Vorkuta, it has increased considerably over the past few years, practically turning the city into a distribution centre for inter-regional long-distance commuting labour. According to internal statistics of the Komiaviatrans airline, there were 1052 helicopter flights transporting 23 500 workers from Vorkuta to Yamal (one way) in 2011, in addition to the regularly scheduled train trips (Alexander Ponomarev, 06.02.2012, Syktyvkar). *Vakhtoviki* are not counted in the population statistics of Vorkuta since they are not officially registered there. In practice, the town is affected by the large-scale influx of this transient population. Some of them stay in the city for mere hours on their way to field camps or returning home. Others remain in Vorkuta for longer periods of time, depending on their shift and employment agreement. The latter usually work nearby the city or in technical and engineering positions.

Labour migrants are attracted to Vorkuta for several reasons: the lack of local specialists with industry specific qualifications and experience, regional differences in living costs and employment opportunities and a higher income compared to the salaries commute workers can draw in their place of permanent residence. For example, a public transport driver in the Astrakhan region receives about 400 USD per month. The same job pays 800 USD in the Republic of Bashkortostan and 1500 USD per shift working twelve hours per day in the North. Since Vorkuta is directly connected to many of the central and southern regions by rail, which allows for relatively low-cost journeys, ever more workers travel to the distant North for work.

In addition to the intra-regional commuting workforce, the city supplies domestic labour to Gazprom and sub-contracting firms such as Stroygazkonsulting, which is involved in laying pipelines, building bridges and roads and exploitation of natural resources. The appearance of new economic players in construction projects and mining activities in the urban district and further North, as well as the influx of temporary (predominantly male) workers, influences socio-economic environment in Vorkuta in a complex way, as described in the previous section (Nuykina 2013).

The identity of Vorkuta as an Arctic base town is steered and reinforced by local and regional authorities who try to make the city an important player in the Arctic economic and geopolitical arena. According to the state program "Socio-economic development of the Russian Arctic zone for the period up to 2020", continental Arctic territory includes cities and areas that have access to the sea – Murmansk Region, Yamal-Nenets, Nenets and Chukotka autonomous districts, the five entities of the republic of Sakha (Yakutia), the three municipalities of Krasnoyarsk region and seven municipalities of the Arkhangelsk region. Komi Republic (and Vorkuta particularly) was not initially considered in the program. However, the list of areas belonging to the Russian Arctic zone has not been revised since 1989. The regional government and particularly the head of the Republic, Vyatcheslav Gaizer, have attempted to lobby for the interests of Vorkuta in federal interdepartmental commissions. The republican initiative is supported locally, where 1335 (87% of 1532 respondents) consider Vorkuta an Arctic city (Zapolyarka online n.d.). On the 28th of February, 2014, the working group responsible for controlling and coordinating implementation of the Arctic development strategy "agreed with most of the arguments presented by the Komi Republic, confirming the possibility and necessity of including Vorkuta in this federal program" (Zapolyarka online 28.02.2014). Future negotiations will show whether Vorkuta will be formally accepted as part of the Arctic region or not. What is important for the purpose of this dissertation is how social actors in the name of municipal and regional policy-makers try to leverage the city's geographic location for improving its positionality and economic prospects.

Home for permanent residence

In the eyes of an outsider, Vorkuta may be associated with a landscape of cold desert and severe climate, territorial isolation, extreme Soviet history, polluting coal mines, forgotten settlements. A stereotypical description of the city from outside refers to the well-known Soviet comedy Gentlemen of Fortune, where Vorkuta was named as a place of detention. Based on interviews with young skinheads, Hilary Pilkington concludes: "Vorkuta is a place to which people came involuntarily, stay unintentionally and in which they make no long term investment. <…> It is a place which friends and relatives have either left or plan to leave; an emotional community whose past is silenced and whose future is projected elsewhere" (Pilkington 2008: 12).

My research draws a different picture of Vorkuta; it focuses on the active core of the community and the people who remain by choice. Although outmigration from Vorkuta

continues, especially among members of the younger generation who move away to study, work professionally, and experience life in a big city, there are those who have deliberately chosen to stay in the North and associate their life prospects with Vorkuta. Who are these people and what roots them here? How do they perceive the future development of the city and the ways in which residents engage in improving quality of life in Vorkuta? Previous sections of this chapter presented an assortment of ideas and official strategies for improving city viability from the perspective of the government and big corporations. I have also touched upon the multifaceted impact of long-distance commuters on city development, while the stories of permanent residents have been reserved for the following pages. By revealing people's experiences and their interaction with the city, this section shows that "place is a process and it is human experience and struggle that gives meaning to place" (Harner 2001: 60).

One of the unique transformations of the late post-Soviet years was the evolution of northern settlements from places for temporality to permanent settlements in which people feel at home (Bolotova and Stammler 2010; Stammler 2010). With an increasing number of inhabitants attached to the region, the temporary status of northern industrial towns to which people initially moved for work (and planned to leave once they retired) has shifted. Better employment and career opportunities, an established circle of friends and colleagues, good schools and sport facilities for children and comfortable living in terms of "there is everything one needs" are reasons for remaining in the North mentioned by my respondents. People do not want to leave, as they have a decent life and better social services in comparison to what they could afford in the big cities of central Russia. Moreover, there is an emotional sense of belonging that contributes to the process of "making it home".

This first story is about Semen Mostunenko. He is a young man in his thirties who works as a miner for the city-forming enterprise Vorkutaugol. I got to know him via one of my other respondents. He was recommended to me as "one of those helping the city, although he is not from Vorkuta". Semen moved to the North in 1999 with his wife, whose male relatives had worked in the mines for several decades. He explains the decision to change his place of residence:

> "I met my wife when I was nineteen, shortly after she got pregnant and so I had to feed the family. Her family is one of the coal mining dynasties; father and grandfather spend their lives underground. I saw that it possible to live this way, earn good money, make provision for the family and live decently. Therefore I came here" (Semen Mostunenko, 20.04.2012, Vorkuta).

Semen takes an active role in community life and considers Vorkuta a true home. His work schedule is based on shifts, and Semen and the members of his brigade spend their off-hours training local youth. First, he volunteered as an assistant boxing trainer at the technical vocational school. There was not enough equipment in the gym there, so he bought first one punching bag with his own money and then another. In this way, he started Timurite movement in the district[22]:

> "In the following summer I was able to find construction materials for 20 000 rubbles and slowly, step by step I began to repair the gym" – says Semen. "Our gym is placed in the basement and the water from the street penetrates inside the room, especially during the spring when the snow melts. In the morning before my shift began I came to clean the building from the snow. One boy whom I trained taught me how to cement. Thus, together with the boys we repaired the gym. It was the beginning. Next year I asked the head of my brigade if the company can find money for building up the ice-hockey rink, we needed the construction materials. Otherwise the boys, whom I looked after, would wander off and nobody knows the consequences. I was such a child and run away from home several times. I know the problems of these guys and care about their future. I want to make them "busy" with sports and work" (Semen Mostunenko, 20.04.2012, Vorkuta).

That same summer, Semen and his close co-workers installed a new hockey pitch. The effort made him known in the community and soon the director of the district school asked Semen to help renovate the children's choreographic studio. After that, he helped to renew a school sport club and color playgrounds and he currently plans to make a new boxing hall. To fund the projects, Semen raises donations from various actors, including individual entrepreneurs, politicians, a corporate labour union and workfellows. His wife Irina complained that her husband habitually spends money from the family budget to buy training equipment for the gym or boxing gloves for the boys he supervisors. Over the last three years, Semen and his team have completed 15 community projects, including the organisation of football and boxing competitions, repair works and renovating playgrounds.

[22] Refers to the popular book of Arkady Gaidar "Timur and his Squad" where youngster Timur and his squad did good deeds, voluntarily helping people around.

Picture 14: Semen Mostunenko shows the places which he helped to reconstruct

Source: Pictures taken by the author

Examples from other parts of the world indicate that "mining towns frequently have strong community roots, a strong place identity, due to sacrifices and hard life that miners and their families experience" (Harner 2001: 660). For Semen, mining families form the social fabric of Vorkuta and constitute a viable core of the community. Semen says that miners are generally socially active people and willing to help; therefore it is important, in his view, to share and disseminate good practices among them. He and his close colleagues (a group of fifteen men) try to use worker solidarity to improve city viability by involving miners from other brigades in volunteer works and patronizing playgrounds, sport clubs, etc.

I asked Semen what really inspires his social activity, why he spends time and money on fixing sport objects. He says:

> "These boys, who do all the things with me side by side, who come to the gym for training, they motivate me. <…> I will do everything I can to make Vorkuta attractive for youth, that they feel themselves a family and wish to return here" (Semen Mostunenko, 20.04.2012, Vorkuta).

While I was working on this dissertation, Semen and other community activists established the non-governmental organisation Independent Community Council. Its purpose is to unite individual volunteers and groups, including City without drugs, Federation of car owners, Union of photo-artists, Association of active youth Severnaya Zemlya and many more. Independent Community Council is a group of 50 permanent members, formed as an alternative to Public Council, which was earlier established by the local administration as an advisory board. The journalist Olga Khmara, who participated at a gathering of the newly born group in October 2013, asked Semen about the objectives of the council. As in his

conversation with me, Semen stressed the importance of unity and cohesion between the citizens:

> "We want to see our city clean and well-groomed, we want to organise celebrations and sport events for the whole city. And more, we want to strengthen in people confidence in the future. Our society is divided and this should not be. Vorkuta was always a monolithic, soldered city with good traditions and we want it to be" (Semen Mostunenko cit. in Khmara 27.10.2013).

The latest news from Vorkuta is that the expansion of this Timurite movement continues and that it is helping and supporting the city's most disadvantaged citizens (BNK 18.02.2014). For example, a free of charge taxi, run by volunteers, provides transportation to citizens with limited mobility. Volunteers take care of old and disabled people, accompany them to concerts and the theater, do their shopping and help at home. The range of good deeds run by Independent Community Council is rather broad. At the core of their social activism lies an interest in local city needs and the intention to improve living conditions by doing real projects. Non-governmental organisations involved in Independent Community Council support each other in organising public events, like the social action dedicated to the memory of road traffic victims, organised visits to the elderly's home, boxing tournaments, etc. A new project that arose from a joint meeting of so called "Timurites" with the local priest is an orthodox school for children.

The social activism of my two other field partners – Oleg Gudovaniy and Irina Vitman – is concerned with educational projects and the city's historical heritage. I met Oleg Gudovaniy during my very first visit to Vorkuta; he guided me through the city and introduced me to other friends, like Irina Vitman, with whom he explores the GULAG past of the city and leads the human rights movement. Both Oleg and Irina are schoolteachers with a deep interest in the history of Vorkuta and regional ethnography. Oleg came to the North with his parents in 1974, while Irina arrived as a young Soviet specialist. They met in the early 1990s at the first meeting of the Russian historical and civil rights society Memorial, whose main task was "to study political repression in the Republic of Komi during the Soviet time and to preserve the historical memory of Vorkuta". Driven by the spirit of research and enthusiasm, they organised a school field expedition to the former GULAG locations during summer vacation, which then became an annual event.

The artefacts discovered and collected during the fieldtrips can be viewed at the historical and geological museum – The City in the North of Russia, established by Irina Vitman in 1999 at municipal school N14. The museum funds are constantly replenished with

the discovered objects, while results of the expeditions are reflected in the reports and field notes, written by the students. Today, the school museum is an important tourist site recognised by the municipal government; pupils conduct guided tours for the visitors and organise events for public holidays and memorable days. In tourist programs, a visit to the museum is highly recommended. Moreover, the hiking tours developed by Oleg and Irina were included in the official tourist tours offered by the city centre of tourism development, for example, the tourist memorial route Steel Horseshoe of Vorkuta.

Picture 15: Paper model of labour camp unit N10, existed in 1944-1954 in Vorkuta. The model is made by the school students in 2007 based on the results of their research work and exposed in the museum The City in the North of Russia

Source: Picture taken by the author

Another interesting social project of Oleg Gudovaniy and Irina Vitman, realized in 2011, brought together pupils of the Vorkuta and Moscow regions to discuss the repercussions of the Stalinist era. *Vorkutintsy* filmed their fieldwork, which was conducted in the former settlement Kharbey in autumn 2010, and produced a 40-minute documentary called “In the depths of the Ural Mountains”. The film was then shown to the pupils in one of the schools in Zelenogorsk. After watching the movie, the pupils met online at a virtual conference for answering questions and sharing opinions. In the words of the organisers:

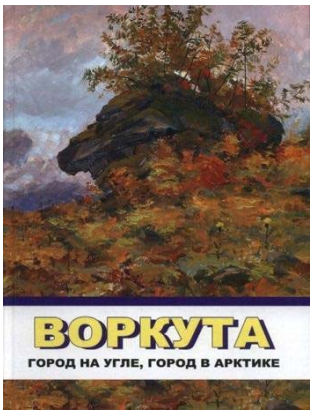
> “The purpose of this event was to bring the students to the idea that ignorance of history and the inability to learn the lessons lead to a repetition of past mistakes. Also of great importance was given to a critical understanding of the processes taking place in modern society” (Gudovaniy 2011).

Again, as in the case of Semen, the motivation to create a museum, conduct annual expeditions and organise social events comes from a deeply felt concern for the people of Vorkuta: both those who formed Vorkuta in the 1930s-1960s and those currently residing in the city. Irina and Oleg dig into the region's history in order to reconstruct the story of the place in a truthful way and dispel the myths invented by socialist propaganda, to make sure that "nothing is forgotten, no one is forgotten". "We want inhabitants, and especially the young generation, to know in what place they live and who was building the city", says Oleg. In his view, knowledge about the past can provide people with a better understanding of contemporary challenges. "History is cyclical", concludes Irina and Oleg in our interview. "In order to move forward, we must learn the lessons of history".

My acquaintance with the next interviewee, Margarita Getsen, began in Syktyvkar in 2011, where I met her to borrow books. Margarita Getsen is a 77-year-old pensioner, a doctor of biology and a mother of three children. She spent 20 years in Vorkuta and now resides in Syktyvkar, but still travels to the North regularly. Several years ago, Margarita headed the Republican Environmental Centre for the study and protection of Eastern European tundra, which was opened in Vorkuta in 1995 despite the prevailing socio-economic decline. Today she is retired but continues to write books, organise conferences, edit one of the leading scientific journals and supervise students. Every visit of Margarita to Vorkuta becomes a social event, either a discussion club in the local library or a conference at the university.

The city has changed before her eyes: "Vorkuta is not as it used to be and the current generation does not really know what it went through, how mines were erected, how in different years new forces got involved in the development of the city to create sustainable living conditions. People who have lived here for many years fly away and with them fly away the local knowledge". Margarita's main concern is how to preserve the memories of the people who devoted their lives to building and developing the city in various spheres. Together with other local historians and intellectuals, she wrote (and then republished, with a considerable extension) the book, "Vorkuta – the city on the coal, the city in the Arctic". The idea for the volume as well as its contents was developed in the little apartment of Margarita Getsen, where authors gathered during the year to brainstorm and write.

Picture 16: Margarita Getsen and Oleg Gudovaniy celebrate the publication of the book "Vorkuta – the city on the coal, the city in the Arctic"



Source: Pictures taken by the author

The story of Dmitriy starts in Vorkuta in 1970 with his birth. He has lived his entire life thus far in the, apart from his student years. After graduation, he returned to Vorkuta because it was easier to start a career here and the public welfare provision was higher in comparison with central Russian regions. Today, Dmitriy works as a doctor-anesthesiologist in the municipal hospital and holds two jobs to feed his family. I traveled with Dmitriy in the same train compartment from the capital of Komi Republic to Vorkuta. The trip usually takes 25 hours, so we had some time to talk about Vorkuta's city life while drinking tea. It was my first trip to Vorkuta and I knew very little; one year later we met again and had a more structured conversation.

I asked Dmitriy whether he would advise his fellow students from the medical institute to settle in Vorkuta. Although young people try to find success in the big cities outside the North, Dmitriy considers Vorkuta a comfortable place to live; it can provide a good start for early-career professionals:

> "It offers a young family decent public schools and kindergartens, affordable or sometimes free of charge sport and cultural clubs, hobby groups, reasonably priced apartments, a theatre to go on Sunday, a swimming pool and a hill for skiing. Everything you need is within walking distance, the city has good social infrastructure, at least for my needs", says Dmitriy (Dmitriy, 13.04.2013, Vorkuta).

Vorkuta is still enduring an exodus of its young population, a group essential for the development of new potential from within. By choosing to return and work in the public healthcare sector, Dmitriy contributes to the social viability of the city. Although Dmitriy

spends most of his time in the hospital and does not participate in many civic movements, he is connected with other *Vorkutintsy* through his true passion – downhill skiing. As the ski area is located some distance from the city and there is no connection via public transport, those who have a car usually give a lift to fellow *Vorkutintsy*. The ski club unites people from different spheres, including miners, geologists, train drivers, businessmen, etc. Regular skiers know each other and exchange information about weather and snow conditions and organise competitions and other events. *Vorkutintsy* are known for their love of sports, and even in the most difficult years the city hosted sports competitions. Sport centres are popular meeting places where one can make friends and as such are important spaces for creating and establishing community ties:

> "I must say we have very active sport life. Sportsmen come to Vorkuta, our guys travel to other cities. I just returned from Moscow and together with me in the train were the football players and then young karatists. In one word, there are sport competitions every week and big "Polar games" in autumn" (Dmitriy, 13.04.2013, Vorkuta).

"My grandmother was a political prisoner; she fell in love with the prisoner guard. My mother is the second child born in Vorkuta, it is stated in her birth certificate", begins the story my next respondent, Yuriy Mezheritskiy, who was also born north of the Polar circle. Yuriy is one of the long-term residents and he knows the city very well both as a resident and a business developer. He is a director of one of the biggest local firms in Vorkuta and a key community business person. Yuriy does not plan to ever leave the North, both because of work plans and because of the quality of life he enjoys there:

> "I feel good here and I have enough money. If I need sun, I travel, but winter and summer I spend in Vorkuta. I was born here and know every corner, my friends are here, and it is easier to live this way. In winter I get to garage and drive out on the snowmobile and go hunting. In summer I go fishing on the four-wheeler. It is easier to run business, not much competition. And I do not need a lot of time for driving around. Five minutes and I am at work, whereas in Moscow one wastes four hours in traffic jams" (Yuriy Mezheritskiy, 09.04.2012, Vorkuta).

Apart from work-related projects Yuriy invests in socially significant events. In 2012, he co-organised an open-air festival called "The road to where it does not exist" to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the bike club Polar Wolves. The festival brought together rock-music bands, bikers, extreme sport lovers and residents of the city for three days and became a big thing for urban life in Vorkuta. The success of the festival led to its inclusion in the city program of tourism development. It became an annual event enthusiastically attended by

Vorkutintsy and guests from other cities, some of whom come with their own bikes. The far-reaching intention of the festival has been to improve the image of the city and increase its attractiveness for both Russian and foreign visitors (Bykovskaya 15.07.2013).

Such grass-roots initiatives attracted my interest, as a bikers' movement is a rather exotic and expensive thing in the polar city, where the snow-free season is short, winds are strong, highway connections to other places is missing (thus, transportation of bikes to and from the city is by train) and people usually travel during summer vacations. Regardless of these limitations, every year Vorkuta's motorbike club admits new members. Today, there are thirty active members of the club who regularly gather and help each other in different matters. For example, they buy spare parts collectively, rent a garage together, and assist each other with repairs (Yuriy Mezheritskiy, 09.04.2012, Vorkukta). In general, the fact that residents invest in a hobby so unusual for the North may be an indicator of growing prosperity among the local population, as well as a growing sense of attachment to the place and desires to live comfortably there.

The five stories presented above, as well as others not mentioned here due to limitations of this dissertation, suggest that Vorkuta is a socially viable city. Despite some discontentedness associated with the city's peripheral location and climatic harshness, and regardless of all the talks about moving out one day, there are visible signs that people plan to permanently stay in Vorkuta. Pensioners, miners, businessmen, doctors and teachers have been actively involved in city-making, initiating projects to improve the atmosphere in the community, strengthen the bonds between people, encourage leadership and form new common values based on trust and support.

Moreover, as shown above in the example of the motorbike club, people in Vorkuta want to live comfortably and engage in leisure activities. Looking at buildings in Vorkuta, one can see an increasing number of expensive plastic windows in flats. People invest in their housing, in more extensive repairs and upgrades of their apartments, in expensive cars, snowmobiles and other material goods. My observation was confirmed by Semen, who gave me an example of how miners encourage each other to buy more expensive cars to display their position in the community. A new car is not merely a symbol of material wealth; it also represents prestige of the miners' profession in a community where a large part of the economic wealth streams from the coal sector. The new trend is the construction of individual houses in Vorkuta – a clear sign of Vorkuta becoming a permanent place of residence in people's minds. If *Vorkutintsy* previously invested their savings into housing and cars in the regions where they originally came from or plan to settle in while "living in one's trunks" in

the North, they increasingly spend their money locally. These recent shifts can be interpreted as material evidence of people's wish to remain in Vorkuta as well as an indication of city viability.

Social aspects of city viability

Mackleworth and Caric (2010: 467) conclude from their research in Croatia that: "In geographically isolated communities, the influence of dominant and charismatic leaders may be more significant than in less marginal communities". This observation can be likewise applied to the case of Vorkuta, which survived the 1990s with less devastation than neighbouring settlements such as Inta (placed within the same general economic niche) largely because of the leadership of Igor Shpektor and his administration between 1998 and 2007. I met with Igor Shpektor in Moscow at the annual session of the Union of the Circumpolar and Arctic Cities in 2011. He was no longer a city mayor, but he spoke about Vorkuta's most pressing issues like one who deals with them every day. Igor said that Vorkuta is a child to him, that he cannot leave this child and thus crosses the Polar circle several times each year to take part in different events. I have noticed that Shpektor's opinion is held in high esteem by both Vorkuta's new administration and the residents, and interviews with him are often published in the local newspapers. My own conversations with *Vorkutintsy* included thoughtful descriptions and examples of his leadership in helping the city to persist. For instance, Shpektor participated in *subbotniki* and other collective activities and worked with his own hands side by side with *Vorkutintsy*, proving to people that "he is one of them". The material impact of his policies is still visible in painted residential buildings, lights along the road, planted trees, public spaces equipped with benches, etc. With a minimal budget, he managed to improve the look of the city and support cultural and sport activities, "so the city was booming with social events". It is said that every morning he would take a ride around the city to check how clean the streets were and to control municipal undertakings (Mikhail Tverskoy, 27.03.2012, Vorkuta). My respondents called him *khozyain goroda* – the master of the city, as he knew all its problems and potential as his five fingers.

It is argued that diverse ideas and perspectives about future community development is a necessary condition for revival. At the same time, the required balance may be reached when "the shared beliefs about place meaning for the majority match the ideological beliefs of those in power" (Harner 2001:660). When a hegemonic view is agreed upon and enacted by the majority of community members it can thus unite the actors to pursue common goals. On the other hand, lack of agreement concerning common visions can negatively impact

community viability. Igor Shpektor was particularly successful in mobilizing citizens to support changes and restore local pride by popularizing the slogan "Vorkuta is the capital of the world". He made residents believe that Vorkuta is a unique city, and he nurtured hope in the community for future stability and renaissance:

> "Shpektor managed to stress positive moments in the situation when everything was ruining, he showed good things in our city and what we will have in the future" (Mikhail Tverskoy, 27.03.2012, Vorkuta).

City viability depends on responsible local leadership (Ricketts 2005), a key element in asserting successful community action and encouraging social well-being. Viability of a city depends on the knowledge, qualities and skills of its leaders and their ability to communicate community needs with other actors. Igor Shpektor is remembered as one of the most charismatic and strong figures in the post-Soviet political arena. Most of his decisions could be taken via authoritarian measures, yet were shared and supported within the community. Balancing genuine respect for the accomplishments of Shpektor's administration is a shared recognition of its failings, such as the misappropriation of public resources as well as unclear connections with criminal groups (Zapolyarka online 05.04.2012; Shchakhov 30.03.2012). It does not matter for the purpose of this dissertation how close the relationships between Shpektor and mafia were. What is relevant is that during the most difficult years Shpektor used criminal groups as resource-givers and tried to involve them in contributing to the city. Street lights and the decorative fences at the main square were donated to the municipality by local crime barons.

Another key theme in the international literature on community development research (Skerratt 2011) is extra-local relations, or those that extend beyond community. This is an especially important topic for understanding remote resource centres whose viability is very much dependent on external sources. Therefore, local leaders must possess the ability to plan strategically in terms of the broader socio-economic and political context, and to establish and maintain distant connections. Effective leadership requires careful consideration of the extra-local context and navigation between the layers of power and economic interests (Gray and Sinclair 2005).

The example of Vorkuta confirms this thesis. Historically, municipal governors served the community though their personal networks at the federal level. In order to advocate for local interests, Igor Shpektor initiated a Union of Arctic and the Far North Cities that helps the federal government work on northern issues. Later, Shpektor became a member of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, and he continues to use his influence for the benefit

of Vorkuta. His successors, however, have not possessed such powerful connections, and that has negatively affected the positionality of Vorkuta and "city – industry" relationships during the last several years.

Residents of Vorkuta have in recent years developed strong social ties through collective efforts and experiences such as building urban infrastructure, working in the coal sector, living in shared apartments, overcoming the hardships of the early years, spending holidays in the same sanatorium, participating in *subbotniki*, etc. The older generation, in particular, considers solidarity to be an important part of the community relationships that were built around work of different forms. Referring to the example of industrial settlement in the Murmansk region, Bolotova and Stammler (2010: 213) argue that joint practices "glue" people together and turn them from a number of randomly composed former inmates or labour migrants distributed by the state into a community with a shared sense of social cohesion. This observation resonates with the way social cohesion has been generated in Vorkuta.

Social cohesion is perceived as an important value for the community, but when I asked my respondents whether they think of present-day Vorkuta as a tight-knit community, almost all of them answered negatively. Of my respondents, only Semen knows and periodically visits the neighbors in his part of the building (*pod'ezd*). All the others, even long-term residents like Oleg Gudovaniy, have little or no communication with neighbors. A general explanation is that previous neighbors moved out, and new dwellers have not established a connection with long-term residents. Semen says:

> "When I arrived here, I saw how kind-hearted people can be. In Syktyvkar, if you come to the neighbor, he would not give you a spoon of salt. But in Vorkuta, whenever you visit a neighbor, he always tries to bring you to the table. Northerners have different mentality, but with time it changes. People become closed; they talk less to each other" (Semen Mostunenko, 20.04.2012, Vorkuta).

The common reason given by my interviewees for this perceived weakening of solidarity is decreasing living conditions and welfare. I am not convinced, however, that social cohesion depends on prevailing economic situation. Further, I question assumptions of decline, as the economy in Vorkuta has been improving for several years and people there have more expendable income than in years past. In my understanding, this decline in perceived solidarity has two reference points. First, it goes back to Soviet times, when the miners and residents of the North in general had high incomes in comparison with the inhabitants of other regions. In this regard, *Vorkutintsy* were more or less equal to each other

in having similarly high access to goods and similarly high social welfare benefits. In contemporary society, socio-economic stratification shapes a person's evaluation of their own welfare; people may feel less fortunate simply by comparing themselves to the newly rich. Inequality creates greater perceived distances between people.

Still, what does this tell us about community ties? I argue against the economic explanation of my interviewees; interconnections are stronger and networks of support between inhabitants are more efficient and crucial for survival when people cannot rely on state institutions. One helps not only because one is a good person, but also out of practicality; one who gives help is more likely to receive help from networks based on reciprocity. The wealthier one becomes, the less dependent one is on social or governmental safety nets. I do not say, however, that a prosperous society has weaker bonds than an impoverished one. The Soviet past of Vorkuta offers a relevant example: the collective endurance of hardships and discomfort vis-à-vis the collective enjoyment of the exclusive social treatment and high earnings in the northern cities are two aspects of the same process of developing social cohesion among inhabitants.

My interviews indicate that today the linkages between people have weakened: first because of mass (and continuous) outmigration, which undermines long-term established relationships; second, due to a lack of common interests and collective goals; and third, because of increased inequality. In the Soviet era, social cohesion was produced through the practices of joint works for the benefit of the city, for the common goal. "People have made these places their homes, and this process created social cohesion among inhabitants" (Bolotova and Stammler 2010: 217). In the 1990s, *Vorkutintsy* were united by the struggle for their benefits and compensations. They became activists protesting for days in front of the White House in Moscow in 1998 and requiring the payment of unpaid wages. Similar actions occurred in the city, where people were frightened of being left without state support. Economic decline reinforced the connections between inhabitants who banded together as a survival strategy, but this also shifted the focus from collective needs to private ones. In today's Vorkuta, it is difficult to find ideas that are shared by a majority of citizens. People are rather autonomous and focus mainly on household needs; they group according to leisure interests such as sports and hobbies, rather than political ideas.

Still, practices of social participation and volunteering that had little place in the early post-Soviet years have visibly reemerged. The same collective practices that turned Soviet cities into "glued" coherent communities have been successfully reintroduced. In Soviet times, *subbotniki* were steered by the authorities, and today locals willingly unite to care for

their city. They collaborate to renovate the entrance hall in their house, protect children playgrounds from wild dogs, color fences, plant trees and other things. Often, these positive changes tend to be ignored because the small scale of cooperation compared to former times when almost every family in the city was somehow involved in the city-making process. However, failing to mention these activities would be to ignore a big part of the social life of the city, an aspect of viability that remains in the shadow when developing city viability policies. Semen, Margarita, Oleg, Irina and Yuriy are not only single actors; they are trying to create a chain reaction of good deeds in the society and include others in their activities. Individual projects and their results (such as renovated sport facilities, written books, motorbike festivals) have less significance than the larger process of making improvements together to benefit future generations, to maintain the past and to live happily today.

My field research has shown me that social capital and personal connections remain the most efficient channels for "getting things done". The importance of connections can be found in other places in Russia, but in Vorkuta it is especially strong due to the legacy of the GULAG period, when informal relations were the "golden key" to survival. Such close relationships have also resulted from a so-called "kitchen culture", which is still prominent in the North. It plays an important role in keeping and extending the networks between people. Unlike larger population centres with a variety of neutral indoor spaces for socialising, *Vorkutintsy* are accustomed to inviting each other for a dinner or tea with sweets and gather in each other's home. Now, as before, it is the kitchen that holds people's secrets and complaints; friendships are born while gathering around the dining table. For me, it was the best place for conducting interviews in a relaxed atmosphere and for developing connections. Relationships that arose from kitchen discussions may be stronger in comparison to those developed in public places, as sharing one's private both requires and demonstrates trust.

A different way to bring people together and reinforce local identity is through public holidays. The importance of coal extraction for local development and the pride associated with it is signified in Miners' Day, which is considered to be a main city holiday and grandiosely celebrated every year at the end of August. Other holidays include New Year, the Polar Olympic Games in Vorkuta, the day of a reindeer herder and a City Day held on the 26th of November. During these holidays the whole town comes together at the main square to rejoice. Celebrations typically include speeches by leaders of the city, parades, processions, fairs and holiday concerts. The party ends with fireworks.

Positive community change and city viability is built on networks of residents and social capital. Another ingredient of city viability discovered in the process of my research

can be found in the collective personality of *Vorkutintsy*. The present-day residents of Vorkuta arrived in the city "at a time when there was a cult of young energetic activists, whose achievements for common goals were highly honored and celebrated" (Bolotova and Stammler 2010: 208). *Vorkutintsy* became famous for their active social position and solidarity. Present-day understanding of *Vorkutinets*, in the perspective of my interviewees, is related to hard work and oriented on success both in professional activities and sports. Several respondents mentioned Arkady Vyatchanin, the Olympic medalist in 2008 in the backstroke who grew up and was trained in Vorkuta. Anatoliy Polyakov, Anastasia Ivanenko and Elizaveta Gorshkova – honored masters of sports and champions in swimming – also come from Vorkuta. Their stories of success inspire other young sportsmen in Vorkuta and give a credit to the city where they trained. "*Vorkutinets* is a strong man who is not afraid of hardships", said one of my respondents when I asked him about the *Vorkutinskiy* character (Nikolay Gerasimov, 22.04.2011, Syktyvkar). Previously, *Vorkutintsy*, and miners in particular, had a reputation as fighters for the city's existence that they inherited from the GULAG prisoners. This image is expressed in the city hymn, whose words say: "…Vorkuta, Vorkuta, city with a hard and cruel fate, forever our lives are wed to you Vorkuta, you fly through the years, no thought of comfort or peace, and the miners leave for battle, for it is a battle, for you, for you, city of mine!" Struggle as integral to the character of *Vorkutintsy* was on full display during the city strikes and protests of the so-called "transition", while in present times this side of the *Vorkutinskiy* character is less articulated. I previously described the controversial elections in 2011, when a candidate chosen by the people was not allowed to assume office. It was a confirmation for residents that public opinion has no significant role in municipal governance and decision-making processes:

> "… and nothing happened. Vorkuta has swallowed this case. If this case would happen in ninety one, there would be no authorities; they would be kicked out of the city immediately. And now nothing happened, they got away with it, because people do not have power, they are no more fighters" (Mikhail Rogachev, 17.04.2011, Syktyvkar).

People still have little control over the political situation in Vorkuta (and in Russian generally), as all decisions are taken within the vertical power structure and in major cases passed down from the regional or federal political centres. The fact that *Vorkutintsy* do not go to the streets to voice their frustrations or to push for reforms may be explained by different priorities; family interests are generally considered more important than political engagement. Second, there is a general disbelief that civil protest or disobedience can change the political

situation, in contrast with the proactive collective personality of *Vorkutintsy* in years past. Moreover, some people said they are afraid of expressing their political opinion publicly, because, as Dmitriy says, "next day I shall go to work and my boss would not like it. I do not want to be fired just because someone did not get into power" (Dmitriy, 13.4.2012, Vorkuta). The consequences of demonstrating prevent people from struggling for democratic government; instead, civic activism is focused on the social sphere and volunteer initiatives. The energetic side of the *Vorkutinskiy* character is channelled to the direction of cooperation and working together for a socially viable city.

Concluding, I would like to return to a statement I have made at the beginning of the section. The biographies and experiences of northern residents change the temporary status of northern industrial settlements into places for life-long habitation through practices of permanence and the process of developing roots. With that, municipalities of the Russian Arctic are shrinking and some part of the northern population wishes to return to *bol'shaya zemlya* while others have found home there. In the vein of Bolotova and Stammler (2010), I approach outmigration from the North not as abandoning the settlements, as outwardly directed population mobility is a typical phenomenon for remote communities observed in other parts of the world, but as an ordinary process within any community. "Many people who were born elsewhere do not want to move back to their birthplaces. Along similar lines, many members of the first generations born in northern industrial cities do not necessary develop a strong attachment to the North and decide to move elsewhere" (Bolotova and Stammler 2010: 212-213). The question is then not how to prevent people from leaving, but rather how to make Vorkuta attractive for living and returning. I addressed this question to my interview partners and almost all respondents cited economic factors first place: decent salaries, availability of jobs due to flourishing enterprises, career prospects and public welfare. Families are interested in good schools and kindergartens, pensioners prioritise medical services. The look and feel of the city is also important – it must be clean, pleasant and well-groomed. Some mention good roads, as in Vorkuta there is the constant problem of roads full of holes. Young respondents emphasise the importance of indoor places for leisure activities, where people can go out and spend time nicely, such as a modern cinema or a café. Lastly, attractiveness of the city is also linked with energetic and socially active inhabitants who renew the city. In finishing this section I will let Semen Mostunenko offer a concluding statement:

> "There is a difference between aged miners and us. They will remained in Vorkuta for 2-3 years more and then leave somewhere. Therefore they try to gain as much as possible

> benefits from the city, from the company and then go. They are not interested in our future. The future is our hands" (Semen Mostunenko, 20.04.2012, Vorkuta).

Conclusion

As has been shown in the previous chapters, the problem of city viability came to the fore several times. In the 1960s, when *Vorkurlag* was liquidated and it was no longer possible to profit from the "free" labour of imprisoned specialists, the economic feasibility of further coal mining in the harsh northern conditions became problematic. Despite high production costs, Soviet economists decided to continue mining there mainly because the local coal was of exceptionally high quality. In the 1990s, the question of how to treat northern cities appeared once again at a time when decline in the prices for energy resources caused stagnation of Vorkuta's primary economic sector. Evaluation of city viability was mainly based on the economic capacities of the place, while social components were underestimated and undervalued. Economy-driven thinking of how northern industrial communities should function heavily influenced local experiences and practices. Two decades later, one finds that even "doomed" and "dead" communities can somehow exist despite economic and environmental sustainability planning aimed at the contrary. But what keeps them staying afloat? And what pathways should a city like Vorkuta follow to ensure a prosperous future? These questions were situated in the centre of this sixth chapter and were answered through the perspective of key social actors.

I described the concerns of policy-makers and ordinary people as well as official plans for the transformation of Vorkuta and the repositioning of the city in response to changing socio-political and economic circumstances. I showed how municipal and regional authorities have tried to manipulate the geographic and economic characteristics of Vorkuta so as to garner special status and additional resources from the national budget. Local and regional authorities have put together different puzzles grouped under titles such as "shrinking city", "mono industrial place", "new tourist Mecca", "gas transportation hub" or "the Arctic base town for fly-in, fly-out operations" in order to secure the long-term viability of Vorkuta. The first strategy was put into practice in the 1990s and employs shrinking via spatial rearrangements and so called "optimization of the local population" by assisting economically inactive residents to outmigrate. By inducing Vorkuta's downsizing, municipal authorities tried to make it less expensive in terms of maintenance and also easier to govern. Resettlement programs presented in the chapter are rooted in the thinking of previous decisions. The second idea was to add Vorkuta to the list of Russian single-industry towns

and thus qualify for special financial treatment from federal authorities. Furthermore, greater economic diversification became a pillar of the new economic thinking of local planners. To make the city more sustainable, at least economically, city administration is betting on the development of tourism and transportation of gas from the Bovanenkovo deposit. Proximity to the Kara Sea and the industrial sites located in northwest Siberia provide Vorkuta with assets to position itself as a gateway to the Arctic.

For a settlement with a single-industry economy, the relationship between the city-forming enterprise and the municipality is key ingredient. City viability depends on how much the company is interested in local matters and willing to contribute to the community's comfort. Although the main task of the coal and gas transportation industries in Vorkuta is to run their businesses with maximum profit, their activity has a direct impact on the lives of town dwellers and the city's socio-economic well-being. They are the biggest employers, budget contributors and sponsors of socially significant projects (both locally and regionally). Directly and indirectly, they create an impulse for the development of smaller businesses, the increase of housing prices, the reduction of unemployment etc. Success in the mining sector prolongs resource dependence of the city and, despite the efforts for diversification, locks it into a narrow set of economic activities related to coal production (Watkins 1963). However, every coin has two sides. Re-established North-South interdependences visibly benefit the city and its residents both economically and socially. Vorkuta currently serves as a "satellite platform" of large externally-based steel companies and therefore enjoys a revival, unlike the neighbouring city of Inta. The construction of two additions mines on the territory of the urban district promises new opportunities for the city's economy. On the other hand, a new player, represented by Gazprom and its sub-contractors, opens the gate for an influx of temporary workers from the less prosperous regions of central Russia and neighboring states. Because of this, Vorkuta has acquired a new role – a base town for long-distance commuting.

Economic geographers Hill and Gaddy state: "for a country with so much territory, especially territory in remote and cold places, location matters a great deal" (Hill and Gaddy 2003: 3). Vorkuta is among the top ten largest Arctic population centres in the world. Its geographic proximity to the Arctic Ocean coast and the mineral-rich Ural Mountains and Yamal Peninsula and its relations with the mainland and linkages to other northern places encourage authorities to rethink available (and potential) assets and to reflect on city viability from the perspective of future developments in the Arctic and sub-Arctic region.

When discussing the prospects of local development, it is important to remember the role of external forces. Having been established as a GULAG camp that collected labour from

all over the Soviet Union for mining polar coal, Vorkuta attracted the attention of international players, such as the World Bank, in the 1990s and 2000s. Despite its peripheral location at the margins of the Russian North, Vorkuta became a pioneer of socio-economic transformation and a testing ground for neoliberal restructuring projects. Today, the course of future development is conditioned by decisions of the Kremlin and national interest in the raw materials and the Arctic region as such. Among other factors, the viability of Vorkuta rests on the ability of elites to include it in special-purpose national programmes, to make it attractive for the federal centre and big investors. In particular, Vorkuta is a link in a chain of production processes. Its economic growth is contingent on both the production network established in Soviet times (the metal industry in Cherepovetsk and Novolipetsk has long been dependent on coal from Vorkuta) and newly appearing connections with the gas industry. Because gas transportation routes have changed, Vorkuta became linked to a new strategic sector and, thus, can claim a strategic geo-economic position.

Another approach to tackle the problem of city viability is induced shrinkage, implemented through concentrating the population in the urban core, shutting down declining mining settlements and pushing out economically passive groups. The process started in the 1990s, during a period of socio-economic deterioration, and continues today, as there is still a demand for resettlement. Beneficiaries are provided with subsidised housing certificates that allow them to obtain flats outside the North in exchange for their apartments in Vorkuta. The intention to shrink the city through relocation schemes, however, is inadequately applied in practice. Qualitative research shows that housing certificates are frequently misused by the program participants for improving life conditions of extended family rather than for relocation itself. “Grassroots responses developed by people demonstrate that migration, if not physically forced by the state, is still a private choice made by the relocation candidates and their families, rather than a result of structural inducement” (Nuykina 2011: 62). They independently decide on a degree of interaction with policies, and, moreover, use these structures, whenever possible, to suit their own interests. Resettlement is organised on the basis of queuing, and families from different parts of the urban district receive relocation assistance according to their place on the waiting list. Instead of resettling, people from the same declining neighbourhoods often redeem their certificates locally in order to improve their current living conditions. The spatial effect of this measure has resulted in partially inhabited buildings, especially in the *poselki*, which are serviced at incredibly high cost regardless of the number of dwellers. Steered shrinkage is clearly a development priority, but no controlling mechanism of spatial contraction has yet been implemented.

It is known from other examples beyond the borders of Russia, such as Newfoundland and Labrador, that collective practices and cooperation within a community are crucial for overcoming economic downturns and guaranteeing further prosperity (Snowadzky 2005). On a grassroots level, city viability is formed through people's activities in the social sphere and their wish to invest in a comfortable life locally. Although people still talk about Vorkuta as a place for temporary habitation, they act as if it is and will remain their home. *Vorkutintsy* enlarge their apartments and install plastic windows, buy motorbikes, motor boats and expensive cars and plan individual housing instead of typical residential apartment buildings. They come together to write books, organise festivals and construct sports facilities. Some collective activities witnessed today are path dependent, as they apply Soviet viability-making practices, such as *subbotniki* or the Timurite volunteering movement, to present-day realities.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Introduction

The matter of city viability is especially pressing for remote areas suffering from various socio-economic disorders. These are particularly relevant for many villages and industrial settlements in the Arctic and the Russian Far North. Demographic shrinking, increasing living costs, hostile environments, limited economic and employment opportunities, and difficulties attracting investors create challenges for successful urban development in these regions, which negatively impact individual and collective well-being. A common growing trend that makes all of these issues more pressing is the increasing connections between the place-based developments and the global competition for human and financial resources (Martin, Killorin et al. 2008). The present-day economic environment became more "slippery" because of free trade, new information technologies, globalisation and mobility of capital, which challenged local policy-makers, companies operating in these areas and the inhabitants of the North to search for coping strategies and ways to ensure viability.

To enhance "stickiness" of their communities (Markusen 1996), local actors initiate various economic diversification projects, for instance, in the sphere of heritage tourism and further exploitation of various mineral resources. This does not mean, however, that 'staples trap' is exceeded, as many of these places preserve dependence on the extraction of natural resources through fishing, forestry, mining activities, agriculture and other industries for local economic development. It is often the case that new economic projects coexist with the city-forming enterprises. A case of this study has shown that successful re-establishment of former economic networks can bring positive opportunities to the local municipalities. The latter serve as "satellite resource platforms" of large enterprises located outside the region. Such towns are little involved in the intraregional trade but rather oriented to the national and/or international markets. Another strategy suggests shrinkage of the population and built infrastructure to economise local public spending and to make a city "manageable". This idea is put into practice through the state-funded programs that induce mobility of the local population from a region. Evidence from the field, however, show unexpected consequences of "state-initiated social engineering schemes" (Scott 1998).

The process of place-making cannot be fully understood without considering the complex positionalities that link people and places with one another and that create heterogeneity in a place because different actors that are involved in making a viable city are

positioned differently in respect to each other and the extra-local forces (Sheppard 2002: 319). This dissertation shows that composition of the actors involved in city development fluctuate from one historical period to another. Powerfully-positioned actors set dominant visions about future developments and steer development policies. On the other hand, it is the task of local actors, particularly municipal leaders, to strive for resourceful positions of a city within the networks of extra-local relationships. In this respect, the question of how a settlement is situated in respect to other Arctic places is one of the hottest topics in the Arctic power relations.

Subsequent sections of this chapter are combined into three blocks and provide the reader with the overall conclusions about the research problem, implications for policy planning and practice, theoretical conclusions, and implications for further research based on gaps in knowledge. The purpose of this chapter is to analytically link empirical findings from the city of Vorkuta with the theoretical concepts of city viability, positionality and path dependence as well as stress the theoretical contributions of my research to the urban geography. Lastly, I summarize developments of the city through the three historical periods and make suggestions for further research and policy-making.

Conclusions about the Research Problem

This study provides an account of how ideas, strategies and practices of city viability gradually evolved through three historical periods. Moreover, I have shown the role of various actors involved in the process of city-making and how their position has changed. An historical approach to the study revealed fluidity of the concept of city viability, which is understood depending on the contextual settings. Soviet principles of viability were neglected by the following regime as irrelevant, herewith today's ideas of what is a viable place is very much based on (and can only be because of) the path dependences.

A viable city under Soviet regime

During the Soviet years, viability of a locality was very much connected to the local industrial activities as the prime function of the urban settlement was to ensure successful operation of a city-forming enterprise. Broad scale urbanisation of the country was performed in accordance with the national economic plans of modernisation and industrial development of the peripheral territories abundant in natural resources. A decision to found a city was taken by the corresponding ministry in Moscow in order to supply the newly-established plant

or factory with a labour force, which was purposely relocated from the central regions. It was mainly an economic decision based on the principles of command economy and centrally-approved plans that directed local urban growth. Soviet towns grew as integral parts of large industrial complexes, and much of the political, socio-cultural and economic functions were performed by these "total social institutions" (Sneath and Humphrey 1999). Production requirements of the company formed the demographic and spatial composition of a place, while needs of residents in social infrastructure involved the company in the city-making process. In short, industrial complexes and newly-founded cities were two sides of the same coin dependent on the central planning and redistribution systems.

Although cities that I describe in this dissertation were mono-industrial, there was still a place for diversification. The idea of diversification was quite different from the Western understanding, as it was not based on profit-seeking criteria, but caused by the community demands in goods and services. For instance, in-house diversification under the roof of Vorkutaugol resulted in wood processing, production of cement, agriculture, production of clothing and many other economic activities not directly related to coal-production, but they were still organised by the city-forming enterprise and sponsored via state subsidies. Many of these firms were unprofitable, such as dairy factories. But "children in Vorkuta needed milk, so Vorkutaugol started milk production. And nobody calculated if it would be less expensive to bring milk from the neighbouring Syktyvkar where climate is warmer" (Oleg Gudovaniy, 21.2.2012, Vorkuta). Soon after the USSR's disintegration and budgetary cuts, the heavy ballast of non-core businesses became the responsibility of the city-forming companies that had been struggling for survival. Reorganisation of the head company to make it more profitable resulted in shrinking of the production structure. As a result, with the new economizing attitude towards business creation, cities with single industries became even more mono-industrial than before, as many side activities were liquidated.

Relationships between municipal authorities and the central government followed a top-down hierarchical approach that almost eliminated the real system of local government, but replaced it with the system of a party-state leadership. According to the Regulation "On the City Council" (1933) and the Constitution (1936), the city administrations were defined as "organs of the proletarian dictatorship" ordered to implement decisions of the Communist Party taken in Moscow. Thus, functions of local councils were reduced to the performers of the political centre's will and had little bottom-up influence. Economic and social development of a city was controlled by the ministerial economists, party leaders in Moscow and top managers of the city-forming enterprise. The welfare of a city and provisions of local

population with goods and services entirely depended on the federal transfers to the municipal budgets as well as company's capacities. According to this logic, the future of a city and its development paths were steered by the economic interest of the Union's government in the territory and its resource potentials often regardless of the costs and economic distance from the markets.

Despite marginal positionality of the local actors, analysis of the Soviet history shows crucial importance of the leadership at the municipal level. As the head of the enterprise often possessed a function of the city governor, his or her personal characteristics, preferences, interests and relations directed city development in no small degree. Personal contacts in the federal apparatus and negotiation skills helped local leaders to bring in resources and make some needed decisions. It was often given as an example that the Music-Drama Theatre in Vorkuta was erected in 1943 during the Second World War among the very first buildings of the city while most of the population were convicts that occupied simple barracks (Getsen 2011). Cultural life in the city was flourishing unlike anywhere else in the Komi region, partly because a large number of Moscow and St. Petersburg intelligentsia were imprisoned in the Vorkutlag and partly because the wife of the camp commander deeply loved the scenic art and was bored with the lack of cultural events in the northern mining settlement. Thanks to the personal interest of Mikhail Mal'tsev and his wife in arts, Vorkuta became a "cultural heart" of the Komi Republic. Apart from the cultural events, Mikhail Mal'tsev supervised the construction of the railway Kotlas-Vorkuta, the construction of mines, and city infrastructure development in general. He was both the head of Vorkuta-Pechora administration of labour camps of the NKVD and the enterprise Vorkutaugol. He is remembered as a strong man who knew how to push through the bureaucratic inflexibility and implement projects in the shortest possible time period (Cherneta-Gizatulina 2000). Mostly thanks to the efforts of Mal'tsev, Vorkuta was given an administrative city status, which directly influenced its positionality and increased the local budget. From the end of the Second World War, Vorkuta became visible to the Moscow politicians, and as a result, many people were directed there to work in the mines and support the national level of economic activity. This example from Vorkuta shows that positionality of a settlement very much relies on the competence and negotiation ability of the local leaders to raise the interest of the external actors in domestic matters. Although the Soviet top-down approach to city-making left little possibility for participatory governance, extra-local personal connections were used as channels to "make the right decisions happen" (Mikhail Rogachev, 17.04.2011, Syktyvkar).

Moreover, national positionality of a place depends on the value of the resource extracted by a city-forming company and a city's embeddedness in its economic relations with other places. Northern places like Vorkuta were established by the Soviet government not as individual, self-sustained entities, but as constituents of the broader picture of national economic interests. Supply-demand linkages that developed within the Soviet economic geography ensured growth of the industries and thus viability of company towns. For example, Vorkuta was one of the main suppliers of coal to the steel industry of the European part of the Soviet Union. The 1950s-1980s marked the golden years of the coal sector, when the miners' professions were prestigious, the salaries were high and state investments to the coal towns were regular. This blossoming of the coal industry gave prosperity to mining communities and especially those located in the North. This continued as long as coal played a leading role in the national energy balance and remained a prime energy source. In the 1970s-1980s, the economic and geopolitical importance of coal was dismissed by the booming oil and gas sector, which has since then become a source of currency income. This shift has directly influenced the positionality of Vorkuta that began to lose its relevance as an energy centre and thus negatively influenced its livelihood possibilities.

New Soviet cities usually grew from the workers' camps, like in the case of Vorkuta, and consisted of those relocated from all over the Union. Many of these people did not initially have connections to the place or even a wish to change their place of residence. This was a typical characteristic of the new industrial population. It is difficult to talk about city viability at this stage, as people were ordered to leave their home behind and involuntarily move to the areas where the state needed them the most. Years later, attractive social provisions, higher salaries and carrier opportunities became enticing factors for the second wave of incoming people. In order to make specialists come and reside in the northern regions, the Soviet state introduced special benefits and privileges that opened the door for the voluntary resettlement of the area. The two groups were joined by the young graduates pushed to the periphery by the romantic aspiration and desire to explore the new corners of the country and serve the Soviet state, who facilitated inmigration flows through the system of *raspredelenie* and propaganda among the young party members. As a result of these efforts, cities grew in population and size. Formerly artificial entities established by the state primarily as labour pools, they have been gradually transforming into viable communities for long-term settlement. Community viability was reached through people's involvement in the process of actual place-making, joint works, physical building of urban infrastructures and

other collective activities. Joint efforts of community members to reach collective goals fostered solidarity among the residents, social cohesion and place-based social capital.

Post-Soviet ideas of city viability

A different understanding of a viable city appeared together with reforms of economic liberalization and a change of political regime. The post-Soviet state recognized local self-government as one of the foundations of the constitutional order (Russian Federation 1993) and launched the process of decentralization that continued until early 2000s. Liquidation of the Soviet vertical model of governance and division of powers was legally formalized by the Presidential Decree, 26 October, 1993 "On the reform of local self-government in the Russian Federation", which established a principle of subsidiarity and delegated powers to the local authorities. Consequently, city administrations gained greater freedom to govern and plan local development, manage the city budget, own municipal property and address local issues. For the first time citizens could decide who to trust to lead their settlement. The following legislative acts (Federal Law N154-FZ 28.08.1995) guaranteed institutional, financial and economic independence of local government and stressed that municipal authorities were not included in the system of state administration bodies. Thus, local officials received greater influence and responsibilities for organisation of life in the city and its viability, while state authorities in the local matters had limited jurisdiction.

At the same time, the economic basis of the company towns were undermined as the new democratic "government has significantly reduced federal subsidies to northern enterprises and industries, and prices for their inputs and outputs were liberalized" (World Bank 2001). Companies established and ruled by the command economy were prompted to learn how to be economical and competitive in the free market circumstances. Declining industries, budgetary cuts, increased costs of social services and the state's withdrawal from the centralized shipment and delivery of food and fuel to northern territories financed by the federal budget negatively affected the northern communities. Moreover, a new approach to city governance initiated a "divorce" between city-forming companies and municipalities. A "two sides of the same coin" model was nullified as enterprises began to divest themselves of their social obligations to the administrations in order to reduce production costs. Corporate facilities of the social infrastructure such as medical units, canteens, libraries, clubs, sports facilities, kindergartens and schools were transferred to municipal property. Detachment of

the companies from ruling political, social and cultural life in the city was enhanced in the process of privatization that put an end to the Soviet principles of viability.

Again, as in the previous historical epoch, ideas of city viability were developed in the ministerial cabinets and transmitted to the municipal leaders. The important role in guiding "sustainable municipal policies" and assisting the federal government with implementation of restructuring projects belonged to the foreign experts and institutions, such as the World Bank. The latter carried out restructuring of the coal sector in Russia and relocation of the population from the northern territories, both of which were implemented in Vorkuta. The key indicator of city viability was reduced to the calculations of economic costs and benefits, while social parameters of viability were neglected. In general, the concerns of the post-Soviet planners were to identify the "best" distribution of productive activities within the national borders and economically promising settlements to minimize the costs.

In the centre of the development approach offered by the Western and Western-influenced consultants was the economic and demographic shrinking of the northern settlements, which were regarded simply as mistakes of the Soviet-planned system (Pivovarov 1995; 2002; Hill and Gaddy 2003; Hill 2004). The main intention was to facilitate northern industrial cities to become smaller. Discourse around future existence of "wrongly situated and extremely expensive places" had material effect in the form of restructuring projects. My study has shown, however, that programs aimed at greater efficiency were differently manipulated in the interests of the recipients. Restructuring of mines did not reach the goal and resulted in liquidation instead of transformation, while relocation of economically inactive groups of population did not bring desired results. I also conclude that restructuring plans were used by the municipal officials not as strategic tools for long-term transformations (as proclaimed in the project objective), but as assets to solve short-term socio-economic needs in the overall uncertain situation.

It is argued that city viability is based on social capital, coherence within community and ideas supported by all actors. My research concludes that socio-economic instability of the early post-Soviet years induced residents to develop individual coping mechanisms instead of striving for collective goals. The case study of Vorkuta illustrates how people united and went on strikes to assert their rights for social compensations and unpaid salaries. Being previously used to high income, northern privileges and exceptional provision guaranteed by the state, citizens faced a situation where they needed to take active responsibility for their household's welfare. As in similar cases when people faced economic decline such as in African copper mining communities described by James Fergusson in the

book “Expectations of modernity”, people’s losses were “not simply the material comfort and satisfactions that it provided, but the sense of legitimate expectation that had come with them” (Fergusson 1999: 12).

Another aspect often mentioned in the field is the confusion in which political and economic transformation of the 1990s took place that made it difficult to understand what was really happening, not to mention the long-term life-planning. Discussions about hopelessness of northern cities stimulated some residents to search for opportunities to leave. Others with a stronger sense of belonging had chosen to stay in the North. Both were busy adjusting to the new rules and solving basic family needs such as working two jobs, hunting and gathering, participating in informal economic practices or using state support programs to serve household interests in the best way (Nuykina 2011) rather than satisfying community interests. People tried to diversify their economic strategies, or more correctly, their survival strategies, by all means. In the minds of my respondents, collectivism was very much associated with the vestiges of socialism, while individualism and entrepreneurial spirit were regarded as the values of a new society. People felt tired of unredeemed promises and had no trust in authorities and the Russian state. The latter was seen as a betrayer who first moved them to the North in the economic interest of the motherland and then left them as unneeded. Such perception was expressed by my interview partners when they explained a shift from “working together to achieve a common objective” towards a “searching for individual profits” paradigm.

The example of Vorkuta demonstrates the survival of a community that was achieved through utilisation of established relationships and networks between residents – so called social capital. The most common way to become employed, borrow money, access information about recent changes in the city, overcome bureaucratic hurdles, to repair a car or to jump a queue for resettlement assistance was (and still is) through relatives, friends and acquaintances. In the settlement where “everyone knows one another”, connections between people are regarded as the most valuable assets as it helps to solve almost any problem and provides security. “You do not need recommendation letters, because they have little importance in this city”, explained TV reporter Natalia Ivashchenko who I interviewed in the very first days of my field work in Vorkuta. “What you need are people who know other people” (Natalia Ivashchenko, 29.04.2011, Vorkuta). Knowing the “right people” and maintaining good relations with them is a value that lasts from the times of GULAG when connections between people helped to live through the hardships of camp. By “right people” I mean those who occupy an important position in the public and non-government institutions,

who have access to resources, who make decisions or may influence the decision-making process. During the subsequent Soviet years, networks between people were utilised to navigate within the hierarchical system, to access scarce commodities or to make particular decisions. In the 1990s when the former state guarantees were reduced significantly and overall distrust in public authorities grew, mutual assistance amongst the citizens was a more reliable and functional support system. The weaker the state was, the stronger and more valuable relationships between citizens became. On the other hand, empirical findings from Vorkuta demonstrate that those with less developed social capital were deprived from the process of welfare distribution.

Decline of the coal industry and its input to the market of fossil fuels reduced federal allocations for the northern industries, eroded extra-local economic links between the city-forming enterprise and the consumers, and changed the state approach to developing northern territories, particularly to distributing the population, which negatively affected positionality of Vorkuta. If the city was previously seen as a treasure trove of coal, in the free market circumstances, Vorkuta was now positioned as a burden for the federal budget due to high maintenance costs and overpopulation. On the other hand, decline in Vorkuta and its peripheral location magnetized the interest of the World Bank in this place. (World Bank 1994; World Bank 2001). Partly because the local elites were cooperative and welcomed the projects of the World Bank with enthusiasm as they were seen as a source for additional funding, partly because the World Bank required a platform to test its schemes, Vorkuta had the attention of international experts more so than other places and could gain greater funding. During the early post-Soviet years, the World Bank was one of the players who was directly involved in shaping economic and social life in Vorkuta, affecting its viability. The World Bank set up a neoliberal rhetoric about viability of the northern towns and initiated a restructuring campaign based on that rhetoric. Taking this approach to city development can be characterised as incomplete and "greedy" as it was mostly centred on the economic calculations and ignored social attributes of the place.

Contemporary approaches to city viability

Although it was argued that Soviet policies of populating the Arctic periphery "resulted in an artificial economic structure in the North and inflated population base that would not have developed under market conditions" (World Bank 2001), industrial communities continued to exist. Post-socialist strategies of city viability yielded a transition from narrow economic networks and relationships to more global ones by including international actors and linking a city to the international markets. It is questionable, though, whether or not the networks and relationships contributing to the city-making process have changed significantly from the late Soviet period.

On the one hand, fulfilment of the budget, welfare of the population and the level of social services still largely depends on position and performance of the city-forming enterprise. Quality of social and economic relations between the city administration and staple companies determines the development of the municipal entity as a whole. Mining activities of Vorkutaugol allowed the city to remain as a "resource base" and source the steel producers in central Russia with high-quality coking coal. Before privatization, its relationships to the external economic players were defined by the state and the national economic priorities. Vorkuta, through its city-forming enterprise, was included into the national production ties and served as regional "hub and spoke" centre in the definition of Ann Markusen (1996). It was also surrounded by multiple suppliers and related activities. Key investment decisions were made in Kremlin, but were often initiated locally. Vorkutaugol continues generating unique local culture related to the coal mining industry and industry-specific expertise in the work force, however, today it has even less autonomy and is dependent on the head company Severstal. It serves as a "resource branch" (Markusen 1996) of the parent company and brings forward corporate interests, not only in the economic sphere, but also in the political arena, as described in chapter six. The position of Vorkutaugol within the vertically-integrated firm practically means for the city that the local economic structure is dominated by a large, externally situated actor that makes crucial decisions about investments. Vorkuta's leading companies is mostly branch plants of larger firms, so the city positionality is mediated first through firm networks, then industries, and wider economic networks. To conclude, on the one hand, socio-economic recovery of Vorkuta after the post-Soviet bust has been ensured through reproduction of the North-South economic path dependence. Vorkuta was initially established as a "resource platform", and from the very beginning its viability depended on the commitment and success of the mining industry. On the other hand, the power of external

capital in the long run leads to greater economic dependence and may produce a counter-effect, as has already happened.

Reliance of a city's economy on the mining industry is used as a political "trump card" in the relationships between the municipal authorities and the Russian Ministry of Regional Development. The latter elaborates state policies of regional development and compiles special programs to assist regions and municipalities in solving their socio-economic difficulties. One of the recent concerns of the federal government is how to support single industry cities, many of which experience an economic downturn. It created a register of Russian mono-industrial cities that encompassed over 300 municipalities, including the city of Vorkuta. A small number of the listed mono-industrial cities received a state grant based on the proposed diversification projects. Vorkuta has not been lucky with gaining state subsidies; however, local actors attempt to participate in the program and propose its territory for testing policy schemes aimed at energy-efficient management of municipal resources. According to the project design, in case of success, these measures could be used in other settlements with similar problems. Municipal administration has been seeking to use a status of *monogorod* – the Russian term for 'single industry town' – to solve practical problems in the sphere of public utilities on the federal funds. If the project is adopted, Vorkuta will become a pilot territory for state restructuring policies for the third time.

Despite this, the present-day understanding of what constitutes city viability and associated economic strategies has shifted towards greater diversification and multi-directionality. It is argued that diversified local economies might have greater adaptive capacity and lower propensity to negative path dependence (Martin and Sunley 2006). Due to the construction of a new gas transportation route, Vorkuta was selected to be a base town of the Bovanenkovo – Ukhta project managed by the daughter company of Gazprom and its subcontractors. Inclusion of the city into the national networks of gas pipes enriches the municipal budget through various payments and taxes. The new construction project on the territory of the urban district and in the neighbouring areas brings several thousands of intra-regional commuters to Vorkuta. Although only a minor portion of them stay in the city while being on a shift, transient workers have clear impacts on the latest developments of the city such as increasing apartment rent, boosting the real-estate market, growing the number of cheap dormitories and hostels for fly-in fly-out workers, mushrooming of small business, and increasing prostitution along with the number of cases of sexually transmitted diseases. Long-distance commuters are not yet considered by the authorities when developing strategic plans and are perceived as a problem rather than a potential benefit. Fly-in fly-out workers from the

central Russian regions create greater competition for the local labourers, as they usually agree to work for smaller wages. Participation of Vorkuta in the project of Gazprom promises the municipality with the future economic benefits and employment opportunities for the local population. Local and regional elites hope that new source of income and wealth will positively influence local and regional developments. It also promises a city with the positional advantage within the national economic structure as a Gazprom base town, where fly-in fly-out operations in the circumpolar region will be performed on a regular base. Gazprom, in the perception of local actors, is associated with economic and social security and long-term prospects. The real stability and profitability of such plans depend on different factors such as the demand and prices for natural gas, geopolitical relationships between Russia and other national states and international corporations, development of renewable energy sources, political stability within the city, etc.

A strategy that is closely related to the gas transportation industry requires improvement of the city's positionality in the Arctic region. With the growing international interest in the Arctic resources as well as state investments into the infrastructural projects, local authorities in Vorkuta are trying to step in and position Vorkuta as one of the strategic hubs in the region. A strong geopolitical status of an Arctic base town can increase chances for city viability through integration of the city in the newly-evolving power relations and economic and social-cultural networking with other localities (within and outside the North), state and non-state actors.

Although there is little happening in Vorkuta in terms of tourist activities, tourism discourse has material effects on city life and is useful for some actors involved in promoting the discourse. Visible consequences of this rhetoric have materialized in the budgetary funds allocated for tourism projects, a newly created department at the administration that specifically deals with tourism as well as a recently established municipal tourism agency. The latter promotes tourist attractions around Vorkuta, develops hiking trails and organises public events to increase interest in the local population, especially school students, in practicing sport tourism and spending their spare time outdoors. A privately-funded product of tourism discourse is the unfinished GULAG village. These material results of the policy (rather insignificant in relation to its stated aims) are mentioned as attributes of diversification, which is one of the key concerns for the national authorities. This brings us to answering the question of why tourism appeared as a matter at this particular moment and not before. The answer lies in the federal policy approach towards economic diversification of mono-industrial towns launched by the Ministry of Regional Development in relation to

mono-cities. By putting tourism on the agenda, Vorkuta's leaders make an effort in repositioning the city. Tourism becomes an asset for the municipal governors to upgrade the image of the settlement not only as a coal mining community, but also as a tourist hub.

The shrinking process, which began in the mid-1990s, continues contributing to the reorganisation of urban space and demographic recomposition as seen in the outmigration of permanent population exceeding inmigration, people queuing for relocation grants, city margins turning into ghost settlements, and municipal authorities being challenged with moving remaining residents from the *poselki* to the city centre. Various resettlement policies described in the previous sections aim to direct and stimulate this process towards achieving greater city viability. Social engineering schemes initiated by the state and adopted by the local authorities yielded smaller compact municipalities inhabited mostly by the working population. Satellite urban settlements that create economic pressure on the local budget have to be depopulated and closed down. Citizens from these places are the first candidates for resettlement while other target groups of relocation policies include economically passive individuals. Despite the taken efforts, northern relocation schemes did not bring intended results (Nuykina 2011) because of human agency. Being designed to improve well-being of the northern communities, relocation programs, however, underestimated the importance of social capital and people's attachment to the place that restrained many beneficiaries from leaving. Would the relocation policies produce better results if they were to be planned differently? This is a question for further investigation.

To conclude, the Soviet period can be described as place-making when much of the physical urban infrastructure was established while the early post-Soviet period was the time of socio-economic reorganisation when the city went through a series of adjustment reforms and defended its right to exist. The contemporary process of establishing viability mainly refers to finding a compromise between all the actors and searching for new schemes to ensure livelihood. In this regard it is interesting how different actors within the city attempt to re-establish positionality of Vorkuta by following various strategies. Although multi-faceted development paths may initially seem contradictory, they do not exclude each other and are in fact used as complementary ingredients to ensure city viability. Diversification of development strategies is a distinctive feature of contemporary viability-making in contrast to mono-directional development path based on coal mining activities.

Implications for Policy Planning and Practice

My interviews and informal conversations with the ordinary residents show that people are not well-informed about the municipal authorities' future plans of the city. When I asked what plans they have heard about, my field partners commonly mentioned big industrial projects, like construction of the gas pipeline or opening of new mining sites. Some interviewees mentioned tourism as a new venture. A lack of awareness about the plans of the administration is perpetuated by distrust in the frequently changing political elites. My impression was that people do not feel continuity in policy-making as each new municipal administration rewrites development plans that are not publicly accessible anyway. In the case of Vorkuta that went through the change of three governors over the last three years, local leaders have not articulated a clear and realistic vision of the future that they are attempting to bring into action. Although there are some procedural requirements for participatory decision-making, residents are still not included in the process of policy-making. In cases where people are actually included in the process of political decision-making, say, a master plan, they are rather formal and have no real impact.

OECD (2011) advice on improving social cohesion calls for inclusive, co-ordinated policy-making process based on civic participation and political feedback. It says "inclusive policy making brings in the views of all stakeholders – from those who will be implementing the policies to the final beneficiaries. The policies which result from such a process benefit from having greater legitimacy and support, factors which ultimately determine their effectiveness" (OECD 2011: 24-25). This policy advice shall be taken into account locally in Vorkuta and other places lacking the contribution of civil society across different levels in the process of city-making. People do not know much about the strategies for city development as they are not included in the process of deciding on alternatives. My interviews show that residents are better informed about plans of the extractive industries rather than urban transformations.

Another aspect of constituting a viable city is policy consistency when strategic decisions thoughtfully taken by the government are followed by the succeeding officials. My interviews with the municipal officials in Vorkuta (Marina Sovershaeva, 26.4.2012, Vorkuta; Alexander Litvinov, 11.2.2012, Vorkuta) confirm that it takes about a year for a new administration to "get into work", which usually starts with rewriting city development plans and strategies designed by the previous cabinet. Soon after new plans were adopted, the city manager and his team were dismissed and the next administration started the process again. Of course, it does not mean that all the strategies were reshaped. The leading projects, which

aim at increasing possibilities for the city and its residents, have remained unchanged unlike the arguments of positionality. According to the last vision of the city development strategy, Vorkuta is striving for a more powerful influence in the Arctic region, and effective leadership in this regard is the crucial element in achieving positional advantage.

Successful examples from other corners of the Arctic region (Aarsaether, Riabova et al. 2004), remote areas in North America (Gray and Sinclair 2005; Ricketts 2005) and Australia (Davies 2009; Skerratt 2011) among other factors prove that local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties. My field material also confirms that local officials are crucial actors in encouraging and supporting projects aimed at better viability, economic diversification, and innovative activities. Moreover, they act as a "gate-opener, establishing contacts and legitimating actions by networking" (Aarsaether, Riabova et al. 2004: 152) with other municipalities, state bodies, companies and transnational institutions. "As the legitimate community representative, local government should have the capacity to bridge local and non-local relations, and the more isolated the locality the more important it is" (Aarsaether, Riabova et al. 2004: 152).

Local long-term prosperity of a community is influenced by the attitude that municipal authorities adopt when it comes to positioning the city and initiate changes. As my interviews indicate, it is often the case that local authorities are reactive to the reforms launched outside the place. Municipal programs in most cases come as a result of a prescribed direction of development, for example, in the case of tourism. This dissertation suggests municipal leaders should move from a reactive to a proactive approach to local planning that works towards improving the economic, social and environmental conditions of the city. Furthermore, proactive attitudes regarding the future mining activities on the territory of the city district can help the city to meet expected industry demand and enable the local economy to grow in proportion with its economic ambitions.

Moreover, based on the example of Vorkuta and my field observations, I argue that local actors lack an opportunistic approach to city development and tend to perceive some of the present-day changes as threats rather than welcoming potentials. This is particularly related to the appearance of inter-regional long-distance commuters in the city who are generally regarded as troubles-makers, while economic changes related to the new population group are hardly considered at all. Transient workers involved in the projects of gas transportation industry near the city district of Vorkuta can alternatively be viewed as customers of hostels, canteens, barber shops, etc. (Nuykina 2013). Long-distance commuters are also a source of individual income tax that stays in the host region and thus contribute to

the municipal budget. Consideration of demands and purchasing capacity of this population group can be considered by the city administration and local businesses when planning future development for the benefit of the whole settlement. Attention to the economic and social potentials of the current processes may supply the city with new sources of income and contribute to its overall economic well-being.

This paper argues that place-bound processes cannot be planned in isolation from the extra-local forces and positionality of a settlement with respect to other actors. Viable urban industrial communities are "a complex product of multiple forces, including corporate strategies, industrial structures, profit cycles, state priorities, local and national politics. Their success cannot be studied by focusing only on local institutions and behaviours, because their companies (through corporate relationships, trade associations, trade, government contracts), workers (via migration and international unions), and other institutions (universities, government installations) are embedded in external relationships – both cooperative and competitive – that condition their commitment to the locality and their success their" (Markusen 1996: 309). Thus, greater reflection about positionality of a city and its inclusion in the cooperative economic relationships and cross-regional alliances make a given municipality stronger. Path dependences in this respect can play both as a source of additional livelihood prospects and also as a barrier for diversified sustainable development.

Lastly, I propose fostering feedback mechanisms between program-designers and implementing institutions in order to shed light on the tremendous regional diversity within the Russian North, which was not properly considered at the stage of policy planning (Nuykina 2011). Empirical material that comes out of the case study shall be used for reviewing the broader principles of city viability in Russia and in the North in particular. In addition to the question of how massive development projects were applied locally, I also reveal how people's practices contribute to the understanding of development programs and theoretical framework. Careful consideration of responses from the ground may enrich understanding of decision-makers about human agency. Stories from Vorkuta demonstrate that people are not passive recipients of state policies. In fact, they actively reinterpret them through their feedback and even utilise them in the personal interest.

To conclude, I suggest that city viability will be beneficial if local planning authorities look for solutions rather than problems. People are better informed and included in the process of decision-making. There is a level of expertise and local knowledge within the civil society that can be used for developing some city plans such as tourism. Participatory governance may stimulate greater trust from the residents to the political leaders and thus

provide their decisions with greater eligibility. Municipal leaders have steering power in bringing all other parties together and elaborating shared visions, strategies and practices of city viability. Therefore the professional competences and personal qualities of those in power at the city level as well as their willingness to cooperate with other actors and negotiate the interests of the residents are important elements that ensure the sustainable future of a settlement.

Theoretical conclusion

Place-based community attributes

In addition to the economic well-being of a city, its viability also rests on the social qualities of a community. This includes developed social capital, a strong sense of belonging and social coherence, civic activism, effective leadership, shared ideas and visions about the future and present development pathways. Each of these components contributes to the overall success of any community, but especially those located in the Arctic periphery of the Russian North. Social qualities of a community and people-place bonding are the foundation which allows economic and positional opportunities to appear. Ignorance of place-based social characteristics leads to the failure of economic development efforts no matter how good the intentions are.

People's relationship to other community members and their living environment is a key issue for a better understanding of the city dynamic as a whole. However, it is not the urban structures and the built environment as such that is crucial, but how people perceive and experience it that may explain a city's viability. Emotional, social and economic attachment to the place is shown to be one of the motivations why people refuse to relocate from the northern regions (Bolotova and Stammler 2010; Nuykina 2011; Heleniak, Nuykina et al. forthcoming 2014), regardless of the state-induced incentives. Previous chapters described the process of getting rooted while building a city brick by brick. First, industrial settlers, both convicts and free labourers, began their living in the North without basic comforts, staying in dugouts and later in wooden barracks. Both these settlers and the following newcomers were included in the construction of the industrial and urban infrastructure with their own hands and transformed a place from "empty tundra" into a modern city- from the place "in the middle of nowhere" to one of the biggest population centres on the Arctic map. "People have made these places their homes" (Bolotova and Stammler 2010: 217) and, in return, places have made them into Northerners. It is a typical story when today's residents originally came

to the North for a short period to improve their economic and professional position and ended up staying for many more years as they found meaning in their lives. My research concludes that both people's developed attachment and experiences with the place contribute to the transformation of the Russian northern communities from being places of temporary inhabitancy (which appeared mainly because of the South-North relocation induced by the state policies) into the localities for life-long habitation.

Practices of collective works and helping each other brought residents together on newly-established localities and created more tightly-knit, social communities. Solidarity, unity and mutual assistance are the values regarded as integral to a city's viability. The previous chapter described five stories of how path dependent collective practices are followed and reproduced in contemporary practices through small, but important volunteer projects. Active members of the community continue improving public infrastructure in the city by building playgrounds for children and reconstructing sport facilities. They explore and document the history of the region for the sake of new generations, organise social events and sport competitions, participate in hobby clubs, etc. Some activities, which were previously managed by the Soviet state, such as *subbotniki*, are currently carried out either by the private companies or by people themselves who believe that they are responsible for local prosperity. Although the belief in state obligations to provide social services is still strong in the North, I could also observe an increasing understanding of the civil society's power in creating a viable city. The spirit of collectivity originates from people themselves (rather than being induced) and motivates residents to create local improvements. The scale of these good deeds is not as big as it was previously when people were engaged in the construction works, however, shall be not ignored, because of the "spreading effect". A functional community draws its strength from social cohesion amongst inhabitants contributing to the common good and people's feeling of being at home.

According to this study, resilient social capital within a community proved to be one of the most important contributors to city viability throughout the three historical periods. Examples from the field showed that social networks have practical value for advancing individual and collective livelihood opportunities. The networks of beneficial relationships are utilised by not only municipal leaders to push decisions through the power hierarchy, but also by the residents to access social programs, companies to influence the political situation in a city, long-distance commuters to find employment in the North, and others. Diversified social capital is an important asset when striving for powerful positionality outside a given community.

The role of effective leadership in encouraging strong social capital within and outside the community was stressed in several studies on city viability, and my research came to a similar conclusion. "Effective leadership within the community field is necessary in order to assert successful community action, encourage social well-being, and improve community viability" (Ricketts and Place 2009). A charismatic and strong political leader can help a city through difficult times with minimal losses, as happened in Vorkuta during the Second Word War and the economic decline of the early 1990s. Evidence of a leader's true caring nature about her/ his community is shown in increased local well-being and citizen cooperation. Social capital, and thus, city viability increases. It also stimulates unity in the community through hegemony of values and ideas when residents agree to share and follow visions of the leaders (Harner 2001). On the other hand, leaders are the crucial link in reaching out. They can bridge their place with outside resource-givers through extending and strengthening connections across the spaces. Collaborations across and within the places are especially important for the viability of remote communities that, by their location, have less access to the markets.

Path dependence

In my very first field notes about Vorkuta, written in May 2011, I describe the city as one of the last islands of the Soviet regime. While walking in the streets, I was astonished to see so many Soviet symbols on the houses, well maintained monuments and pictures. At first glance, it appeared that time had stopped in the city. There has been no construction in Vorkuta since the 1990s; the architectural look of the city centre and its spatial organisation was formed when GULAG was in full blossom. Even present-day advertisements and street banners somehow reflect Soviet-style propaganda. The main street of the city – Lenina Street – is decorated with posters that encourage miners to produce more coal for the nation. Outdoor billboards of the government party United Russia ask citizens to "work together for building the future".

This initial impression was further reinforced as my interviews progressed, as people constantly compared contemporary developments with the former period. It looked as if some respondents felt trapped in the past and continued living in the memories about "how it was before", while keeping a critical attitude to the present-day changes. Although general material welfare in Vorkuta is higher than in many other territories, people compare their current economic circumstances with previous material well-being and express discontent.

The level of average northern income per household in comparison to their consumption possibilities is much lower in contrast with former opportunities. Moreover, Soviet social welfare system and supplementary northern benefits gave inhabitants the feeling of security and being appreciated, both of which vanished once the system became obsolete. Payments and public assistance to the population are still higher in the northern communities as well as reliance of municipalities on state support; however, the general trend is towards equalisation of the North with other Russian regions. Such a state development approach, in people's opinion, is unreasonable as the life in the North is more difficult and expensive due to the limited livelihood opportunities. "By phasing out from social maintenance and cutting out the public spending, the Russian state "betrays" its northern residents", says one of my respondents. My research in different regions of the Russian North show that the local populations tend to preserve the idea of moral economy, sacrifice and entitlement (Thompson 2004: 77). Interviews show that long-term residents see their presence in the North as "service to the motherland", which has to be compensated by material and non-material benefits. Such thinking reflects the Soviet pattern of relations between the state and the citizens- the former by attracting people to work and live in the harsh northern environment thereby entering into a "moral agreement" with them. People settled in the North because of the Soviet policies of populating the periphery and therefore still expecting the state to help them with housing and other matters either in Vorkuta or elsewhere. The moral obligations of the state were nullified with the collapse of the Soviet system. The successor state applied different methods and principles in population management, but for the people themselves, it did not matter that the contractual party had disappeared. The expectation that the government is fully responsible for public assistance still exists (Nuykina 2011: 56). This path-dependent attitude makes people seek help from the Russian state and overset its plans when they do not correspond with people's needs. This manipulative practice results from the belief that they have the right to social assistance by their long-term residence and work in the North as well as the right to use state-provided assistance packages at their own convenience.

Among the most important contributions to the theory of path dependence is that it has a human agency. Local actors consciously (and also unconsciously) recreate path dependent understandings and expectations of the state's social commitments in order to serve their interests. For example, presently the most active advocate of a northern relocation policy is northern municipalities that try to prolong the state's involvement into subsidised housing provisions. My interviews with the governmental officials show that even though city administrations are well-informed about backward migration to the North and existing

manipulative strategies they continue insisting on the importance of resettlement grants. They are consciously reproducing the discourse related to social responsibilities of the Russian authorities in front of the northerners and try to pull in federal subsidies, although the need of assisted relocation is not equally important throughout the North. As some localities with developed socio-economic and transportation networks to the mainland become permanent settlements, people consider these places their homes and thus refuse to move out. Path dependences are utilised as "manipulable resources" (Humphrey 1998: 195). Less advantaged localities, such as the Susuman district in the Magadan region, still rely on state assistance for relocation and mostly use program money according to its intended goals. For the residents of such places, reproduction of path dependent relationships between the state and the northern communities is a crucial contribution to the private and collective well-being (Heleniak, Nuykina et al. forthcoming 2014).

On a broader level, the same relocation policies can be interpreted as a "state-initiated social engineering scheme" (Scott 1998) that has the same intention of directing people's mobility and rescaling settlement patterns as performed by the Soviet authorities, though in the opposite, North-South direction. Relocation from the North is an attempt to rationalise contemporary economic geography of Russia according to the principles of free market economy by concentrating population centres in the old industrial areas. The Soviet state purposely distributed mass populations and industrial complexes within and across the Soviet space for a similar purpose – to make the national economy work according to the central planning and Marxist beliefs in equality. Although there are different logical explanations of the state-induced mobility, the principle of the state's involvement in managing the territory is quite similar. National policies of Putin's cabinet reproduce path dependences in control measures over behaviour of the population that somehow mirrors the Soviet state approach to the "administrative ordering of society" (Scott 1998). And again the rational design of social life hits the wall of human agency when people's creativity finds its way through the structural order.

The revived production chain that linked the coal mining industry in Vorkuta and steel companies in central Russia is another form of re-established path dependence, which exist on different terms than had existed previously. Yet this still impacts city viability. It is an "important fact that the economic landscape inherits the legacy of its own past industrial and institutional development, and that this history can exert a major influence in conditioning its future development and evolution" (Martin and Sunley 2006: 12). The case of Vorkuta confirms one of the theoretical arguments that path dependence results from a reliance on

particular raw materials that become a foundation for social and economic well-being. It also conditions future decisions about development pathways. Industry-related identity is very strong in Vorkuta as well as a general belief that the city would not exist without any mining operations. Therefore, the first option to guarantee survival of the community was to revive the coal sector by incorporating it into the steel production enterprise. Positive opportunities came to the city through new configurations of the mining legacies.

Economising approach to city development will not bring desired results until the Soviet legacy in its current infrastructure persists. Urban infrastructure and electric utility systems in the Russian cities were constructed according to the Soviet idea of centralized distribution of communal services. Widespread networks and urban equipment created annual losses in terms of energy, water, heat and budgetary spending. Existing utility networks and the physical organisation of the city district does not allow shrinking places, like Vorkuta, to economise their resource management. Path dependences of the former Soviet social state such as existing water pipes, wires, apartment blocks, heating boiler houses and bureaucratic routines related to property management create a barrier for long-term viability prospects (Collier 2011), as the size and the distribution of the population within the urban district does not match the physical infrastructure. Remaining utility systems result in unsustainable use of natural recourses and large municipal expenses. For example, in order to provide hot water to the satellite communities in Vorkuta during the winter season, one has to pump twice much water than it is actually consumed. The size of the pipes does not allow saving of water resources, because less pressure in the pipeline leads to freezing and then breaking down the whole water supply system. Unused water is dumped outside the city, while the new portion from the river gets into the pipeline. This loss-creating scheme of water delivery has been constantly criticised, but it is still used, as there are no local funding to implement restructuring.

As in Russia, resource communities in the Canadian northern regions share the same understanding of core-periphery relations. A song by Alex Berthelot, which I found in the book by Mawhiney and Pitblado (1999) explicitly expresses this position. It "calls on northerners to join together to ensure that more of the wealth gained through northern resource exploitation stays in the North and enriches the communities and the people of the North" (Mawhiney and Pitblado 1999: 17). However, northern municipalities today, as well as during the Soviet period, possess a function of resource donor that benefits the national centre with taxes and resource revenues. They are fully dependent on the decisions of the Kremlin both politically and economically. Centre-periphery relationships under Putin's

presidency are very much in-line with the Soviet-style top-down approach. Northern localities have less economic and political power to govern their territories compared to the earlier post-Soviet decade. Intergovernmental fiscal relations in contemporary Russia (when all the taxes were collected in the federal centre and then redistributed between localities) aggravate dependence of the city budgets on the external funds and make local actors passive. Municipal authorities are not motivated to diversify the sources of budget revenue since a city's financial plan is formed according to the municipal needs (no matter real or fake) rather than raised funds. When developing an annual city budget, they share an attitude of "getting as much as possible" from the state while having little legislative rights. The municipal authorities also have little motivation to develop economic potentials, which would provide a locality with greater in-house income. This creates the problem of a reactive approach to city development instead of one proactively looking for new possibilities. Putin's incentives for localities to develop their tax-bases bring no result, as the whole structure of intergovernmental fiscal relations leaves no space (and most importantly enthusiasm) for local creativity. In short, this example of path dependent relationships between the core and the periphery in the fiscal sphere shows that existing limitations do not currently permit municipal administrations to enjoy actual independence in decision-making on budgeting and ways to increase revenue and thus does not provide public services in the most efficient way. However, weak positionality of the localities can be improved through collective and coordinated efforts of the Russian urban settlements to make necessary changes in local self-government legislation and thus overcome lock-in path dependence.

In conclusion, socio-economic settings and practices inherited over time continue to influence present-day development trajectories and outcomes. This is particularly observable in the case of economic relations, the decision-making process, relationships between the municipality and city-forming enterprise, and state involvement in social welfare provision. Although path dependences impose some limitations to the city development, it is also connected to actors' choices in the same way that continuing legacies are relevant for the city viability. They decide whether to follow path dependent relations or to act further in order to fulfill their common or private interests. In this way, path dependences can be utilised as a resource through manipulation of remaining social and economic networks as well as power relations for creating a viable city. The case of Vorkuta shows that "transformation is path dependent which means both that it is influenced by the past legacies and open to the possibilities of a new configuration of these legacies" (Stark and Bruszt 1998).

Positionality

In the context of increasing competition among places, remote localities are attempting to favourably reposition themselves in the network of power hierarchies and economic relationships; they aim to guarantee long-term security and sound economic benefits for themselves. Due to their reliance on external (either state or corporate) sponsors, urban settlements in the North have limited financial resources for developing self-sufficient economies. Urban centres established around mineral deposits to provide the extractors with a labour force are locked in an export dependent development path. Such dependence creates a barrier for the implementation of strategies for economic diversification, while also making these communities more susceptible to "boom and bust" cycles.

I have shown in the chapter five how decreasing demand for fossil fuels (coal) at the end of the1980's caused economic instability and social insecurity in the mining communities. With appropriate timing (and giving an appropriate timescale), however, these economic interdependences can serves as a source of community revival. This can be done through vertical integration of the location in the geography of production, as was demonstrated in Vorkuta in the early 2000's. Economic relationships similar to those seen during the Soviet period between the coal mining enterprise in Vorkuta and the major steel producers in central Russia were re-established on the basis of a market economy. Although it became a "satellite platform" for internationally-based companies, Vorkuta received a new impetus for economic development. However this positionality does not prevent local actors from promoting the city to become a "hub" for development in the Arctic region. Municipal and regional officials strive to include the city in a list of Russian Arctic settlements which would improve its positional advantage by making it an Arctic base town. Growing interest of the national states and extractive industries in the regional fossil fuels and mineral resources provides the far northern settlements with new source for viability. The success of this city in becoming a significant player in the Arctic 'game' depends directly on the ability of local leaders to promote local interests and compete effectively with other northern localities, on both a national and global scale. Differences in places' positionality effect the city's viability. On the other hand, collaborations among state and civil societies across spaces (such as, for instance, along the Arctic-Arctic axis) may improve the chances that northern communities can shift their peripheral position in relation to the core. Encouraging cooperation and the development of new networks in the Arctic can contribute to viable futures for northern industrial communities and the region in general. Thus, the limitations of place-based development

efforts can be overcome by greater inclusion of said places in non-local networks and partnerships.

Theory says that positionalities are manipulated to improve the well-being of places (Sheppard 2002). The most efficient way of improving the quality of life in various localities under the Soviet centralized redistribution system and vertical government was through informal personal contacts among city leaders. Social capital within the network of government bodies and personal positionality of municipal officials had a direct influence on the livelihood possibilities of the whole community. Similarly, today's municipal leaders use their acquaintances in Moscow-based ministries to influence the decision-making process to, for example, include a certain city in a federal program or/ and make it "visible" for investors. The same principle of network relationships used as resources is witnessed within the city; individuals capitalize on their positional resources in order to benefit from the state programs. In particular, residents utilise their connections to reap benefit from the police or to gain attention for their social initiatives. In the previous chapters I have described how some residents manage to exploit the changes and disorder that came with the new democratic regime to improve their livelihood possibilities, while the majority has not benefited in a similar way. Differences in positionality produce differences in access to information, public funds, and professional assets; likewise, unequal possibilities among inhabitants derive from disparities in positionality. People's relations with a town are not homogenous, but rather take different forms depending on their position, connection to the outer world, life interests, and expectations.

The way cities develop is a result of how actors are positioned against each other, and yet the positionality of actors is constantly shifting in the process of city-making. I have stressed the roles and the visions of different actors and their changing situatedness in city-making in three historical periods. During the Soviet years key decisions about industrial and urban growth were made by the central government offices in Moscow and in particular by the Soviet Ministries. The state was responsible for and controlled "the rate of growth of towns in number and size, the location of new towns, the allocation of functions to towns and the ways of evolution of individual towns as geographical and economic and social entities. The state has to decide the priorities for all these processes, and distribute resources: financial, material and human" (French 1995: 3). Cities were closely linked with the industrial enterprises, and this is the second key agent contributing to the formation and development of places. City-forming enterprises played economic, political, social and cultural roles and served as a "total social institutions" (Sneath and Humphrey 1999) that encompassed the

whole being of a city. The interdependence of municipalities and industries was at the core of the Soviet understanding of place vis-à-vis city viability. Representation and implementation of the Communist Party's decisions at the local level was carried out through the City Council of People's Deputies and other representative bodies without much independence. Residents did not possess decisive power about planning the future of a city, although they were actively involved in the very creation of these places. Both GULAG prisoners and income-workers during several inmigration waves built up industrial and urban infrastructure, organised places for common use and created green zones in the city, which initially did not have trees. Working collectively outdoors in the city, they laid the foundation not only for the spatial growth, but also for the continuation of a sustainable and coherent community. "This joint, hands-on experience at work and the strong feeling of a community" (Bolotova and Stammler 2010: 208) were the ingredients that created viability for new industrial cities.

The following period is characterised by a different rage of social actors. Soon after disintegration of the Soviet power hierarchy, municipal administrations received greater authority but also responsibilities to organise the life in the settlements. City-forming enterprises continued to influence city development, although many of its socio-cultural and political functions and also non-core assets were delegated to municipal officials. Economic decline and restructuring of the main company caused socio-economic decay of the whole city; its means of subsistence were made dependent on the success of staples on the market. Positionality of federal ministries in relation to the city-making process has also been modified, as these bodies could no longer provide cities with the massive investments to support previous levels of economic activity. The centralized shipment and delivery of food and fuel to northern communities, which was financed by the federal budget and special compensation packages, were an important motivation for many to relocate to the North. However, the transition period these supporting incentives were significantly reduced. The state's direct involvement in managing local matters was replaced with the principle of subsidiarity, which increased the positional advantage of city administrations. However, it did not completely avoid setting up an economy-driven understanding of how to ensure city viability in the broader market. Moscow decision-makers did not operate alone in developing the principles of the city's economically sustainable existence, but were advised by international institutions, such as the World Bank. In order to put its ideas into practice, the World Bank developed and funded socio-economic adjustment programs, which corresponded to the general policy course of the new democratic government. On the other hand, inhabitants of northern communities gained some power through democratic elections.

Moreover, they have been influencing decision-making through civic activism, by, for example, protesting and demonstrating during the early post-Soviet years.

Today, the positionality of social actors has again changed. Reforms implemented under Vladimir Putin, and particularly the new law on municipal self-government (Federal Law N154-FZ 28.08.1995), undermined positionality of the city administrations and provided greater power to the regional governmental bodies. It is difficult to say unequivocally whether Russian municipalities have benefited from Putin's verticalisation. On the one hand, political and economic dependence of the local administrations on the core has been strengthened. Almost all Russian cities currently have monies obtained through grants in their budgets and thus rely on inter-budgetary transfers from the federal government to the regions and from the regions to the municipalities. In terms of power relations, key municipal leaders are appointed by the regional governments according to demonstrated loyalty to the ruling authorities. Further, the heads of the regions are selected and can be dismissed by the Kremlin. Thus, the Russian state has reinforced its positional influence over northern localities which consequently underpins a path dependent, top-down approach to city viability.

The influence of the World Bank in advising the Kremlin about northern regional development, as well as the demographic and spatial reorganisation of municipalities, has diminished. This, however, has not occurred without policy repercussions. Evidence that the positionality of the World Bank has changed can be found in the termination of the "Northern Restructuring Pilot Project" in Vorkuta in 2008; money allocated to the program have not been put to use. Schemes proposed by World Bank planners resulted in poor performance as they relied on single path of development that ignored the positionality of the places targeted by the reforms (Sheppard 2002: 326). At the same time, efforts of the World Bank to "provision advisory services on legal, economic, fiscal, and social aspects of Northern restructuring for the Federal Government" (World Bank 2001: 7) can be noticed in today's national strategy towards Russian northern areas. For instance, in order to discontinue the exclusive status of northern settlements and equalize the North in relation to other regions, the Russian government has eliminated the Ministry of the North.

The example of Vorkuta demonstrates another path dependence in the way a city-forming enterprise uses its economic weight to shape the political life of the municipality and region. Dominant enterprises concern themselves with those governmental decisions that directly influence their land use or tax and regulatory situations, and they try to cooperate with the authorities to ensure their interests at the local, regional, national and international level are taken into consideration. In practical terms, this means that a company's managers

are involved in the political life of a municipality or even a region, as has occurred in the case of the present case study.

The positionality of civil society among the full suite of social actors can take on significant importance as long as people help each other and participate in various common activities intended to improve common and public places. My interviews with residents show that solidarity and people's closeness to each other is valued and perceived as an important component of city viability. By taking an active social position, the key leaders of the community collectively impact the atmosphere of the communities. They "bring people together." The position of the residents in making northern communities their home is as important as it was previously, although in today's political climate people in Vorkuta prefer to avoid active political resistance and "fighting." They do not antagonize the political leaders, as there is mistrust in official strategies and the changing promises of political leaders. While generally ignoring the local political conflicts, people show increasing concern for social matters and more actively engage as volunteers. Those who decided to live in the North show in practice that "the idea of temporality can be overcome, and long-term viability of the city population as a whole might be achieved" (Bolotova and Stammler 2010: 211).

In conclusion, I would like to state that city viability requires continuous negotiation of positionality among community actors as well as between the place and external actors and forces. Every historical period is characterised by context-specific situatedness of actors involved in the process of place-making. The course of city development and the transformation of a place depend on the perceptions and visions of the positionally advantaged actors, which then form a foundation for strategies. Existing configurations, however, tend to change and in doing so modify the recipe of city viability. Secondly, I argue that city viability is a process produced through interactions among the large-scale external and smaller-scale, place-bound processes; it is also influenced by the interconnectedness of networks. My data have shown that, among other factors, city viability is shaped by shifting relationships between local processes and macro forces and that its success is conditioned to a large degree by the ability of social actors to reposition the place within the global economy in order to attract people, investors and funds. In the process of conducting this research, I found out that although there is a general tendency to look at city viability through the lens of place-specific actors and processes, it is evident that city-making is not an isolated process but rather includes also national and global network spaces. Moreover, my research in Vorkuta allows me to argue that the well-being of a settlement can be achieved through a manipulation

of actors' positional resources. The usage of positionality to improve local life is a feature characteristic of all three historical periods I have described.

Implications for Further Research

It is clear that not all cities are likely to be affected by the global forces in the same way. The question that interests me, and is suggested for further investigation, is whether a city's only way to persist is to become integrated into the global network of money, goods and people's flow. Can a place be viable and not integrated in the global market economy?

Another research proposition is concerned with the comparison of resource towns in the North to similar places in remote regions outside the Arctic region and the post-Soviet space. Clearly, the social problems and global economic challenges they face have some similarities. I suggest fostering North-South comparisons to extend our knowledge of what makes cities viable entities. What are other variables that compose city viability outside post-socialist context?

On the other hand, it is obvious that every mining activity has an end. The map of the world is full of places that were once prosperous and then became ghost towns. The question is how this transformation happens in practice. How do mining communities plan for closure? It would be interesting to hear the perspectives of companies, ordinary people, local authorities, NGOs and other stakeholders to find out how a viable place turns into ruins. The city of Vorkuta is surrounded by such communities, however, the limitations of this work did not allow me to explore this process in greater detail.

Concluding Statement

This dissertation shows multiple ways of approaching and understanding city viability depending on the historical, socio-economic, cultural and political context as well as the various actors involved. Social actors with positional advantage bring forward ideas and strategies of city viability that become dominant, while marginal voices tend to be neglected. These neglected ideas, however, may produce practical outcomes and explain why the dominant strategies do not yield expected results. Therefore, when trying to understand what makes a place thrive, it is important to consider the spectrum of perceptions, strategies and practices that create a viable city. As the composition of actors involved in the city-making process evolves over time, so does their positionality with respect to other actors, external forces, and the composition elements of city viability. Thus, I argue that city viability is a socially negotiated process, and, as every process, it exhibits fluidity and inter-temporal changes. Moreover, it applies creativity that allows different (sometimes diametrically opposite) strategies to co-exist as long as they benefit a city and its inhabitants.

Local perceptions, projects and practices to improve viability of a community depend on the external impulses and positionality of a city in the broader national and international networks. Differences in positionality amongst places make a difference in viability of a city. Therefore, powerful positionality within broader socio-economic relationships and competitions for resources are important contributors to city vitality. The latter requires certain efforts of local actors to readjust and reposition a city in the changing environment by establishing, reproducing and using networks of relationships. Some of these can be path dependent while others form according to the contemporary needs and ambitions of leading actors.

I explicitly acknowledge that there are many more factors that go beyond the framework of this dissertation and can be useful for improving our understanding of city viability. This dissertation is an attempt to contribute to the social theory by linking together three theoretical underpinnings – city viability, positionality and path dependence. Based on these concepts, I conclude that city viability is a product of interaction and on-going negotiation of various social actors both within a city and outside of it, which changes over time depending on the extra-local contexts and success of the city to reposition itself and overcome lock-in path dependence.

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ANNEX 1: BGN/PCGN ROMANIZATION SYSTEM FOR RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

The BGN/PCGN system for Russian was adopted by the BGN in 1944 and by the PCGN in 1947 for use in romanizing names written in the Russian Cyrillic alphabet.

Russian					Romanization	Russian					Romanization
1.	А	а	*А*	*а*	a	18.	Р	р	*Р*	*р*	r
2.	Б	б	*Б*	*б*	b	19.	С	с	*С*	*с*	s
3.	В	в	*В*	*в*	v	20.	Т	т	*Т*	*т*	t
4.	Г	г	*Г*	*г*	g	21.	У	у	*У*	*у*	u
5.	Д	д	*Д*	*д*	d	22.	Ф	ф	*Ф*	*ф*	f
6.	Е	е	*Е*	*е*	e	23.	Х	х	*Х*	*х*	kh
7.	Ё	ё	*Ё*	*ё*	ë	24.	Ц	ц	*Ц*	*ц*	ts
8.	Ж	ж	*Ж*	*ж*	zh	25.	Ч	ч	*Ч*	*ч*	ch
9.	З	з	*З*	*з*	z	26.	Ш	ш	*Ш*	*ш*	sh
10.	И	и	*И*	*и*	i	27.	Щ	щ	*Щ*	*щ*	shch
11.	Й	й	*Й*	*й*	y	28.	Ъ	ъ	*Ъ*	*ъ*	”
12.	К	к	*К*	*к*	k	29.	Ы	ы	*Ы*	*ы*	y
13.	Л	л	*Л*	*л*	l	30.	Ь	ь	*Ь*	*ь*	’
14.	М	м	*М*	*м*	m	31.	Э	э	Э	э	e
15.	Н	н	*Н*	*н*	n	32.	Ю	ю	*Ю*	*ю*	yu
16.	О	о	*О*	*о*	o	33.	Я	я	*Я*	*я*	ya
17.	П	п	*П*	*п*	p						

ANNEX 2: GLOSSARY OF RUSSIAN TERMS

Bol'shaya zemlya – literately translated as "the main land". Term is used by the northerners to refer to central and southern Russian regions.

Gradoobrazuyushchee predpriyatie – a city-forming enterprise.

Krayniy Sever – the Far North – is a geographic area that comprises sixteen regions on the basis that all or majority of their territory is classified being in the Far North. The latter includes Murmansk Oblast, Republic of Karelia, Arkhangelsk Oblast, Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Komi Republic, Khanti-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, Yamal-Nents Autonomous Okrug, City of Norilsk which administratively belongs to Krasnoyarsk Kray but physically located in Taymyr Autonomous Okrug, Taymyr Autonomous Okrug, Evenki Autonomous Okrug, Republic of Tuva, Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Magadan Oblast, Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, Koryak Autonomous Okrug, Kamchatka Oblast, Sakhalin Oblast.

GULAG – system of prisoner-labour camps in the Stalin era Soviet Union.

Chekists – servicemen of the Soviet state security organisation.

Koeffitsient – multiplier used to determine the monthly income of northern workers. The maximum rate of a Koeffitsient is 2.

Kuzbass – short form for Kuznetsk Coal Basin in southwestern Siberia, Russia.

L'goti – special benefits or privileges that entitled eligible recipients to the free or discounted use of various public services, including transport, housing, utilities, medicines and sanatoria. Categories of recipients included military veterans, people with disabilities, Heroes of the Soviet Union, inhabitants of the Far North, victims of the Chernobyl disaster and many others, including pensioners and policemen (Wengle and Rassel 2008: 740).

L'gotniki – beneficiaries of state compensations system.

Monogorod – single-industry town.

Nadbavka – sum added to the base monthly income of northerners invented by the Soviet authorities to encourage people's movement to the North, the size of which grew with length of residence in the North.

NKVD – the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs – is a law enforcement agency of the Soviet Union that was responsible for the system of forced labour camps (GULAG).

Osvoenie Severa – "Mastery on the North" – a term referring to both Soviet and Russian development programs aimed to settle and industrialize the North.

Poselok – urban settlement of a small size.

Pyatiletka – short form for the five-year plans for the national economy of the Soviet Union.

Raspredelenie - system of distributing university and college graduates to positions throughout the country, and especially to those places where workers of particular profile were needed the most.

Severniy zavoz – subsidized supply of food and fuel to the northern regions.

Vorkutlag – Vorkuta's forced labour camp specifically established to mine the coal.

Vorkutaugol – mining enterprise which was formed on the industrial base of Vorkuta labour camp. Today it is a private company.

Vakhtoviki – Russian term for long-distance commuters.

Vezdekhod – is an off-road vehicle, used to travel in tundra.

Vorkutintsy – inhabitants of Vorkuta.

ANNEX 3: EXAMPLE OF QUESTIONS FOR A SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW WITH A RESIDENT OF VORKUTA

1. General information

- Sex
- Age
- Length of residence in Vorkuta
- Number of household members

2. Identification with the community

- Were you born in Vorkuta? If not, when did you move to the city?
- What were the reasons for inmigration?
- Do you like living in Vorkuta?
- Do you identify yourself as *Vorkutinets*?
- What does it mean for you to be *Vorkutinets*?

3. Attitudes to living in Vorkuta

- What does the city generally mean for you?
- What is it like to live in Vorkuta?
- What are the benefits or advantages of living in Vorkuta?
- What is your favourite place in the city and why do you like it?
- Would you recommend living in Vorkuta to others?
- What positive/ negative changes have happened in the city over the last several years?

4. Social relationships in the community and quality of social interaction

- How well do you know your neighbours?
- Do you feel as though most people in Vorkuta trust each other?
- Is there generally a strong community spirit in Vorkuta?
- Do you feel safe walking outside alone at night?
- Whom do you usually ask for help?
- Do you belong to any social organisations or clubs?
- What are the main events in the life of the city?
- Do you participate in the social life of the city? How?

5. Economic well-being

- Do you have enough money to cover your expenses?
- What is an average income rate in the city?
- What is your average income?
- What can you buy for this amount of money?
- What do you usually spend your money on?
- Do you save money? What do you save for?
- Is it easy to find a job in the city?
- What is considered to be a good job in the city?
- Do many people from the city go to other regions to work?
- Would you take a job in a different region as *vakhtovik*?
- Is it easy to start up a private business in the city?

6. Attitudes toward relocation alternatives

- Do you think of moving away from the city yourself?
- What would be the reasons for leaving the city?
- Do you want your children to stay in Vorkuta to live?
- Do you have an apartment in a different region?
- What place would you choose for relocation?
- Would you be able to afford to move away on your present income?
- How you would feel if you had to leave Vorkuta?
- What would you miss most if you had to leave?

7. Socio-political situation in the city

- Who decides the future of the city?
- What plans of the local administration for the city you know about?
- What do you think about closing up poselki around the city?
- Are there many newcomers (migrants, vakhtoviki) coming to Vorkuta?
- How does it influence the city in general?
- What are the crucial moments in the history of Vorkuta that have shaped the place?

ANNEX 4: DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEWS

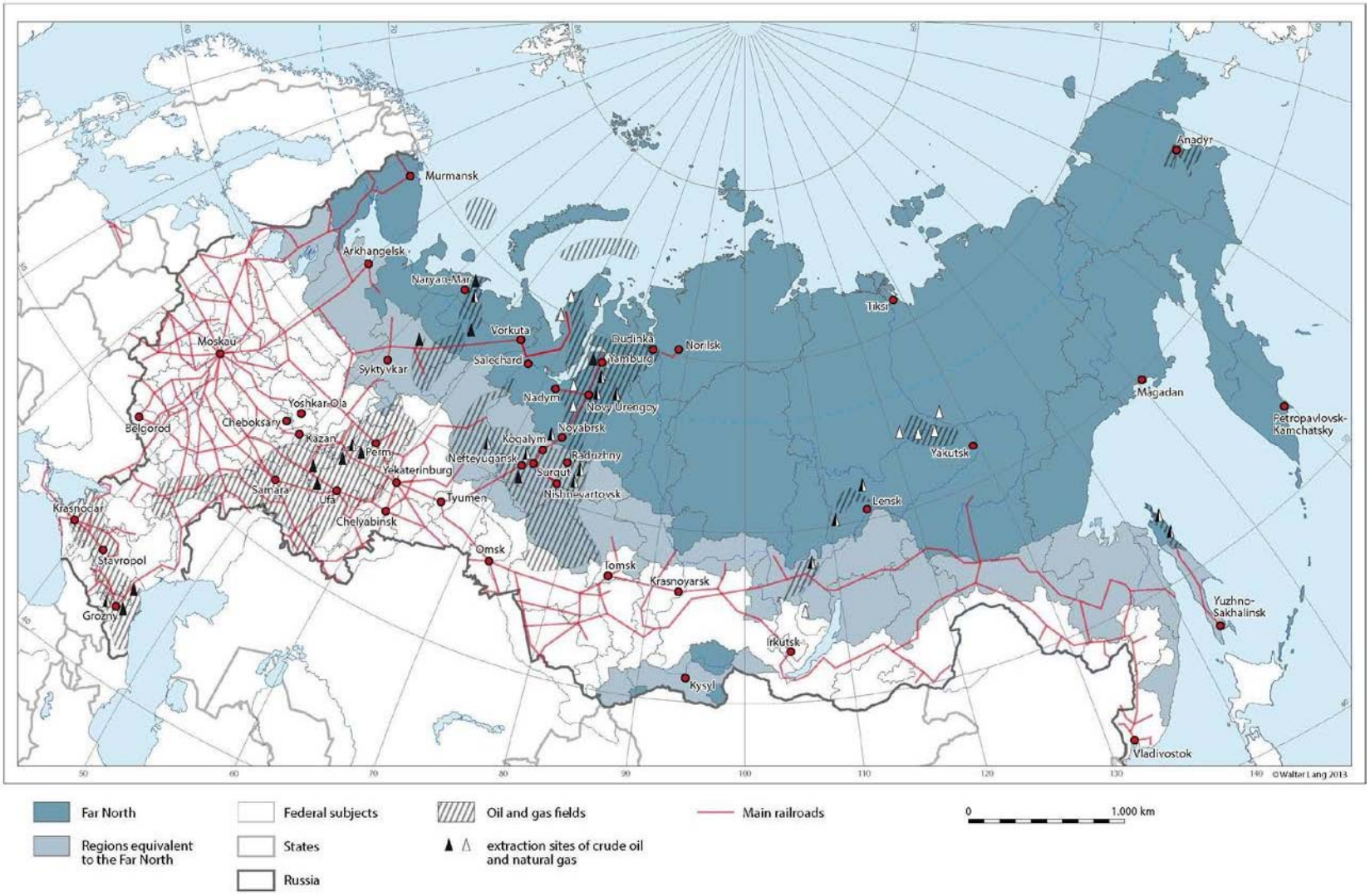
N	Name	Sex	Occupation	Interview day	Interview place
Regional authorities					
1	Alexander Gibezh	m	1st Deputy Minister, Ministry of Industry and Energy of the Komi Republic	19.4.2011	Syktyvkar
2	Aleksey Ievlev	m	Deputy Head of the Department of the Mining Industry, Ministry of Industry and Energy of the Komi Republic	20.4.2011	Syktyvkar
3	Sergey Ustinov	m	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Industry and Energy of the Komi Republic	22.4.2011	Syktyvkar
4	Olga Konakova	f	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economic Development of the Komi Republic	3.2.2012	Syktyvkar
5	Nadezhda Maltseva	f	Head of Department for cities' socio-economic development, Ministry of Economic Development of the Komi Republic	2.2.2012	Syktyvkar
Municipal authorities					
1	Igor Shpektor	m	Mayor of Vorkuta 1998-2007, currently the head of the Union of Arctic and the Far North Cities	24.5.2011	Moscow
2	Alexander Segal	m	Mayor of Vorkuta 1990-1998, currently responsible for the project of NLMK in Vorkuta	20.4.2011 and 29.02.2012	Syktyvkar
3	Aleksey Chernishev	m	Municipal official, responsible for PR	02.05.2011 and 03.05.2011	Vorkuta
4	Alexander Kochergin	m	Deputy mayor of Vorkuta	3.5.2011	Vorkuta

5	Vitaliy Troshin	m	City architect since 2012, involved in constructing the GULAG tourist village in Vorkuta	30.4.2011 and 11.02.2012 and 19.02.2012	Vorkuta
6	Larisa Cheremushkina	f	Municipal official, responsible for the development of entrepreneurship	27.4.2012	Vorkuta
7	Vladimir Ivashenko	m	City architect until 2012	24.2.2012	Vorkuta
8	Nina Kurganskaya	f	Head of the Department for the Development of Entrepreneurship in Vorkuta	30.3.2012	Vorkuta
9	Alexander Litvinov	m	Municipal official, responsible for PR	11.2.2012	Vorkuta
10	Maksim Mironkov	m	Municipal official, responsible for tourism	9.4.2012	Vorkuta
11	Yuriy Sopov	m	Head of Vorkuta until 2012	17.4.2012	Vorkuta
12	Marina Sovershaeva	f	Deputy mayor in Vorkuta	26.4.2012	Vorkuta
13	Anatoliy Zamedyanskiy	m	Municipal official, responsible for social policies	18.4.2012	Vorkuta
14	Dmitriy Zhidkov	m	Municipal official, responsible for youth policies	16.4.2012	Vorkuta
Representatives of big companies					
1	Alexander Ponomarev	m	Representative of Komitransaero	19.4.2011 and 20.04.2011 and 06.02.2012	Syktyvrar
2	Alexander Gorbachevskiy	m	Representative of Stroigaskonsalting	31.3.2012	Vorkuta
3	Aleksey Krukov	m	Representative of Gazprom Trans Gas	21.3.2012	Vorkuta
4	Rostislav	m	Representative of Stroigaskonsalting	9.4.2012	Vorkuta
5	Vyacheslav Tokmyanin	m	Representative of Vorkutaugol	03.04.2012 and 19.04.2012	Vorkuta

World Bank experts					
1	Andrey Markov	m	Head of the Russian Northern Restructuring Project	19.12.2008	Moscow
2	Eugeniy Rupasov	m	Project manager of the Russian Northern Restructuring Project	20.12.2008	Moscow
Working-age local population					
1	Nikolay Gerasimov	m	Geologist, director of oil company Severneft	22.4.2011 and 02.02.2012	Syktyvrar
2	Mikhail Rogachev	m	Historian, the head of Memorial in the Komi Republic	16.4.2011 and 17.04.2011	Syktyvrar
3	Natalia Ivashchenko	f	TV journalist	29.4.2011	Vorkuta
4	Pavel Shipunov	m	Head of geological exploration works	3.5.2011	Vorkuta
5	Tatyana Andreeva	f	Owner of a tourist agency	20.2.2012	Vorkuta
6	Viktor Bogino	m	Private entrepreneur	19.4.2012	Vorkuta
7	Dmitriy	m	Anesthesiologist at the city hospital	13.4.2012	Vorkuta
8	Oleg Gudovanniy	m	History teacher	21.2.2012	Vorkuta
9	Yuriy Mezheritskiy	m	Private entrepreneur	9.4.2012	Vorkuta
10	Natalia	f	Chemistry teacher, supervisor of Vorkutaugol class	25.4.2012	Vorkuta
11	Elena Reischahrit	f	Professor of economics at the Vorkuta Mining Institute	22.3.2012	Vorkuta
12	Nadezhda Shefer	f	Head of a garment factory	26.03.2012 and 27.03.2012	Vorkuta
13	Semen Mastunenko	m	Miner	20.4.2012	Vorkuta
Pensioners					
1	Anna Krikun	f	Pensioner, former prisoner of Vorkutlag	1.5.2011	Vorkuta
2	Gennadit Denisov	m	Pensioner, former chairman of the City Council in Inta	22.4.2011	Syktyvrar
3	Margarita Getsen	f	Pensioner, ecologist, writer	4.5.2011 and 25.04.2012	Syktyvrar and Vorkuta
4	Pavel Silonov	m	Pensioner, worked in coal sector	18.4.2011	Syktyvrar

5	Vladimir Kapitanov	m	Pensioner, worked in coal sector	3.4.2012	Vorkuta
6	Margarita Krochek	f	Pensioner, worked at the City Geology Museum	21.3.2012	Vorkuta
7	Andrey Reischahrit	m	Pensioner, worked at the Vorkuta Mining Institute	24.4.2012	Vorkuta
8	Mikhail Tverskoy	m	Pensioner	27.3.2012	Vorkuta
Long-distance commute workers					
1	Dmitriy	m	Fly-in fly-out worker Inta-Bovanenkovo	25.4.2011	Inta
2	Viktor Kuranevich	m	Fly-in fly-out worker Inta-Bovanenkovo	27.4.2011	Inta
3	Sergey	m	Fly-in fly-out worker Inta-Ukhta	25.4.2011	Inta
4	Kostantin Gradovich	m	Fly-in fly-out worker Belorussia-Baidaratskaya bay	30.4.2012	train Vorkuta-Moscow
5	Alexander	m	Fly-in fly-out worker Astrakhan-Vorkuta	3.4.2012	Vorkuta
6	Reynat	m	Fly-in fly-out worker Bashkortostan-Vorkuta	3.4.2012	Vorkuta
Total number of interviews 64					
Total number of interviewees 53					

ANNEX 5: LOCATION OF VORKUTA IN RELATION TO OTHER LOCALITIES IN RUSSIA

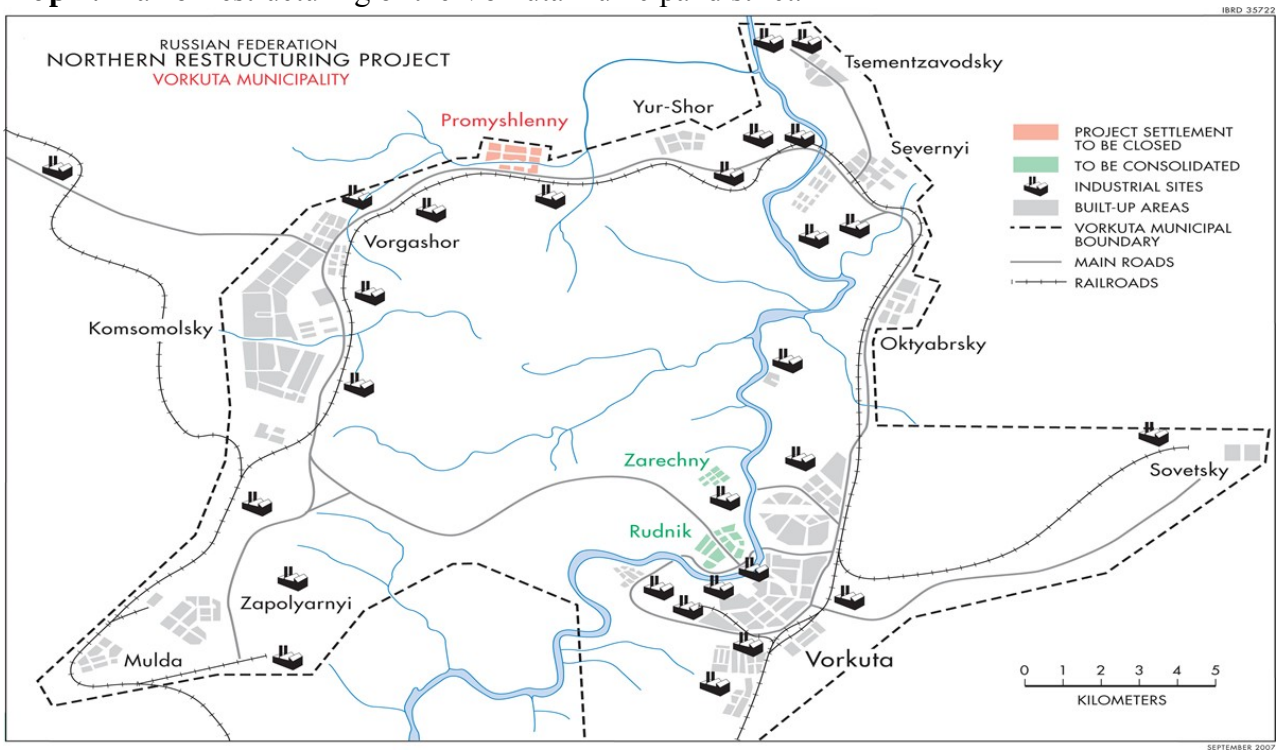


Source: Produced by Walter Lang (Institute for Geography and Regional Research, University of Vienna) for the FWF project [P 22066-G17] "Lives on the Move"

ANNEX 6: THE NORTHERN RESTRUCTURING PILOT PROJECT

Map 1: Geographic dimension of the "Northern restructuring pilot project".

Map 2: Plan of restructuring of the Vorkuta municipal district.



Source: Maps provided by Eugeniy Rupasov for the MOVE INNOCOM project.

ANNEX 7: CURRICULUM VITAE

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

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EDUCATION

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Doctoral studies in Geography
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University of Kassel — Kassel, Germany
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Sept. 2005-June 2006
Ural State University — Yekaterinburg, Russia
Ssp. degree in political science

Sept. 2001-July 2005
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Bachelor degree in political science

ADDITIONAL EDUCATION

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PhD Course "Arctic city - communities and the extractive industries:
urbanisation, industrial livelihoods and sustainability-considerations"
University of the Arctic Thematic Network "Arctic Extractive Industries", in conjunction with the international conference "In the Spirit of the Rovaniemi Process"

Arctic Centre, University of Lapland
Rovaniemi, Finland

27-31 May 2013
PhD Course "People in Arctic Extractive Industries"
University of the Arctic Thematic Network "Arctic Extractive Industries"
University of Tromso
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21-28 August 2011
PhD summer school "Impact of climate change on resources,
maritime transport and geopolitics in the Arctic and the Svalbard area"
University Centre in Svalbard
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7-17 April 2010
PhD block course "From vulnerability to resilience in disaster risk management",
United Nations University
Bonn, Germany

25-26 Nov. 2009
Workshop "Community Adaptation and Vulnerability
in the Arctic Regions" (CAVIAR),
Arctic Centre, University of Lapland
Rovaniemi, Finland

24 June-22 July 2006
International Summer University
Universität Kassel
Kassel, Germany

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Feb. 2011-Feb.2014
University of Vienna, Department of Geography and Regional Research
Vienna, Austria
FWF project "Lives on the Move – Vakhtoviki in North-Western Siberia"
Scientific collaborator

Sep. 2008-Dec. 2010
Arctic Centre, University of Lapland
Rovaniemi, Finland
BOREAS – MOVE INNOCOM Project "Assessing senses of place, mobility
and viability in industrial northern communities"

Research Assistant

INTERNSHIPS

Feb. 2014-Sept. 2014
Arctic Centre, University of Lapland
Rovaniemi, Finland
Guest researchers

AWARDS AND SUPPORT

University of Vienna
01.03.2014-01.08.2014
PhD completion scholarship

Österreichische Forschungsgemeinschaft
Sept.2013
Conference Grant

Österreichische Forschungsgemeinschaft
Sept.2012
Conference Grant

International Arctic Social Science Association (IASSA)
June 2011
Conference Grant

Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS)
June 2010
IPY Science Conference Stipend Programme

Wintershall Holding AG
Sept.2006-Sept.2008
MA scholarship
MA Global Political Economy, Universität Kassel, Germany

Wintershall Holding AG
June 2006-July 2006
Educational grand
Hessen International Summer University, Universität Kassel

The ministry of education and science of the Russian Federation
Sept.2001-June 2006
State student scholarship

Ural State University

SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES

Selected publications

Nuykina, E. (forthcoming 2015) Long-Distance Commute work (LDC) in the Russian hydrocarbon industry: a discussion on macro-structures of power relations and inequalities // Imprint details are not yet settled.

Eilmsteiner-Saxinger, G., Nuykina, E., Öfner, E. (forthcoming 2014) Mobility and migration from the Republic of Bashkortostan to the Far North // Imprint details are not yet settled.

Eilmsteiner-Saxinger, G., Nuykina, E., Öfner, E. (forthcoming 2014) The Russian North Connected – The Role of Long-distance Commute Work for Regional Integration // In: Russia's Arctic Cities: State Policies, Resource Development, and Climate Change ed. by R. Ortung

Heleniak, T., Nuykina, E., Khlinovskaya-Rockhill, E. and Stammler, F. (forthcoming 2014) Resettlement Policy in the Russian North and Its Impact on the Ground// In: Moved by the State: Population Movements and Agency in the Circumpolar North and Other Remote Regions, ed by Schweitzer P., Khlinovskaya-Rockhill, E., Stammler, F. and T. Heleniak. Oxford & New York: Berghahn publishers.

Nuykina, E. (2013) Vliyanie vakhtovogo metoda organizatsii proizvodsv na bazovie goroda Rossiyskogo severa: na primere goroda Vorkuty. [The impact of long-distance commuting on the base towns of the Russian North: case study of Vorkuta] // Izvestiya Komi Nauchnogo tsentra UrO RAN, N2 (14) pp. 107-116

Nuykina, E. (2011) Arctic Centre report № 55 "Resettlement from the Russian North: an analysis of state-induced relocation policy" // Rovaniemi: Arctic Centre, University of Lapland

Nuykina, E. (2009) Resettlement in the Russian North: problems of implementation // In: Biography, shift-labour and socialization in a northern industrial city – The Far North: particularities of labour and human socialization (Proceedings of the International Conference in Novy Urengoy, Russia, 6-8 December 2008), ed. by Stammler, F. and Eilmsteiner-Saxinger, G.

Nuykina, E. (2005) Communitarian model of civil society: main features and dominant forms // Yekaterinburg: Ural State University press

Participation at the conferences

2-4 December 2013
Conference “In the spirit of the Rovaniemi process”
Rovaniemi, Finland

27-28 November 2013
International conference “Arctic medicine, biology and ecology”
Nadym, Russia

8-9 November 2013
7th annual conference of the European Institute
Section “Arctic Changes: Triggers, Trajectories and Consequences”
St. Petersburg, Russia

10-12 October 2013
International conference “The role of the universities in implementing the Russian Arctic Strategy: Economic, technical and socio-cultural aspects”
Ukhta State Technical University
Ukhta, Russia

9-10 October 2013
Urban North: Dreams and Realities Symposium
Charles Darwin University
Darwin, Australia

8-10 July 2013
Symposium at the University of Vienna
Contemporary issues in long-distance commute work in the extractive industries and other sectors
Vienna, Austria

19 November 2012
George Washington University conference
“Russia’s Arctic Cities: State Policies, Resource Development, and Climate Change”
Washington D.C., USA

28-30 August 2012
The First International Conference on Urbanisation in the Arctic
Nuuk, Greenland

11-13 April 2012
The 10th International Conference
Osvoenie mineral'nikh resursov Severa: problemi i resheniya
Vorkuta, Russia

27-30 October 2011
Conference "Urban Development and Politics in Europe and Russia"
St. Petersburg, Russia

22 September 2011
Seminar day "Sparsely populated areas: economic diversification, mobile labour, community viability and demography - A comparative perspective from Australia, Russia and Austria"
Vienna, Austria

14-17 September 2011
GAA Conference "Wa(h)re 'Kultur'" - Cultural Heritage, Revitalisation and the Renaissance of the Idea of Culture
Vienna, Austria

22-26 June 2011
ICASS VII: Circumpolar Perspectives in Global Dialogue: Social Sciences beyond the International Polar Year
Akureyri, Iceland

8-12 June 2010
International Polar Year (IPY) Science Conference 2010
Oslo, Norway

28-31 Oct. 2009
Boreas Final conference "Histories from the North:
Environments, movements, narratives"
Rovaniemi, Finland

26-28 Oct. 2009
MOVE conference "The role of the state in population movements:
The Circumpolar North and Other Periphery Regions"
Rovaniemi, Finland

8-11 June 2009
3rd Nordic Geographers Meeting 2009 "Change-society, environment and science in transition"
Turku, Finland

4-6 Dec. 2008

International conference “Life, shift labour and socialisation in a northern industrial city”
Novy Urengoy, Russia
22-23 March 2005
Russian scientific conference dedicated to the memory of Prof. Lev Kogan
Yekaterinburg, Russia

Teaching experience

15-16 Nov. 2012
Colgate University in Hamilton, NY, USA

May 2005
Railway State Institute
Department of political and social sciences
Yekaterinburg, Russia

Sep. 2005-Oct. 2005
Ural State University
Department of political and social sciences
Yekaterinburg, Russia

Fieldwork

Feb.-May 2012
Fieldwork carried out for three months in the Republic of Komi (Russia)

May 2011
Fieldwork carried out for one week in Moscow (Russia)

April-May 2011
Fieldwork carried out for one month in the Republic of Komi (Russia)

Oct. 2008
Fieldwork carried out for two weeks in Murmansk region (Russia)

Nov.-Dec. 2008
Fieldwork carried out for one month in YNAO and Moscow (Russia)

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Association of Polar Early Career Scientists, since 2009
International Arctic Social Sciences Association (IASSA), since 2011
A.A.S. Working Group Arctic and Subarctic, since 2012
(http://www.sub-arctic.ac.at/nuykina.htm)