

## Chapter 22

# Russia's Circumpolar Territories Inhabited by Indigenous Peoples: Economic and Legal Aspects of Development

**Stanislav Lipski**

*State University of Land Use Planning, Russia*

**Olga Storozhenko**

*Bauman Moscow State Technical University, Russia*

### **ABSTRACT**

*The Arctic zone of Russia includes nine regions (five of them partially). In total, it covers an inland area of 4.9 million square kilometers and 0.2 million square kilometers of islands. Traditionally, land management has been well developed in Russia as a part of public policy with its established goals, including carrying out different land reforms. However, during previous years, the level of land management in the country as a whole and in the Arctic zone, in particular, has decreased significantly due to a number of economic, organizational, and legal factors. Various federal and regional legislative acts regulate a range of issues related to the activities of indigenous peoples and land management. However, a character of such regulation is neither consistent nor sufficient. Notwithstanding the fact that all territories of Russian Arctic inhabited by indigenous people are recognized as the specially protected natural areas, those territories are still engaged in business activities.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The territories of the Arctic zone of Russia (AZR) are unique in their natural characteristics: extreme climatic conditions, various natural resources, and ecosystems with a low level of self-recovery. The AZR includes nine regions of Russia (five of them – partially) and covers an area of about 5 million square kilometers. The combination of the unique factors makes the rational use of the territories a very challenging task. Extraction of mineral resources (especially, hydrocarbons) and their transportation

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affect the ecosystem in a negative way. At the same time, the economic activity in some of the AZR territories is limited by their status of specially protected natural areas (SPNA). From ancient time, the territories now composing the AZR have been inhabited by indigenous people of the North (IPN) whose well-being has been inextricably bound up with nature, i.e. hunting, fishing, reindeer breeding, and local crafts. The AZR extends for about six thousand kilometers along the shore of the Arctic Ocean which means each particular region in Russia's Arctic has individual conditions in terms of the availability of natural resources, transport accessibility, and other factors. However, all those regions are united by one common feature, namely, the inhabitation by the IPN (about 200,000 people in total).

Therefore, the development and exploitation of the AZR territories require the maintenance of a very delicate balance between, first, traditional use of natural resources by indigenous peoples and their communities; second, preservation of unique ecosystems; third, industrial development of circumpolar territories and its inevitable negative impact on the environment along with the intervention into the exploitation of the ecosystems.

In order to achieve and maintain such a balance, it is necessary to have at disposal the tools that facilitate and control the effective territorial development. From the Soviet times, land management has been one of such tools to ensure the rational use of lands and their protection, provide a favorable environment, and to improve landscapes. Traditionally, land management has been well developed in Russia as a part of public policy with its established goals, including carrying out of different land reforms. However, during past several years, the level of land management in the country as a whole and in the AZR, in particular, has decreased significantly due to a number of economic, organizational, and legal factors.

It is necessary to legalize the rights of the IPN and the status of the territories they inhabit and carry out their activities as well as the land management. The issues related to the activities of indigenous peoples and land management are regulated by various federal and regional legislative acts. However, a character of such regulation is neither consistent nor sufficient (especially, in the sphere of land management). Notwithstanding the fact that all territories of the Russian Arctic inhabited by the IPN are recognized as the SPNAs, those territories are extensively and even increasingly engaged in economic activities.

## **BACKGROUND**

In this chapter, the analysis focuses on the specific features of social relations (both those already regulated by federal and regional legislative acts and those which have not received legal recognition yet) arising from the development and exploration of the AZR territories for various purposes (including the use by IPN) and in a view of the land management decisions.

From one point of view, these issues have been addressed by the academic literature and practical studies. The study of rational use and development of the Russian Arctic was initiated in Soviet times by Agranat (1973, 1983), Egorov (1979), Slavin (1980, 1982), and other scholars. Nikolaev (1994), Melnikov and Grechishev (2002), Galichanin, Uvarov, and Yurchenko (2003), Dodin (2005), Vityazeva and Kotyrlo (2007) studied both general and specific issues of the AZR development, particularly, development of oil and gas fields in the Russian Arctic. Arctic ecosystems were investigated by Murashko and Sulyandziga (2000), Klokov (1999, 2002), Morgunov (2003, 2005), Krasovskaya (2008), and Neustroev (2012). The issues and problems associated with the well-being of the IPN were studied by Bakhtin (1993), Petrov (1998), Kurikov (1999), Maksimov (2000, 2005), Donskoy (2002, 2005), Kharyuchi (2004), and Alekseev (2015). The issues of the AZR land management and reindeer breeding were investigated by

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