Socio-cultural characteristics of the Russian Indigenous communities in the Barents region: Political and legal perspectives

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Legal regulation of socio-cultural processes taking place in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) is not effective without involving indigenous communities, which is a specific population group representing the traditional ethno-cultural landscape of the region, unchanged for centuries and affected by globalization. Owing to the cross-border nature of the BEAR, socio-cultural characteristics acquire special synergetic properties determining the vectors of intergovernmental cooperation. With areas of its land making up the largest part of the BEAR, Russia seems to be the key actor in its socio-cultural development. It is difficult to estimate the progress of the unity without understanding the legal and political background of Russia in the field of indigenous issues. This paper sheds light on the policy and regulations on indigenous-related issues in Russia by examining five cases of regions which are part of the Russian Arctic Zone and the BEAR members. The authors compare the essential actions and measures the Russian Arctic regions have taken for complying with the international indigenous agenda. The paper also makes an effort to examine the potential for cooperation in the BEAR through establishing institutional, political and legal mechanisms. The conclusion arrived at is that Russia needs to take major steps to ensure progress and development of its part of the BEAR and to contribute to the BEAR development by fostering further discussion and cooperation on indigenous rights, joint decision-making, clean environment, education and native languages, peace and security.

Keywords: BEAR; Barents region; Russia; Indigenous peoples; Ethnicity; Culture; Law; Policy

Introduction
The Barents Region, sometimes referred to as the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, is a young and newly defined region comprising northern parts of Russia, Norway, Finland and Sweden. This evolving region is dynamically shaping its identity – drawing from its long history and rich variety of cultures (The BEAR, 2019). The Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) is a supranational political and territorial entity (or “the unit of territories”) (Rubtsova, 2009), with “soft legal regime” (The Barents Euro-Arctic Region, 2017) and no “legal personality”, i.e. a combination of the rights and duties legally recognized at the international level (Taci, 2014).

No international treaty (convention or covenant) was signed to establish the BEAR, and the respective territories which are under the sovereignty and jurisdiction of the national states including Scandinavian countries (Sweden and Norway), Finland and the Russian Federation. Certain agreements regulate the issues of cross-border cooperation between these countries, e.g. bilateral treaties or agreements signed within larger regional entities, for instance, the Council of Europe.

Political, legal, administrative and territorial management of the BEAR depends on the domestic law of the signatory states to the Kirkenes Declaration 1993 (Kirkenes Declaration, 1993). Interaction in the Barents region is taking place at both intergovernmental and regional levels and covers a broad range of issues in the fields of economy, environmental protection, energy, transport, education, culture, public health, youth exchanges, prevention of emergencies, customs cooperation and assistance to the development of indigenous peoples (Program, 2007).

The BEAR is a result of regionalization, which contributes “substantially to stability and progress”, promotes consistent democratic changes in a society and strengthens the role of the regions. In fact, regionalization is a compromise between global integration and disintegration through “the adaptation of global trends to local cultural and historical specificity” (Rubtsova, 2009). In this respect, the BEAR is not an international organization as it has no Statute or Charter, nor a state-like entity (Snyman-Ferreira, 2006), but it serves to maintain stability and prosperity in the area, to contribute to security and...
cooperation, and to create an identity opportunity for its civil society development (Honneland, 1998), with indigenous peoples as the most important group.

The cultural and everyday life of the BEAR members provides a certain background upon which to form their common identity: “People in the area all live in a region characterized by a harsh climate, a vulnerable nature, long distances to national centers, and a sparse population, which allegedly gives them some kind of common world” (Barents cooperation, 2017). In order to coordinate approaches to their societies’ development, to meet the challenges and to cooperate at the intergovernmental level within the BEAR, specific “governance institutions” have been established, as listed in Table 1 below.

It is important to understand that all elements of the BEAR structure aim exclusively at an intergovernmental and interparliamentary regional forum. A broad range of issues that fall within the scope of the Barents Regional Council, the Barents Regional Committee and the International Barents Secretariat are discussed within various working groups. The structure is constantly changing and being updated as a “living organism” to meet emerging challenges: for example, one of the novelties has been the working group on youth, even though at the time of the Kirkenes Declaration youth issues had not been regarded as a specific area of cooperation (Averianova, 2014).

Participation in regional cooperation in the North and in the Arctic is a major component of Russian foreign policy. The country’s government prioritizes this interaction as a useful and effective tool to foster stability, confidence and sustainable development in the North (Program, 2007). Special attention is paid to the indigenous peoples living in the region and, in particular, to such issues as education, public health, traditional activities, environmental protection and infrastructure improvement. For these purposes certain administrative measures have been taken – the Indigenous Peoples Office in Murmansk was established and the Indigenous Peoples Action Plan for 2005–2008 was proposed (Program, 2007). In 2013, the Russian Prime Minister (the Chairman of the Russian Government) Dmitry Medvedev underlined the importance of integration within the BEAR in a speech, stating: “We are encouraging the development of tourism, small business, scientific, cultural and educational exchange. We believe that a move to visa-free traveling is in the interest of the Barents Region” (RIA Novosti, 2013). The complication of political relations during the last five years and the international sanctions policy of 2014–2019 caused by the Ukrainian crisis did not affect cooperation between Russia and the countries of the BEAR. The representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation expressed this very sentiment on the sidelines of the international session “Cooperation in the Arctic”, a part of the International Murmansk Business Week (Russian Foreign Ministry, 2018).

The BEAR is one of the most important directions undertaken in Russian foreign policy in the North-West. Russian public authorities perceive the region as a political instrument for sharing best practices of interregional development and supporting democratic institutions in the modern “multilayer” civil society. “The human dimension” is the key element of the BEAR shaping its social and cultural landscape and including ethnic, cultural and religious components, e.g. indigenous communities of the region, their traditional lifestyle, economies and crafts. Those are the focus of a special working group on indigenous issues within the BEAR framework.

The Russian Federation has the largest territory among the BEAR members, and also the greatest number of indigenous peoples. The country is home for three indigenous peoples’ groups in the region: (1) the Sámi, (2) the Veps and (3) the Nenets, each with their unique culture and identity. Their social and cultural development is crucial as being the most important element of sustainable development in Northwest Russia and having the potential to ensure national security and to promote further international integration. ‘Sustainable development’ in this realm means the combination of three dimensions: economic (balance between indigenous economies and non-indigenous industries), social (indigenous communities’ development and well-being) and environmental (mitigation of adverse environmental impacts on the territories which are the essential part of indigenous style of life) (Russian Federation, 2017). Social and cultural diversity of the BEAR is the rationale for strengthening international cooperation and joint projects, as the region has a unique capacity to sustain the ethnic and cultural landscape and to contribute to the protection of the national interests of the BEAR members. The environmental factor has one of the key impacts on the life and activities of indigenous peoples, since their entire culture is associated with nature, life in the forest-tundra and tundra, and the deterioration of the environmental situation resulting from the industrial development of the Arctic directly affects not only the reindeers’ food base and the peoples’ quality of life (an increase in the content of harmful toxic substances causes a decrease of the reindeer population).

Table 1: BEAR political system. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.445.t1

| The BEAR institutions                  | Institutional level                        |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC)    | ministerial level                         |
| Committee of Senior Officials         | ”operational level”, coordinates the BEAC work |
| Barents Regional Council (BRC)        | regional level, indigenous peoples        |
| Barents Regional Committee            | ”operational level”, coordinates the BRC work |
| International Barents Secretariat     | coordination level                         |
substances in the human body through the consumption of fish and poultry, in which these pollutants accumulate, but also the inability to fully realize their right to cultural customs and traditions, as nature degrades, and former sacred places of worship begin to collapse. That is why there is such a procedure as "ethnological expert examination", which includes an assessment of the impact of industrial development on the development of an ethnos and its culture. In accordance with Russian law, "Ethnological expert examination is a scientific research into the influence of changes in the original living environment of indigenous small-numbered peoples of the Russian Federation and the sociocultural situation on the development of an ethnic group."

The objective of our paper is to analyze the political and legal background of the Russian Federation related to its membership and activities in the BEAR. Based on this analysis we endeavor to estimate opportunities for Russia's integration into interregional cooperation and promotion of the social dimension in the Arctic. The main focus is indigenous communities and their role in the region's development. To provide a holistic qualitative study of Russian law and policy within this scope we employ the method of content analysis of state and regional legislation and strategies, the case study method focusing on five regions of the Russian Federation and statistical data analysis.

Case studies provide a deeper understanding of phenomena, events, people or organizations (Gustafsson, 2017). The comparison of Russian Arctic regions that are members of the BEAR is introduced in order to understand the ethnic composition and cultural distinctiveness of Russia and to illustrate the specifics of the Russian governance in the Arctic, i.e., priorities, directions and main mechanisms. Locations were selected based on the zoning process that recently took place in Russia under which land territories of the Russian Arctic Zone were designated. We explore five cases of the Russian Federation regions – the Murmansk Oblast, the Republic of Karelia, the Nenets Autonomous District, the Komi Republic and the Arkhangelsk Oblast – describing social infrastructure, economic activities, relations between indigenous peoples and other social actors as well as particularities of political and legal frameworks typical for these regions. Sixty legislative acts, bylaws and strategies of federal and regional levels have been analyzed in total as well as statistical data analysis having been conducted in order to present an adequate 'picture' of the socio-cultural situation with the Russian indigenous communities in the Barents Region.

Our study provides the grounds on which to determine the major steps Russia and the BEAR need to take to ensure progress and mutually beneficial development of the integrated Arctic region.

**Russian national interests and international cooperation in the Barents region**

**a. Russian Arctic “concepts” and “strategies”**

The geographical area of the BEAR covers 1.75 million km² of which about 75% is located in Russia (The BEAR, 2019). Russia's social and cultural development in the Barents region is contemplated by the Arctic-related strategic legal documents which have been enacted in the country in the last decade. Russian strategic and conceptual documents on the Arctic reflect both the interests of the government and the civil society, and justify Russia's activities in the Circumpolar and Polar regions.

The documents shown in Table 2 below demonstrate the recent trends in the Russian legal system's development regulating the main directions of national and foreign policy on the basis of presidential decrees in accordance with the Constitution (part 3 art. 80). Once approved by the President in the form of a "legal concept", rather declarative in nature and having soft norms, such legal acts are further developed and supported by the package of laws and regulations which contribute to the 'hard law' of the country. In addition, the federal legislation enables the government to utilize the target development programs in the most crucial areas (education, industry, etc.).

This approach is exemplified by the Acts of the President approving two strategic Arctic documents – Russian Arctic Foundations and Russian Arctic Strategy. The acts outline the basic national interests in the Arctic, which are the exploitation of the natural resources of Russia's Arctic, protection of its ecosystems, use of the seas as a transportation system, and ensuring the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation. Established in response to the Russian Arctic Foundations, the Russian Arctic Strategy further identifies the priority areas for the Arctic: integrated socio-economic development; advancement of science and technology; improvement of infrastructure; environmental security; international cooperation; military security and protection of the state borders in the Arctic (Gladun, 2015). The “basic set” of the Arctic strategic documents is

| Concepts/fundamentals/strategies                                                                 | Short name                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| The Presidential Act “Foundations of the Russian Federation’s State Policy in the Arctic Until 2020 and Beyond” (Russian Federation, 2008b) | “Russian Arctic Foundations”                     |
| The Presidential Act “The Development Strategy of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation” (Russian Federation, 2013e) | “Russian Arctic Strategy”                        |
| The Presidential Decree “Foundations of the State Cultural Policy” (Russian Federation, 2014e)    | “Cultural Foundations of Russia”                 |
| The Presidential Act “Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation” (Russian Federation, 2016) | “Foreign Policy Concept of Russia”               |
 destined to be supplemented by federal laws in the near future. To date, the strategic documents are not backed up by national legislation, as the Russian Arctic Strategy still lacks direct Arctic laws and regulations. The draft law ‘Russian Arctic Zone Act’, debated intensively in recent years (Jensen and Hønneland, 2015), was introduced in the State Duma in spring 2017. If adopted, the law will provide a regulatory and legal environment for long-term sustainable development of the Russian Arctic. It will also introduce a special regime of funding and management within the economic, environmental and social dimensions (Gladun, 2019).

Presidential order of May 2, 2014 “On Land Territories of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation” geographically contours the Russian Arctic Zone (Russian Federation, 2014d). It identifies all territories – members of the BEAR: the Murmansk Oblast, the Arkhangelsk Oblast, the Nenets Autonomous District and some parts of the Republic of Karelia and the Komi Republic – as the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation (AZRF).

Jointly, the legal acts just mentioned influence the BEAR structure and development.

Russia’s strongest interregional cooperation in the last ten years is seen in the formation of the BEAR. The main reasons for this are both geographical and historical in nature – territorial proximity, shared history and a long, since Soviet times, international partnership, as well as the general process of forming a single European economic space in the second half of the 20th century (Pelyasov, 2015). The “Foreign Policy Concept of Russia” (Russian Federation, 2016) in its paragraph 76 identifies the BEAR Council as one of the key platforms for cross-border cooperation development in the Arctic:

Russia considers that the Arctic States – members of the BEAR have a special responsibility for sustainable development in the region, and in this connection advocates further cooperation in the Arctic Council, the coastal Arctic Five and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council.

Russian Arctic Foundations outline the national interests, social and cultural development in the BEAR and the Arctic (in sub. “s”, para 7, part 6, Chapter II), mentioning that the strategic priorities of the Russian Federation policy in the Arctic are to improve the quality of life of the indigenous population and to provide social conditions for economic activities (Russian Federation, 2008b).

In addition, the Foundations propose the key measures to implement new social and economic development policy in the AZRF, namely:

- Educational programs for indigenous peoples: training for children to develop the necessary skills to enable them to survive in extreme environmental conditions and to do well in the challenging circumstances of modern society;
- Equipment for distance learning;
- Programs of rational environmental management.

Cultural Foundations of Russia is the official guidelines for the country’s cultural policy encompassing multiple dimensions:

- “Cultural distinctiveness” of Russia;
- Acceptance and role of “traditional” religions of Russia;
- Recognition of the “social atomization” phenomenon, i.e. social connections gap (friends, families, neighbors) as one of the most serious problems of the Russian culture;
- Restoring of “family education” as an important mechanism of a quality education;
- Promotion of “traditional family values”, etc. (Zaikov et al, 2017).

It is obvious that the key directions of AZRF development reflect the objectives of the BEAR stated in the Kirkenes Declaration (Kirkenes Declaration, 1993), which are economic cooperation, science and technology, regional infrastructure, environment, tourism, educational and cultural exchange, as well as projects particularly aimed at improving the situation of indigenous peoples in the North.

b. Russia’s international cooperation within the BEAR

The key legal act on the development of the Russian part of the BEAR is the order adopted by the Russian Government “Strategy for the Social and Economic Development of the North-West Federal District until 2020” (Russian Federation, 2011). In conjunction with the Concept of Border Cooperation in the Russian Federation (Russian Federation, 2001), the document outlines the development priorities for the region and defines the main directions of Russia’s border cooperation based on the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities or Authorities. All the BEAR countries have signed the Convention on Border Cooperation (Council of Europe, 1980). One of the main objectives of this document is the social progress of the border areas stipulated in its Preamble. The absence of specialized regional treaties within the framework of the BEAR is compensated by bilateral agreements between the member states, as well as by other agreements related to the BEAR.

The goals and principles of indigenous development as well as the current situation for the indigenous peoples of the region is described in the “Action Plan for Indigenous Peoples in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region 2016–2018” worked out by the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples (WGIP) in Murmansk in 2017 (WGIP, 2017). The Action Plan contains measures and projects aimed at development of the indigenous peoples’ communities and societies within the BEAR, at strengthening the cooperation between indigenous peoples in the BEAR as well as goals striving for a wider cooperation between indigenous peoples of the BEAR regions. The main fields in focus are development of trade and business, language and media, health and social-related issues, environment and culture. The
“Action Plan for Indigenous Peoples in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region 2017–2018”, in its paragraph 3, sets the goals and objectives related to indigenous issues which are formal guidelines for the working groups and other bodies formulating and finalizing program documents. Underlining the general objective for indigenous peoples’ development, the Action Plan articulates eight intermediate objectives, which we generalize in Table 3 below.

All the objectives echo the global trends in protection of indigenous peoples’ rights since the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2007) and do not have any specific regulations within the BEAR framework.

At the same time, one cannot fail to mention that, despite the fact that Russia is not a signatory state to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Russia is a state party to a number of acts that to one degree or another affect the rights of indigenous peoples, in particular:

- Genocide Convention (1948);
- UNESCO Convention on Education (1960);
- Convention on Racism (1965);
- Apartheid Convention (1973);
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966);
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966);
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989);
- Convention on Biological Diversity (1992);
- Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995).

All of these tools can be used to protect the rights of indigenous peoples.

Moreover, according to the expert on the rights of indigenous peoples Mikhail Todyshev, after the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014 and the adoption of the final document, and following the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the principles contained therein by four resolutions of the UN General Assembly (September 2007, September 2014, December 2016 and September 2017), the Declaration has acquired the status of a universally recognized norm of international law, and the principle of “free, prior and informed consent” has become a universally recognized principle of international law.

Furthermore, Article 69 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation comes into action. Additionally, according to Article 15 (para 4), “universally recognized principles and norms of international law are an integral part of its legal system”. This does not entail the obligation to execute them, but theoretically creates a legal opportunity to include the provisions of the Declaration and fix the guarantees of compliance with the principle of “free, prior and informed consent” in the norms of federal and regional legislation.

### Social structure in the Russian part of the BEAR

The Presidential Decree “On Land Territories of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation” determines the status of certain Russian regions as “Arctic territories”. First of all, the Decree identifies the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation administratively (Russian Federation, 2014d). Additionally, these regions are meant to be the “foreposts” of the Russian Arctic and engines of the country’s economic growth with substantial financial support allocated through governmental target programs. Each region has a specific economic background and various objectives for its development. This approach can give rise to a new system of effective resource allocation when people, industries and natural resources provide for comprehensive social and economic development projects aimed at achieving strategic interests and ensuring national security in the Arctic regions (Gladun, 2019). As mentioned earlier, the “Arctic territories” include the Murmansk Oblast, the Arkhangelsk Oblast, the Nenets Autonomous District and some parts of the Republic of Karelia and the Komi Republic which are members of the BEAR. These regions, despite some heterogeneity, have certain commonalities (Zaikov, 2014):

1. They are heterogeneous with diverse social groups including ethnic groups, indigenous peoples and migrants;
2. They have their own “regional” legislation on indigenous, environmental, cultural and other issues derived from the federal legal frameworks;
3. The scope and coverage of regional legislation vary greatly depending on various factors (types of ethnic groups residing in the region, economic potential of the territories, political will of the regional leaders);
4. All regions share common legislative gaps and shortcomings (many legal acts are declarative, duplicate federal laws or, contrarily, use concepts and terms unknown in federal laws, etc.).

It is interesting to note that a number of other regions of Russia which are considered to be most successful in

### Table 3: Action plan intermediate objectives. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.445.t3

| Intermediate objectives |
|-------------------------|
| Mechanisms for achieving the goals |
| Local communities’ activity support |
| Financial support of traditional cultures |
| Support of indigenous languages |
| Support of women, families and youth |
| Integrated support of traditional knowledge |
| Updated information policy |
| Institutionalization of social relations |
the field of socio-cultural and ethno-national regulation in the Arctic are the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District, the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District and the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) which are not BEAR members.

The Arctic is home to four million people most of whom live in northern Scandinavia and Russia. This includes three indigenous peoples: the Sami, the Inuit and the Nenets in the European part of the Arctic. A small percentage of the Komi peoples can also be found in this region. The European Arctic is defined from Greenland in the west to the Ural Mountains in Russia to the east. In this part of the Arctic the Sami peoples live in Northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia (Arctic region briefing, 2015). In Russia, the northern indigenous peoples traditionally inhabit huge territories stretching from the Kola Peninsula in the west to the Bering Strait in the east, which make up about two-thirds of the Russian territory (Batyanova et al., 2009).

The northern indigenous peoples use the environment and natural resources for their living sustainably (Park, 2008). They are bearers of valuable and unique knowledge about the Arctic landscapes and possess traditional values, culture and skills (AMAP, 2004). Their life-support system is closely linked to traditional lands and land use, to the challenging conditions of the climate and geography – severe weather, limited natural resources and dispersed settlements. In small groups the indigenous peoples of the Arctic can easily respond to major climatic and environmental changes by altering group sizes, relocating and being flexible with seasonal cycles in hunting or employment (Park, 2008). Smaller herds and camps of nomadic indigenous peoples are able to respond more flexibly to ecological changes because they can exploit smaller patches of pastures, including those surrounded by industrial installations. Thus their number seems almost no growth, while the birth rate does remain sufficiently high. However, the same factors that ensure the high degree of adaptability of northern populations to their extreme living conditions also make it difficult for them to integrate with other cultures and to adjust to the continuing development of their primordial territories (Artyunov, 2015).

The Murmansk Oblast

According to the Russian National Population Census 2010, the Murmansk Oblast was home to 795,400 people (Federal State Statistic Service, 2010). The area had been losing population for the previous six years. The two largest ethnic groups in the Murmansk Oblast are Russians (642,300 people, 89% of the total population and Ukrainians (34,300 people, 4.7%). The largest indigenous community on the Kola Peninsula – the Sámi – has about 1,600 people, 0.2% of the total number of persons who reported their ethnicity. The Census contains statistics on a very few Abaza, Izhors, Koryaks, Kumandins, Mansi, Nagasaki, Khanty, Evenki, Shortz, Eskimos and other indigenous peoples in the Murmansk Oblast (RIA Novosti, 2012). The Nenets have 149 representatives on the territory of the Murmansk Oblast (Federal State Statistic Service, 2010). There are three registered indigenous organizations of the Sámi people.

At present, no ethnic or religious tension is observed in the Murmansk Oblast, and outbreaks of extremism are rare (Sova, 2019). At the same time, a number of negative tendencies, typical for many Russian regions and having a negative effect on ethnic relations, can be mentioned, such as loss of ethical and traditional values; legal nihilism; and negative ethnic stereotypes (Russian Federation, 2013b).

The key ethnic policy measures are described in the bylaw of the Murmansk Oblast “On the Strategy of Social-Economic Development until 2020 and for the Period till 2025” (Russian Federation, 2013b). The Strategy reveals the priorities of the governmental policy aimed at strengthening civil coherence, harmonization of ethnic relations and promotion of ethnic and cultural diversity, promotion of the all-Russia civic identity, support of ethnic peace and harmony; support of the indigenous peoples – Sámi – cross-border cooperation, etc. The Charter of the Murmansk Oblast (Russian Federation, 1997) provides the legal framework of ethnic policy and is the basis for indigenous-related regulations – the regional law on the Sámi traditional resource use support (Russian Federation, 2006b), the regional law regulating land relations and identifying the list of the remote areas and Sámi territories – Kovdorsky District, Kolsky District, Lavozersky District and Tersky District (Russian Federation, 2003b). A special law focuses on northern reindeer breeding (Russian Federation, 2008).

The Charter of the Murmansk Oblast does not mention any specific ethnic or national policies in the oblast, but it stipulates protection of the indigenous peoples’ rights, mainly the Sámi’s. It is important to note that the Charter’s reference to other “representatives of the indigenous minorities of the North” and their right to “traditional environmental management” does not have any real legal effect, since only the Sámi are in the “List of indigenous minorities of the Russian Federation”(Russian Federation, 2000). The Sámi people live in the Murmansk Oblast and enjoy the corresponding legal status (e.g. they have a right to create communities and use the system of preferences). Other indigenous peoples can claim rights and obtain social benefits only if they live on Sámi territories (Russian Federation, 2009b).

The Russian Sámi are represented in the “Sámi Parliament of the Kola Peninsula” – a quasi-state representative body (Zadorin, 2015) established by Sámi peoples and the Department for legal activity and local authority reforms of the Government of the Murmansk Oblast within the program “Economic and social development of the small indigenous peoples of the Murmansk Oblast 2006–2008” (Russian Federation, 2009c). De jure, the Sámi Parliament, called the “Council of Representatives”, is a consulting body of the Government of the Murmansk Oblast. The term “Sámi Parliament” is not the official name.

Some Sámi peoples are employed in non-traditional sectors of the economy, i.e. traditional occupations are secondary for them and, vice versa, non-Sámi people who live on Sámi territories are involved in the traditional Sámi economy. The economic activities of both groups are regulated by the regional legislation (Russian Federation, 2009b). The regional law “On Northern Reindeer Herding
in the Murmansk Oblast” establishes legal, economic, environmental and social norms for northern reindeer herding – a traditional economic activity. The law promotes effective economic measures and supports the traditional way of life and culture. Also, legal definitions of key concepts are provided – ‘ethnic communities’, ‘reindeer herding’, ‘capacity of the reindeer pasture’, ‘reindeer breeding brigade’, etc. (Russian Federation, 2003c).

For example, the law defines the term ‘ethnic community’ as “a group of citizens who are permanent residents of indigenous peoples’ territories and are involved in the indigenous economy”. According to the law, the right to be involved in reindeer herding activities and to enjoy special guarantees, rights and support is not exclusively limited to indigenous peoples. Representatives of other ethnic communities can be engaged in traditional economies (reindeer herding) as well (Russian Federation, 2003c).

Both federal (Russian Federation, 1999b) and regional legislation (Russian Federation, 2008) aim to regulate and develop traditional culture focusing on the main areas:

1) Infrastructure, libraries, museums;
2) Cultural activities;
3) Support of cultural associations of indigenous peoples;
4) Collaboration and networking with other indigenous peoples in Russia and abroad;
5) Support of educational programs with local history studies, folklore and handicrafts of indigenous peoples;
6) Media and radio broadcasts in indigenous languages.

The Republic of Karelia
The ethnic composition of the Republic of Karelia is as follows: Russians – 507,654 (82.2%), Karelians – 45,570 (7.4%), Belarusians – 23,345 (3.8%), Ukrainians – 12,677 (2.0%), Finns – 8,577 (1.4%), Veps – 3,423 (0.5%), other ethnic groups – 15,422 (2.7%), people who did not indicate their ethnicity – 25,880 (Federal State Statistic Service, 2010). Several non-governmental organizations/associations function in the Republic – 11 ‘national-cultural autonomies’, including Belarusians, Ukrainians, Kyrgyz, Armenian, Lithuanian and others; 219 religious organizations: Orthodox Christians and old believers; Protestants, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and Jehovah’s Witnesses (banned in 2017). Among all NGOs, there is only one non-governmental organization representing the indigenous community – Veps people (Ministry of Justice, 2019).

The social and political situation in the Republic of Karelia is generally stable and without serious hotbeds of ethnic tension. Monitoring of the ethnic situation is the responsibility of the Republican Ministry for National Politics, Relations with the Civil Society, Religious Associations and the mass media.

According to the Ministry’s official report, one of the priorities of national policy in the Republic of Karelia is to support and promote languages, cultures, the traditional lifestyle and economies of indigenous peoples (Ministry of the Republic of Karelia, 2014). Key areas of the ethnic policy encompass:

1) Recognizing the status of Veps as indigenous peoples;
2) Supporting and protecting the Russian population of Karelia, preserving and popularizing the historical and cultural heritage of special protected territories (Pomor land, Pudozh and Zaonezhie areas);
3) Supporting the ethno-cultural development of the Karelians and Finns.

The legal framework of the ethnic policy in Karelia is composed of the Constitution of the Republic of Karelia (Russian Federation, 1978); the Law “On State Support of the Karelian, Vepsian and Finnish Languages in the Republic of Karelia” (Russian Federation, 2004); and the Law “On Culture” (Russian Federation, 2005). The Constitution of the Republic of Karelia provides the basic legal norms to secure its socio-cultural structure. Part 4 Article 1 of the Constitution states that the names ‘the Republic of Karelia’, ‘Karelia’ and ‘Karjala’ are equivalent, and Part 5 determines that the historical and national uniqueness of the Republic of Karelia is due to the residence of Karelians on its territory. Part 4 of Article 4 says that mutual respect and voluntary and equal cooperation of citizens of all nationalities form the social foundations of the Republic of Karelia. Part 2 of Article 10 establishes the eligibility of the national (ethnic) municipal entities.

Article 11 of the Constitution secures the state language in the Republic of Karelia (Russian), but the Republican authorities have a right to establish other state languages if the will of the population is expressed through a referendum. The Constitution also secures the right of people to preserve their native languages, their study and support.

Regional Law “On State Support of the Karelian, Vepsian and Finnish Languages in the Republic of Karelia” establishes a wide range of rights in the sphere of language policy for Karelians, Veps and Finns through the adoption of governmental support programs, the use of these languages for geographical naming, the discussion of political issues, social interaction, economic, cultural and family relations (Russian Federation, 2004).

The Nenets Autonomous District (NAD)
One of the largest indigenous communities resides in the Nenets Autonomous District: there, the Nenets community numbers 7,504 (18.6% of the total population). Other ethnic groups of the region are Russians – 26,648 (66.1%); Komi – 3,623 (9.0%); Ukrainians – 987 (2.4%); Belarusians – 283 (0.7%); Tatars – 209 (0.5%); Azerbaijanis – 157 (0.4%). In the region, 19 Nenets indigenous, non-governmental organizations are registered, and they are the most numerous social actors compared to other organizations – one national-cultural autonomy of Dagestanis, and five religious organizations (Orthodox Christians of the Moscow Patriarchate and old believers). In addition, there are two active public movements at the regional level – the Union of Reindeer Herders and the Association of Nenets people “Yasavey” (NAD, 2019).
The social and political situation as well as ethnic relations in the NAD have always been balanced and secured; no preconditions for social or ethnic tension have been identified. Local authorities support collaboration with local ethnic associations and all the district residents are encouraged to keep ethnic peace and to prevent ethnic conflicts.

The priority issues of ethnic policy in the district are equality of the NAD residents, keeping the peace, strengthening the social and economic background for effective implementation of ethnic policy, and social and cultural adaptation of “new comers” in the district (NAD Administration, 2016).

Legal support of ethnic policy in the region is provided through a set of legal documents including the Charter of the Nenets Autonomous District (Russian Federation, 1995); the NAD Law “On State Support of Socially Oriented Non-Profit Organizations” (Russian Federation, 2011b); and the NAD Law “On the Nenets Language in the Nenets Autonomous District” (Russian Federation, 2013d). In addition, extensive secondary legislation adopted in the region provides well-structured legal and financial support in various areas related to indigenous peoples – governmental target programs for the Nenets (Russian Federation, 2013c); local grants for non-profit, socially oriented organizations (Russian Federation, 2011b; Russian Federation, 2014); and international and interethnic relations programs (Russian Federation, 2014b). The regional government’s prioritized functions are to administer the Nenets’ territories of traditional use (Russian Federation, 2001b) and to implement the federal Ethn Policy Strategy at the regional level (Russian Federation, 2014c).

The NAD Charter describes the general principles of ethnic policy in the district and emphasizes the need to protect the Nenets’ interests. In its Preamble, the Charter characterizes the Nenets as a key element of the region’s society: “The Charter is a legal act of direct action expressing the will and interests of the Nenets and other peoples on the territory of the district” (Russian Federation, 1995).

Article 14 of the Charter says:

The state institutions and administration of the district shall recognize and guarantee the rights of the Nenets people, preserve and develop their way of life, culture, language, environment, and traditional industries in accordance with the generally recognized principles and norms of international law and international treaties of the Russian Federation, federal and district legislation, and implement the policy of protectionism.

It is important to note here that, from the point of view of international law, the term ‘protectionism’ is not a politically correct one. It implies some ‘civilizational backwardness’ of the indigenous peoples, which is a hidden discrimination. More correct scientific and legal terms are ‘the right to self-determination’ and ‘the right to development’, and they are currently prevalent, as long as the indigenous peoples are perceived as carriers of an alternative traditional culture related to sustainable development. Indigenous people’s practices preserve the biological diversity by applying ecologically friendly ways of natural resource management in order to transfer their knowledge and skills to future generations. On the other hand, the Russian researcher and lawyer A.V. Akhmetova, referring to her colleague V.A. Kryazhkov, believes that only protectionism contributes to the real equality of peoples and thus ensures social justice (Akhmetova, 2012). Another Russian researcher P.V. Gogolev goes further. He supports paternalism and defines it as policy based on national traditions and the will of the people of a sovereign state – [It is a] … responsible policy towards certain categories of population and ethnic groups in order to ensure the right to development, social equality, preservation and development of additional measures to protect rights through active participation of the interested categories in the government and social management (Gogolev, 2014).

Article 15 of the NAD Charter states that the Nenets people and other indigenous peoples of the North are involved in the decision-making process at the regional or municipal level not only through representation but also through other forms of direct democracy in accordance with the district laws.

An important norm should be mentioned in Article 16 of the Charter. It states that the NAD authorities and the Association of Nenets people “Yasavey” make collaborative decisions on all social and economic issues of the Nenets people. “Yasavey” is a member of the Coordination Council of the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation (RAIPON, 2019) and it has a right of legislative initiative under paragraph 1 of Article 29 of the Charter.

Article 17 requires the support of the traditional lifestyle and environmental management in accordance with the NAD laws in order to preserve the unique culture of the Nenets. The territories of the traditional habitat are mostly used for traditional activities and occupations of the indigenous peoples according to district laws and regulations (Russian Federation, 2001b). However, the traditional territories are not numerous, the main examples are the District Territory “Dawn of the North”, created within the boundaries of traditional indigenous collective farms (Russian Federation, 2002b) and the traditional territory “Kolguev” (Russian Federation, 2002c). It is important to note that the process of arranging traditional territories is at a standstill (Toriya, 2011), and they exist only at the municipal level.

Articles 14, 17 and 18 of the NAD Charter secure the priority of the social and economic interests of the Nenets and other indigenous peoples especially when it comes to extraction and development of mineral resources. Furthermore, paragraph 2 of Article 57 of the Charter states that the traditional lands of the Nenets are allocated for industrial purposes only after a prior consultation and consent of the local authorities or through a local referendum (Russian Federation, 1995).
The Komi Republic (KR)
The ethnic composition of the Komi Republic is very complex, with more than 100 ethnic groups: Russians – 66%; Ukrainians – 6.8%; Tatars – 2.5%; Komi – 1.5%; Belarusians – 1.3% and other ethnic groups (Russian Federation, 2015). Various social actors are active in the Republic including 21 national-cultural autonomousities and 193 religious organizations while the indigenous peoples are represented only in one indigenous organization of the Nenets.

The program “Social and Economic Development of the Arctic Zone of the Komi Republic for the Period until 2020” was adopted by a decree of the Government of the Komi Republic on May 13, 2015 (Russian Federation, 2015c). The document focuses on the quality of life of the people living in the Arctic part of the Komi Republic. The Program suggests measures aimed at improving their quality of life, developing indigenous cultures and protecting indigenous lands and the traditional way of life.

In December 2013 the Komi Republic Government approved the regional program “The Komi Republic – the Territory of Ethnic Peace and Reconciliation (2014–2020)” and in April 2015 the “Strategy of the National Policy in the Komi Republic for the Period up to 2025” was adopted (Russian Federation, 2015b). The scope of both legal documents is on the social dimension of the Komi Republic development aiming at:

- Ensuring equality of citizens, their constitutional rights, ethnic and religious peace and harmony;
- Preservation of cultural diversity in the Komi Republic;
- Development of the cultural education system, civic and patriotic education of the young generation;
- Preservation and development of national languages.

The other six governmental programs focus on various aspects of the ethnic policy: “Culture of the Komi Republic”, “Development of Education”, “Development of the State and Municipal Administration”, “Protection of the population and territories of the Komi Republic from emergency situations, provision of fire safety and human safety at water facilities”, “Economic Development” and “Development of Physical Education and Sport”.

The legal fundamentals of the indigenous peoples of the Komi Republic are in its Constitution (Russian Federation, 1994). Article 3 states that, “The foundation of the Komi Republic and its name are related to the original residents of its territory – the Komi people." Such a provision is the legal embodiment of the collective right to ethnic identity that continues to be a constitutional principle.

It is worth noting that legal 'ring-fencing' of the Komi people from the ‘other’ people attests to its vital role in the history of the Komi Republic and claim of recognition. The claim resulted in equality of cultures and recognition of the Komi language as a second language of the Republic along with Russian. Article 75 of the Constitution of the Komi Republic secures a right to legislative initiative of the Komi indigenous peoples’ association “Komi Voityr”.

The Law “On State Languages” establishes two official languages of the Republic – Russian and Komi. Their use and application are also clarified (Russian Federation, 1992).

Legal regulation of language issues in the Komi Republic has a mixed dispositive-mandatory character. The above-mentioned law establishes the equal use of the Russian and Komi languages in public institutions, enterprises and organizations. Every resident has a right to choose the language of public service and education. At the same time, the law regulates use of languages by public authorities and administration solely.

According to Article 20 of Law “On Education”, all schools of the Komi Republic should have compulsory courses of Komi literature, history and geography: “The study of the Komi and Russian languages – official languages of the Komi Republic – shall be mandatory in all state-accredited educational organizations” (Russian Federation. 2006).

However, the results of annual monitoring of ethnic relations show that, “Parents are not satisfied with compulsory schooling in the Komi language and the general unpreparedness of the Komi Republican school education system to a high quality of teaching” (Rozhkin, Shabaev, 2014).

The Arkhangelsk Oblast
A contrary case is the case of the Arkhangelsk Oblast where several large groups of indigenous peoples live – Nenets number 8,020 (0.65%); Komi – 4,583 (0.37%) and Chuvash – 1,357 (0.11%). There are no indigenous organizations or associations in the region, while other minority groups are present among the regional social actors.

The social and political situation in the Arkhangelsk Oblast is traditionally safe and non-confrontational. In the Arkhangelsk Oblast, no specific ethnic or cultural legislation exists; no places of traditional residence or economic activity of the Nenets is legally identified.

RAIPON as the mediator between the government, Indigenous communities and industrial companies in ethnic policy, environmental security and related issues
The Association of Small-Numbered Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation (RAIPON) is the oldest community association protecting indigenous peoples’ rights in Russia. Indigenous peoples of the BEAR are also members of this organization. The RAIPON’s representatives in the BEAR are “Izvatas” (the indigenous NGO of the Komi Republic), “Society of the Veps Culture” (from the Republic of Karelia), “Association of the Kola Sámi” (represents the Murmansk Oblast) and the Association of the Nenets People “Yasavey” (the NGO unifying representatives of the Nenets Autonomous District and the Arkhangelsk Oblast).
The public authorities of the regions – members of the BEAR function on the basis of the Federal Law “On the General Principles for Legislative (Representative) and Executive Bodies of the Regions in the Russian Federation” (Russian Federation, 1999) which, in its Article 26.3, stipulates support measures for socially oriented non-profit organizations; protection of cultural heritage sites; support for “national-cultural autonomies”, languages of ethnic groups and other objects of culture in educational institutions; protection of the traditional way of life of the indigenous peoples; regional and inter-municipal programs and activities for children and youth, among others. Chapter 3 of the Federal Law “On General Principles of the Local Self-Government in the Russian Federation” (Russian Federation, 2003) enables the municipal authorities to interact with the public cultural organizations. The normative content on cultural development issues is essentially identical to and duplicative of the regional authorities.

Nowadays we observe a great number of ethnic policy models in the world, but three of them (Table 4 below) are the most common (authors’ classification).

The territories of the Russian Arctic members of the BEAR use the ‘integrative’ ethnic policy model where the RAIPON plays the role of an ‘integrating link’ in relations between public authorities, indigenous communities and industrial companies. The meaning of the integrative model boils down to the fact that the state’s desire to ensure the existence of a common civic identity, and only then its own ethnic and cultural one, is the fundamental principle, and the hierarchy of legal acts is built on the vertical principle, when regional acts must follow federal standards and trends.

The list of federal authorities involved in ethnic policy and social and cultural relations are presented in Table 5 below.

Since 2013, the RAIPON has contributed to legal discussions on a number of extremely important Arctic issues, for example, preparing the list of small-numbered indigenous peoples and executing ethnological expertise in the territories of traditional habitat allocated for industrial purposes. The Association initiated the Federal Law on Reindeer Breeding which is presently pending in the State Duma. The RAIPON advocates indigenous traditional knowledge in the environmental management system of Russia which is one of the hottest issues of environmental security in Arctic governance.

Russian legislation defines ‘environmental security’ as protection of the environment and vital interests of human beings in respect of the negative effects of economic activities, emergencies caused by technology or human actions and their consequences (Russian Federation, 2002). The draft of the Framework Convention on Environmental Security of the CIS defines ‘environmental security’ as a system of political, legal, environmental, economic, technological and other measures aimed at the protection of the environment and human beings from the possible negative impact of economic and other activities, natural and technological disasters in the present and in the future (CIS, 2008).

### Table 4: World ethnic policy models. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.445.t4

| Ethnic policy models | Comments |
|----------------------|----------|
| ‘Integration’        | Nonviolent unity of citizens pursuing cultural, language, social issues under politically dominant ethnic group |
| ‘Exclusion’          | Economic, social, political and legal dominance of the ‘titular nation’ by discriminating against ethnic minorities, their forced assimilation, segregation and even (in extreme forms) genocide |
| ‘Multiculturalism’   | Unity of diverse ethnic representatives enjoying the symmetric state support of all ethnic and religious groups, equal cultural development and political representation |

### Table 5: Russian State ethnic policy authorities. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.445.t5

| Federal authorities   | Subdivisions |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| The Federal Government| Federal Agency on Nationalities; Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment; State Commission for Arctic Development |
| State Duma            | The Committee for Nationalities; The Committee for Regional Policy and Issues of the North and the Far East; The Committee for Federative Structure and Local Self-Government |
| Federation Council    | The Committee for Constitutional Legislation and State-Building; The Committee for Federative Structure, Regional Policy, Local Self-Government and Northern Affairs; The Committee for Agrarian and Food Policy and Environmental Management |
The focus of the Arctic governance system is on the threat posed by natural and anthropogenic factors to Arctic biodiversity and ecosystems of which human beings are a part. Special political and legal measures as well as international and national attention should be given to indigenous peoples owing to their close integration with nature and dependence on ecosystems.

Principle No. 22 of the Rio de Janeiro Declaration on Environment and Development (1992) means that indigenous peoples, their communities and other local communities have a vital role to play in environmental management and based on their knowledge and traditional practices (United Nations, 1992b). The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in its paragraph “J” of Article 8 encourages the member states to preserve and maintain traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous communities and their traditional lifestyles relevant to the sustainable use of biodiversity (United Nations, 1992). The norm promotes wider application of indigenous knowledge and equal sharing of benefits.

Russia is a signatory state to these international documents and its home legislation underlines the importance of indigenous communities and their participation in environmental management, especially in the Arctic. The “Environmental Security Strategy”, approved by the President of Russia (Russian Federation, 2017b) indicates that oil and petroleum spills are a primary threat with long-term impact on the environment of the Arctic areas. Paragraph 71 of the “Foreign Policy Concept” explicitly refers to the environmental interests of indigenous peoples (Russian Federation, 2016c).

The Arctic (and the BEAR) is a territory with a highly vulnerable ecosystem, and it is still not the subject of universal international legal regulation (unlike Antarctica). The Permanent UN Forum on Indigenous Issues recognizes the dependence of indigenous peoples of the Arctic on four major traditional activities which are not only a means of subsistence but also elements of cultural identity (hunting, reindeer herding, fishing, gathering). The changes and threats the indigenous peoples face in the Arctic include, but are not limited to, changes in animal populations, climatic instability and altering of the ice environment (Monks, 2017).

A vivid example is the fact that there have been serious climatic changes in Finland, Norway and Sweden. Rains and warm weather in winter make it difficult for reindeer to access the forage base of lichen, which is an essential source of nutrition for them. The weather forces the Sámi herdsmen to switch to expensive feed, which also affects the social, economic and cultural foundations of the Sámi community.

The data of the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (UNESCO IIITE) under the project “Adaptation to climate change: traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples of the Arctic and the Far North” demonstrates a whole set of climate changes, anthropogenic pressures and related environmental problems that directly affect traditional ways of life and indigenous communities (UNESCO, 2015). The BEAR has witnessed climate change and its consequences in the tundra as well (Table 6 below).

The UNESCO data encourage the study and employment of the most effective and thoughtful traditional practices that can help mitigate the anthropogenic impact on the environment and be used for industrial purposes. The role of the indigenous peoples in environmental security can be crucial if they assist in, for example, making traditional ‘economy activity calendars’ to determine the optimum time and location of a species so as to reduce pressure on its population, and in identifying the most vulnerable sites that play a decisive role in the reproduction of a species. The indigenous communities are capable of sharing the traditional system of grazing and reindeer capacity which can protect the ecosystem from overgrazing and the spread of diseases. Alongside the GIS systems, traditional methods of geolocation and filling in information gaps can be used as well as traditional methods of monitoring and diagnosing sick and weakened animals.

**Table 6: Climate change in the Arctic. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.445.t6**

| Climate change | Example |
|----------------|---------|
| Changes in timing of freeze-up and ice cover break-up of the Arctic rivers | Rivers freeze-up later and their ice cover breaks up faster than before |
| Changes in traditional environmental management timing | Less time for reindeer migration in winter due to new water objects along the way |
| Changes in soil structure | Melting of permafrost makes more swampy pastures |
| Changes in flora | Appearance of grass and shrubs in the tundra |
| Changes in fauna | Increase in the number of blood-sucking insects |
| Intensive use of Caterpillar machines in the tundra during the summer | Soil degradation and long-term recovery (up to 50 years) |
| Industrial development | Negative impact on 40% of reindeer pastures and hunting grounds |

**Russian Barents industry: Influence on social and cultural development of the region**

The Arctic region is an area of growing strategic importance in terms of increasing access to natural resources and new transport routes, as ice and snow conditions are undergoing rapid change. Economic developments are accelerating which can be beneficial for the region and...
the global economy, yet there will be repercussions for the Arctic’s fragile environment if not managed with care. In the process of industrial development of the Arctic territory and the rise of hydrocarbon production, new sources of contamination will eventually appear resulting in a real threat to the fragile Arctic environment (Glomsrod and Aslaksen, 2009).

Around 41% of the Arctic oil resources and 70% of gas resources are in Russia, thus significant economic, security and governance interests make Russia one of the most important players in the Arctic. In order to access, exploit and deliver Arctic natural resources to global markets, Russia also aims to develop critical infrastructure in the Northern Sea Route, including ports, search-and-rescue centers, route administration, ice-breaking capability and oil spill response capabilities (The Global Arctic, 2013). Recently, much effort has been taken to regulate these activities and to prioritize the national and indigenous interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic.

The integrated development of the Russian part of the Arctic as a whole, and the BEAR in particular, is impossible without economic “megaprojects” or strategic investment projects. At the legislative level, there is neither a definition of ‘megaproject’ nor its classification.

Theoretically and according to bylaws regulating industrial development of the Arctic, we can distinguish nine categories of ‘megaprojects’ (Russian Federation, 2009; Russian Federation, 2010; Russian Federation, 2012; Russian Federation, 2013):

1) Integrated development of the Northern Sea Route (NSR);
2) The Arctic ecosystem protection and liquidation of ecological damage;
3) Sustainable use of marine and terrestrial bio-resources;
4) Civil ship-building development;
5) Telecommunications development;
6) Development of solid minerals and hydrocarbons
7) Tourism development;
8) Air communication development;
9) Development of environmentally safe energy systems.

All directions are applicable to the BEAR territories; specific activities within these ‘megaprojects’ are presented in a supplementary Table S1.

With the industrial development of the Arctic territory, exploration and production operations are likely to induce economic, social and cultural changes. The extent of these changes is especially important to local groups, particularly indigenous peoples who may have their traditional lifestyle affected.

If controls are not managed effectively, ecological impacts may also arise from other direct anthropogenic influences such as fires, increased hunting and fishing and possibly poaching. Other complications for sustainable land use are the presence of trash, petrochemicals, noise and feral dogs near human settlements. If related problems occur, it means that much territory is functionally lost. This degradation of the territory is in addition to the indirect effects of roads and infrastructure, such as degradation of vegetation, freshwater systems and increased poaching (Forbes et al., 2009).

Special attention should be paid to the relationship between ‘megaproject’ operators and local communities in the Arctic territories. The most socially responsible company in the Russian North is the oil company LUKOIL; its activities in the Nenets Autonomous District are in line with sustainable development objectives (Lukoil, 2019). The company cooperates successfully with reindeer-breeding farms, and money transfers to reindeer husbandry is an obligation it has under contracts it has been awarded. For example, in 2007–2016 the amount of money transferred to local communities in the region was 306.2 million rubles. The company also provides financial support for various indigenous cultural events, such as “Snowmobiles and reindeer race” and a unique medical and social project “Krasnyi Chum”.

“Social investing” is a new trend in industrial companies in the Russian Arctic, aimed not only at profit, but also at building real partnerships with indigenous communities, moving away from a policy of confrontation.

Conclusion
The social and cultural development of the BEAR depends on a variety of factors and trends taking place in all of its member states, Russia included. In Russia, political and legal initiatives introduced in the last decade aim at balancing the social, economic and cultural interests of the indigenous peoples living in the Arctic regions in the situation where state-supported industrial ‘megaprojects’ are being developed in the same territories. The recent tendency of the Russian Arctic-related legislation is to focus on the eight land territories which have the most potential for the country’s economic development. At the same time, most of these territories are members of the BEAR which underlines their crucial importance in the sustainable development of this entity. Socio-cultural perspectives of the region can be revealed through various educational, cultural, ethnic projects administered by the governments of the Arctic regions, NGOs and research institutions, for example the “National Arctic Science and Education Consortium”, established at the North (Arctic) Federal University (NArFU) and “The Arctic Floating University” – a project of the NArFU Arctic Centre for Strategic Studies (NAREC, 2019). The political and legal incentives created in eight Arctic territories have the high potential to comply with interational standard set for indigenous people’s rights, in particular when large scale economic developments are taken place in the regions and the social and the environmental dimensions of the Arctic sustainable development require a special consideration.

Joint international efforts should be directed to the key issues – sustaining ethnic peace, enhancing and protecting indigenous rights, for example the right to participate in the decision-making process and providing for environmental security. The goal of the BEAR members, in exploiting natural resources in the Arctic, is to maintain a balance between the industrial development and the sustainable development of the indigenous peoples. It would be wise to use the opportunities the
oil and gas industry brings for socio-economic development, and to create integrated plans of efficiently governed, mutually reinforcing social-ecological-economic development.

Special attention should be given to preserving cultures and languages through specialized educational programs, because some of the languages of the BEAR indigenous peoples are in danger of extinction. Traditional knowledge should become a systemic instrument used for ‘social investment’ and active interaction between industrialists and indigenous peoples. Studying the customs of indigenous peoples and using them to regulate public relations while respecting federal law is the way to develop a unique cultural component at the level of regional governance and local self-government.

The five cases which we studied show that indigenous peoples, their communities and associations constitute a considerable part of the Arctic society and social structure of the Russian part of the BEAR. The main issues discussed at the intergovernmental, national and regional levels are cultural and ethnic diversity, peace and security, general education and traditional indigenous education, rational environmental management and the participation of indigenous peoples in the decision-making process. The Russian Federation as a member state of BEAR responds to all of these issues by adopting relevant strategies, federal laws and sub-laws, and regional legislation. The main attention is given, however, to cultural issues which are consistently prioritized in the regional socio-cultural policy. Generally, Russia’s recognition of the importance and value of socio-cultural development in the framework of international cooperation is expressed in a set of policy and strategic documents, as well as in laws and regulations.

The socio-cultural potential of the BEAR enables Arctic Barents countries to act as a bloc and to take the lead in the discourse on sustainable development, and the indigenous agenda which will face inevitable challenges in the coming decades.

Data Accessibility Statement
No new data were generated for this study.

Supplemental file
The supplemental file for this article can be found as follows:

- Table S1. Russian BEAR Megaprojects. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.445.s1

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The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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- Contributed to conception and design: EK, MZ
- Contributed to acquisition of data: MZ, EG
- Contributed to analysis and interpretation of data: EK, MZ, EG
- Drafted and/or revised the article: MZ, EG
- Approved the submitted version for submission: EG, EK, MZ

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