

## **Illegal fisheries in Western Kamchatka - social-anthropological expertise - preliminary report, March 2018**

### **Acknowledgements**

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### **Introduction: methods and ethical guidances**

In this preliminary report I examine poaching as a social and cultural phenomenon existing in Western Kamchatka which is a highly sophisticated, subtle and delicate area to study existing on the border of human environmental impact, local and cultural visions of bio-resource extractions, informal moral economy, history and politics. My purpose here is to explore poaching as a social phenomena relevant for contemporary fishing and fish processing activities as well as to market economy of Kamchatka. My main task is to find out a viewpoint of representatives of local authority, experts in fishing industries (lawyers, managers, captains), local people living in the rural settlements Oktiabr'skii and Ozernovskii, and poachers themselves.

In this text I do not write about Oktiabr'skii and Ozernovskii settlements in different paragraphs but use ethnographic data from both to illustrate significant tendencies related to poaching. Yet, these settlements have explicit differences which are important to emphasize in the introduction.

The main difference is transport arteries: Oktiabr'skii has a good transport connection with Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskii. Ozernovskii is partially isolated and people can get the city by helicopter, or by all purpose vehicle [*vezdekhod*] but not regularly. Ice is a serious obstacle: when it becomes brash, it covers the river bank [*zabereg*] making the latter unreliable and unsuitable for traveling. In winter time rivers turns into transport artery [*zimniki*] but local residents consider them as potentially dangerous pathways to 'civilization'.

I did not have any theoretical framework adapted to Western Kamchatka context in particular in this preliminary report but I will have a proper theoretical discussion later on in the final version of my report for the year of 2017. Nevertheless, I was armed with some certain anthropological theories of informal economy, resource curse, and reciprocity in order to design a general approach to my material. I also employed a comparative perspective based on my previous experience of research work among illegal fishermen in North-Eastern Sakhalin island to shove my analysis off.

I used methods of social anthropology such as in-depth interviews and participant observation of the context of conversations. I established good contacts with some of my informants and keep relationships from the distance with them. Snow-ball method of searching for informants worked perfectly well in Kamchatka context: people engaged their friends and colleagues to research project what helped a lot.

Although some anthropologists work in the field under the shelter of a legend to represent themselves in local communities while gathering data related to illegality or other highly delicate topics and similar ethically challenging issues, I represented myself as a researcher interested in local opinions which will help to understand poaching from different angles. I generally followed ethical guidance elaborated by anthropological associations for good research skills. I also promised to keep anonymity of my informants, but not everyone wished to remain an anonymous. At the same time, some of my interlocutors refused being recorded and were anxious about any notes I made during our conversations. I gathered 21 interviews in total. Finally, I employed event-ethnography method in the airport since what I encountered was a discovery for my subjective position as a scholar. So I managed to talk to people who transported caviar to Moscow randomly and this event observations helped me a lot to place the gathered material into a different ground: caviar traffic and market economy networking, what I presume, is a very important element of my area of study. The preliminary report consists of three main paragraphs: the resource curse of Oktiabr'skii and Ozernovskii settlements, Emerging from the dark pentatonic models: local idioms of legalization, red traffic and airport event-ethnography, conclusions: further steps for research monitoring, appendix: notes on calculations.

## The resource curse of Oktiabr'skii and Ozernovskii settlements

The general argument of resource curse theories examines a paradox situation: frontiers of resources are typically undeveloped and communities encounters social and economic problems. The way local fishermen in Western Kamchatka discussed their life and agencies were akin to this well known bunch of theories. Fishermen complained that their settlements became margins to take from and leave, but not places to be invested into [otsiuda tol'ko vykachivaiuf]. All narratives I heard from local fishermen, as well as their ideas of how their relationships with power and market economy should be organized, danced from the paradox known in sociology as 'resource curse'.

Oktiabr'skii settlement is the Sea of Okhotsk coastal settlement populated by approximately one thousand and a half of people according to open statistic sources as well as local people's opinion. However, in summer time its social landscape changes enormously: groups of fishermen from different parts of the country and related Inner Asian countries arrive there for resources which are fish of different kind. Factories such as 'Narody Severa' and 'Lloyd fish' bring annually around three thousands of summer workers. As a result, ambience changes and social tension arises, and local people are typically upset about short-term visiting fishermen: *'we live here and have children and we do not know what they can have in their minds, hard to control summer visitors'*. Furthermore, the competition between different visiting groups and local fishermen for fish is narrated in the form of offense and injustice: my interlocutors insisted on having a privilege as local people conducting certain life styles and having ties with their natal place.

Natural environment of Oktiabr'skii settlement is not unproblematic for local people and officials. Debates around gradually upcoming sea, which is believed by some local people and representatives of authority, will destroy buildings located close to the sea shore and potentially, the entire settlement, place the status of Oktiabr'skii settlement into a shaky ground. If the settlement will get the status of a place under environmental risk - it will cease to exist as a legal body and its dwellers will be relocated to neighboring villages and towns. If authority will have another decision based on counter arguments, both people and power holders will have to face all the difficulties and do something solid to change the situation.

The head of Oktiabr'skii settlement is a young and enthusiastic man with a strong sense of local patriotism and very open for discussions about the area of his expertise and responsibilities. His worries about relocation and about people who will lose a common life and habitat and will have to compete with others in alien and unknown places: *'they will need to adapt.'*

*For example, we have electricians and they have a job. If they have to move to another place they will have to find a job there, but other places have their own electricians. Similar logic can be applied for other specialists. And therefore, the majority is against of relocation'. Later on, local fishermen added that they are not happy with the idea of relocation because they will lose the possibility to fish (illegally) in common environment, and in the landscape to which they are attached.*

The governor's arguments against the opinions about the disastrous effects which the Sea of Okhotsk might bring, are based on a historical account from the 1960th. He demonstrated a document testified that the sea line was initially ill-built and the drastic effects of poor work has its negative consequences today. He also expressed a serious critique toward a documentary released by a popular science TV channel 'My Planet' [*Moia planeta*]. The TV project included Oktiabr'skii settlement into their project entitled 'who pays for weather?' devoted to global climate change in different areas of the Earth such as Africa, the USA, and Kamchatka. They turned their interest onto the settlement of Oktiabr'skii due to the possible policy of relocation caused by the disastrous coastal line:

*'They ensured us that they would show the truth and facts only. They wanted to compare North America, Africa and us and examine the environmental risks. And I showed them that we have this problem not because of our environment but because of human impact: heavy technical equipment which destroy coastal sedge grass which have a strong root system which is not affected by salt water. Hence, when water comes up to the sea shore, it brings sand and the sand stays due to sedge grass working as nets and fence altogether and coast is<sup>1</sup> growing up and becomes more stable. But machines destroy the sedges and as a result we have the sandy and vulnerable sea shore. They saw it. Yet they found a local dweller, who was actually not born here and he gave him his own point of view based on common answers on questions similar to: is the sea storming? Do waters destroy buildings?..As a result, in the film they showed only old iron staff and extracts of the local man answers 'yes it is, and yes it does'. So the film is a deliberate evil for us since it can be employed as an evidence for the relocation'.*

The administrator's opinion was not soliloquizing. Another argument against relocation of local people from the settlement I heard from a local fisher who mentioned that Windmill [*vetriak*] is strongly prohibited in the territory of a settlement. Oktiabr'skii has a sandy ground and windmill

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<sup>1</sup> 'Island' identity is typical for Kamchatka dwellers in the city of Petropavlovsk and in all locations of my fieldwork. In their perceptions, Kamchatka is an 'island' related to 'mainland' which is the rest of the country.

stimulate vibration and as a result, seashore suffers. A huge 22 wheel truck destroys a coastal line, people do not hear vibration, but nature is affected. The only positive effect from windmill which local people expected was the decline of prices for electricity bills. Yet the prices declined only for factories but not for individual households.

As local people explained to me later on, they did not welcome the policy of relocation for a historical reason. Initially the settlement was organized as a fishing industrial settlement and that was the state plan and purpose. Factory worked around a year and received state subsidies for producing conserves which are the strategic food store. The settlement's infrastructure acted as a 'united family': everyone worked for a factory in different services and roles. Electricity, road services, school, hospital and the like was balanced and managed by factory and it acted organically as a socio-economic-infrastructure body.

Partially, memories about former successes of Kolkhoz Oktiabr'skoi Revolutsii. During the Soviet period the kolkhoz was granted by a proud and fair status of 'millionaire'. This fact stimulates local nostalgia about the Soviet past. Furthermore, the experience of the breakup of the regime in 1990s, when the kolkhoz lost its crown and fall down to the niche of a 'bankrupt', empowers substantially socialistic views of contemporary fishermen.

Memories about former Soviet abundance enhances nostalgia with certain amount of individuality: *'My mother sent parcels with buckwheat to Siberia and Ukraine. We had everything from Leningrad here and even the houses, though, it was not the best idea to invite architects from Leningrad. Did you pay attention that the doors open outside? But they should open in an opposite way. Here in Kamchatka winds are stronger when in the western part of the country. If it blows - the door will become difficult to open. Leningrad projects do not work really well here despite they look nice. Too many glasses...we confused them'*.

Poaching in a manner we encounter it today is viewed by local residents as a direct result of changes of political regimes: from socialism to capitalism. These changes brought barter economy models in act: *'Resource is the Sea. Market is simple - people salted fish and caviar and city entrepreneurs [kuptsy] brought potato and other products as exchange. People did not need to search for a market, they were being directed perfectly well. Hence people did what they have always been doing, but their status and conditions changed. Men are professional fishermen, women are professional skimmers. It was a mixed economy, barter but with money engaged. Men fished, women skinned and salted fish and caviar and they exchanged it for potato, red-root and the like'*. Therefore, fish and caviar illegal market did not demand local people to become their own managers:

they were driven by a market itself and various pathways for survival were already done for them.

The conditions of that times in the settlements were challenging in many respects, for instance, as I was told by my interlocutors, in 1997 a new era began. Electricity turned to be a scarce resource given by portions: *'Three hours are for one district and then for another. And soon after electricity stopped and the settlement doomed into the darkness. All trees and wooden fences disappeared including kindergarten's staff - everything what can be used for warming homes up. Every flat had small stoves and they used house airing system for steam. This tactic brought a disastrous effects in spring time and unto now many houses are in catastrophic conditions. Only now old building are being destroyed and the settlement started being repaired'*. Today poaching reminds this era to a certain extent: *'in summer time it is a problem to find specialists such as electricians: all of them are engaged into fishing'*.

After the break up of the USSR people found themselves out of the system and had to face complex dilemmas of life strategies. Local people did not see agriculture as a good enterprise. Moving somewhere looked as a very obscure and unsecured idea: people could do nothing but fishing and fish processing professionally. So adapting to other forms of activities was seen as not a good choice in all respects. My interlocutors insisted that poachers and informal economy existed in the Soviet times; however, after the breakup of the Soviet regime all the shadows emerged in the light of new post-Soviet reality as a new social norm.

Contemporary tendencies in local economies create conditions for illegality but not for sustainability. Hence, today local residents do not search for job opportunities in factories since the latter cannot offer a good wage for a person for him or her to be able to support a family in the Eastern Arctic region well known by extremely high living costs. Plus, the work is hard and health consuming.

Migrational trends play an ambiguous role in local economies and perceptions. From the one hand, factories hire people from the mainland [*materik*]<sup>2</sup> and there is a great reason for them to do so. For example, prices and living costs in Siberia, let's say Buriatia republic, are relatively small in comparison to those in Kamchatka. Hence, fishermen from Siberia are very happy to work for wages which local dwellers approach as unsatisfactory and poor. From another hand, this situation creates social tension for local residents and their conception of how management and social support might really work considering their belonging to the place, professional history and identity as well as devotion and loyalty to the environment.

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<sup>2</sup> I observed similar tendencies in Sakhalin Island in 2014

*'People from the mainland arrive and earn forty or fifty thousand roubles a month (around 900\$ USA) and it is recognized to be a good wage for them. One can buy a log house in a Buriat village for one hundred thousand of rubles which is impossible in Kamchatka. When I was in Siberia, I ordered the taxi to go to a toilet, metaphorically saying [obrazno govoria]. In Altai region the taxi for 400 km costed 3500 rubbles only. In a local shop an assistant gave me 70 kopeck [cents] for exchange. We do not take a rubble here back, do not count it as money'.*

Similar laments I heard in Ozernovskii settlement: *'they hire Uzbeks for penny, our people do not want such a low income. People receive approximately 250 thousands of rubles for six months (approximately 4500 \$) they begin with white fish [belorybitsa] and end up with red fish. And fish is a card game you never know. Migrants do not pay rent they live in dormitories, food is included as well. Locals have to pay their bills which are high. We are placed into more difficult conditions'.* Incoming migrants from former Soviet republics such as Belorussia and Uzbekistan as well as from other parts of the country, are seen to have certain priorities in comparison with local residents of both Oktiabr'skii and Ozernovskii settlements: *'they earn the money here and can live like kings in their home places for the whole year! I remember, once I was in Belorussia visiting my relatives, they thought I was an extremely rich woman. I could effort so much there, but here, my life conditions are much better to be desired. They see our money, but does not count our prices, 320 rubbles (approximately 5,5\$) for one kg of apples and 50 rubbles for a bread, though it is the most delicious'.*

Furthermore, local residents consider migrants to enjoy having more diverse consumption comparing to themselves in other areas: *'if you want apples, you can buy them not necessarily in supermarket. You can drive to the direction of Rostov and buy good and cheap apples full of natural vitamins. Here you cannot go. Apples from Moldova are expensive, Chinese apples are cheaper, but you can hardly take them as a healthy product'.*

Social tension between migrants and local residents sometimes goes beyond the area of narratives and turns into real conflicts. Thus local fishermen from Oktiabr'skii settlement told me an 'epic' story about how they resisted the aggression of migrants from a Caucasian republic: *'they fish here, we do not mind, but they had to understand that the land is ours. They wanted to show they became the masters of the land and wanted to beat us in a bar. Yet we paid back and they ran away. Next day, they called for support from PK and ten trucks full of people moved to Oktiabr'skii for revenge, we did not mind. Police stopped them on the way to us, closed the road. It looked like a war, really. After that they calmed down. We do not mind they earn the money and feed their families, but they must learn that this is*

*our land and our sea*'. This story demonstrates the way local identity displays requesting priorities and respect for their social status and local pride.

In the next paragraph I discuss fishermen consensus about how they should be managed by power and law. This consensus is represented by two models suggesting different scenarios of possible legalization.

### **Emerging from the dark Pentatonic models: local idioms of legalization**

Over the course of my stay at Kamchatka Peninsula almost all of my interlocutors represented consensus in the form of narrative devoted to possible and highly desired legalization of poaching. This consensus found its structure in different synergy between main agentive forces related to fishing represented below: fish, poacher, entrepreneurs [*kuptsy*], factory, and government (power). Synergetic connections between these actors are extremely diverse and a deeper investigation is definitely needed; nevertheless, in local points of view, the logic of relations of those agentive forces toward illegal fisheries can be partially tracked. Moreover, all my interlocutors welcomed socialistic ideas and judged absolutely negatively capitalistic philosophy.

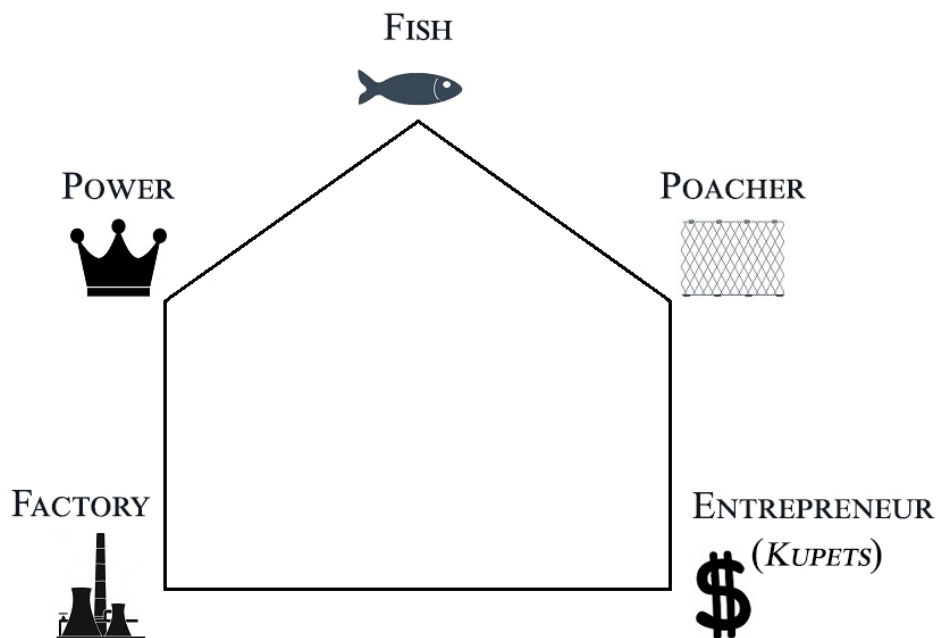
Hence, 'emerging from the dark' models are based on socialistic philosophies and underline values of common good and all social layers' wellbeing. *'The Sea is out here. Local poachers do not fish in the river [v reku oni ne lezut] they work with their boats and nets. The market is the same as in the 1990s. They sell it to entrepreneurs [kuptsy] who bring it to the city, process fish there, legalized it [obelaiut] since they have documents they work under their authority. Local poachers fish in front of the settlement and do not allow anyone to interfere. They see this territory belonging to them and they have a strong sense of local rights'*.

This general statement is represented by two models of legalization of poachers I learned from different fishermen. In Oktiabr'skii settlement the voice of fishermen coincided with the concept of authority represented by Model 2. I must admit, that nowhere else I observed such a low distance between authority and people. The central argument coincided both in the room of negotiation in local administration and around a party table in a fisherman house.



## Model 1 - Kamchatka pie: A little piece from the Sea of Okhotsk plate

*'We have a region of temporary workers - 300 thousands. Kamchatka is small like a train in Novosibirsk'.*



This model is a form of hope where fishing limits will also include local groups consisted of local individuals. In this light contemporary poachers will have a right to organize small sized business groups to be able to ask legally for quotas to conduct their activities without any risk of being accused of being out of the law: *'A poacher sells fish to an entrepreneur and earns money, the entrepreneur sells fish to a factory and earns money, in the factory people process fish and earn money, a master of the factory sell products in the market and gets income as well. Everybody earns little by little. [vse po chut' chut'] and all are happy'*. Some poachers call this type of potential relations with the agentive forces engaged into fishing in Western Kamchatka the 'plate principle'. The Sea of Okhotsk is the internal one, and in

local perceptions has a form of plate both geographically and metaphorically: *it is round and it feeds people*.

My informants suggested organizing artels [*rybatskie arteli*] and pay taxes to the state: *'If I am a poacher, I encounter serious risks: I can lose all my fishing gear and a boat, everything and get a criminal code article No.256. It is hard emotionally to think about it. In the sea we have other challenging risks to think of. I would better pay taxes'*.

At the same time, my informants did not believe their local concepts of fair fishing will turn into reality one day. Similar opinion I have heard from fishing lawyers and captains in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskii: *'The pie is already divided. No need to rethink it and re-share. It is not profitable, no one from power holders and big business will support this idea'*. My question about inequality of life chances encountered a general reply: *'They can work for fishing factories, it is open for them'*. Furthermore, some informants stated if the state will change the principle of support of fishing business [*rybopromyshlenniki*], society will lose: taxes and job offerings will cease to exist.

However, this solution finds numerous contradictions in local communities. As it was discussed above, factory wages for blue collar are extremely low in comparison with regional living costs. In both settlements local people mentioned the same: migrants from Siberia and former Soviet republics take these job opportunities because they can afford conducting a pretty good way of living back home.

The renouncement to work for factories has not only economic ground explained above, but also contains more deeply rooted reasons related to local pride and identity. My informants stated they had a profound knowledge, and richly mastered skills in fishing and fish processing comparing to seasonal workers. Local proficiency is seen as the achievement of everyday life, traditions, and experience belonging to generations engaged into fishing and fish processing. Therefore, their dignity of being Kamchadals [*kamchadaly*]<sup>3</sup> exports mentally to labour relations what finally leads to demanding a higher position and respect within the arena of capitalistic market economy. To put it other way, Kamchadal identity is a synonym to great craft which is viewed as a capital for exchange, and a symbolic currency to be equally valued in dialogue between different agentive forces in the process of exchange in the market: *'They hire migrants, they agree to work for this poor money, but they know nothing about this work. Take our*

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<sup>3</sup> Kamchadaly - a local identity similar to a national identity. Although Kamchadal is not nationality, it is approached as a title of origin approved by three generations. A one can claim to be a Kamchadal if he or she represents the third step of generations living in Kamchatka Peninsula. Thus one need to have a local grandparent who migrated to Kamchatka from any place (or could be originally born there) to count oneself Kamchadal.

*skinner [shkershchitsa], for example. She has been skinning fish for years, and she knows every little detail and do her work quick and perfect. A new comer needs time to understand the process, time to adapt to it, and time to acquire skills of skinning. Unfortunately, factory master does not appreciate the level of local craft, and choose the cheap and low qualified labour. We are doomed to be poachers’.*

To conclude, local bio-resource reciprocity and social-economic stratification is approached as stable and formed reality from the one hand, but as tangible, processual and incomplete relationships from another hand. The first approach is based on capitalistic philosophy and is relevant for fishing elites and the second one walks down a socialistic path.

## **Model 2 - Social Exchange [Birzha]**

I learned this model in Oktiabrskii settlement from the representative of authority in local administration. Local fishermen encourage this model and reacted positively on any ideas about ‘social fishing’. Below is the excerpt from the conversation with the head of administration:

*‘Why not to organize a platform with ice, beaten, shelter, scales boxes similar to an exchange [birzha]? a fishermen would bring fish to that place, entrepreneurs [kuptsy] would scale it, see the quality and if they are satisfied, they buy it for the price good for everyone: they give to a fisher a cheque and he goes to a bookkeeping office and get the money! Easy! And nobody think of quotas: factories have limits, they but fish from a local fisher and minus that quantity from their limits. When limits are over, they ask for extra limits and prolong their licenses anyway. The fish is wild and it does belong to everyone [obshchaia]. And now it seems the fish belongs to particular people. They can fish because they have money Factory is yours, but fish is communal [obshchaia]. A local fisher can be registered as an individual entrepreneur, he uses his equipment and does his job. Fish is legal. Factories receive fish, a fishermen money and the state - taxes. People want this schema here in Western Kuril’sk sub-zone [Zapadno-kuril’skaia podzona]. Why do they need to be subscribed to other zone? President’s moratory to ‘cut out’ new fishing areas [rybolovnyi uchastok] should be rethought. We could ask for our own social fishing area in the middle of the settlement. We could have our own budget and fish in the sea in front of our houses’. <...>*

*Business want international market for better prices, but we need socially oriented projects relevant for internal consumers. This projects must be uninterested in extra income from abroad. Now system is as followed: a*

*poacher buy license for amateur fishing, fish more than he should, and sell it to external entrepreneurs [priezzhie skupscchiki]. 'Who sleeps at night does not eat at day' [kto nochiu spit tot dniom ne est] <...>*

*If we have this model in act - poachers will cease to exist, no need of extra expenses for fishing police services and all the apparatus related to this process. Furthermore, local fishers will not allow external poachers to fish and trade here. If we legalize that forty people, the environmental damage will decline. They will be responsible for their piece of the sea shore. They may use trails and trolleys to deliver fish from the sea seasonally - no need to destroy sea shore. After the end of spawning season, rails will be removed. External poachers are the uncontrolled agency. They do not care about coastal line [kosa] and what they leave after their fishing, and local authorities do not have tools to bring them to order and responsibility. Furthermore, after every spawning season, local authorities have to grant a piece of local budget to correct the situation instead of granting money for local people primary needs. Alternative municipal factory is highly needed. If a business man does not want to organize his business due to lack of profit, municipal factory will do so since it has another goal - a social one, not capitalistic. Distance between poor and rich is drastic. Ten yours ago it was different.<...>*

*According to the law it is prohibited to export fresh products [syrets] from the place they were harvested - it must be operated at the same place. Frozen fish is a fresh product. It is not the final product. Here they have the fish frozen, take it by car, use and break roads and sell it somewhere, not here. What people of Kamchatka got from that business? Heavily used roads only. 'Factories closed down, and people closed down'. Entrepreneurs have license and they can legally buy fish from local fishermen within their license. Local people fish here, sell it to kuptsy who make fish legally clean [obeliaut]. We have Olympic system: when you ran out of your limit, you may require another one and continue. So they have 'legal papers'. Everyone is in profit.*

*This model prioritizes local identity and criticizes the unshakable power of profit [vykhlop]. Entrepreneurs interested in capital only are seen as blind to so called human factor and objective reason of lost opportunities 'he asks from people even if a year is fish-less [bezrybnyi], but he punishes people though it is not their fault. And he ignores circumstances. I remember a woman had a force major situation in one of factories. She signed the contract, but her mother in the Altai Republic passed away and she needed to return. The factory charged her for food and clothing and paid ten thousand rubles only, hence she did not have the money even for a return ticket. She*

*was sitting and crying. That was not her fault, but company did not count it to be a good enough reason'.*

Model 1 and Model 2 represent the desired local vision of the future of illegal fishing in Western Kamchatka. These models are 'hidden transcripts' which are not spoken out explicitly, but exist as a consensus and a local idiom. In Oktiabr'skii the distance between representatives of power and common people is short. All models accept socialistic ground as the right philosophy to follow for the prosperity of local development. The critique of these models I heard in Ozernovskii settlement: an informant emphasized that any attempts to create 'social brigades' will unavoidably transform into same poaching.

### **Red traffic and airport event-ethnography**

One of the main question in any research related to informal economy is question about a way the resource traffic and networking with global market is organized and operated. It is foremost important to understand how export of caviar is organised to be able to calculate and evaluate the quantity of illegally harvested fish. During my stay at Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskii, I tried to converse with shop assistants who sold fish and caviar in local markets. Unfortunately, they refused speaking to me and found my visit suspicious. Furthermore, those who agreed to grant a time for my project typically were unhappy to see a voice recorder and asked me politely to switch it off. So, my data in the city context is based on informal and unrecorded conversations mostly. Subjectively I can say that it was much easy to work with common people and fishermen in rural areas as well as rather than with those who had other occupations and lived in the city.

Hence, my approach to networking analysis appeared to be a difficult enterprise for my perception. What I managed to learn from informal conversations about caviar traffic considered the use of postoffice service to transport caviar and all possible opportunities such as aircraft. Yet, nobody could enrich my knowledge with more deep ethnographic details. *'They do it somehow. Transport caviar to Moscow, internal market. Japan, for example is interested in another types of resources, they do not care about caviar'*. I was interested in Moscow-oriented caviar networking but I could not find an informant who wished to discover a scheme of how it is organized. Finally, this situation convinced me that caviar traffic was a hidden and illegal practice.

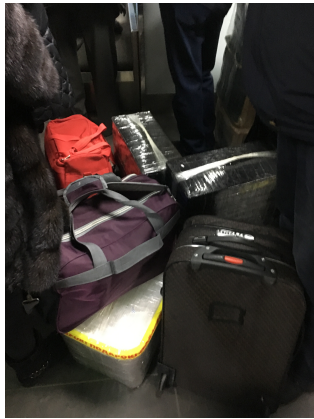
However, my perception changed in the last days of my stay. One of my new friends in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskii asked me to take 'some caviar' to Moscow and help him to earn some money for new shoes. His request sounded suspicious to me. He ensured that his request was absolutely legal and asked me to take 30 kg of caviar on board. I refused, and took only half kilo as a Christmas present for his sister who moved to St. Petersburg many years ago, found a good job and established a new life there. My new friend was offended, although he said he understood my total absence of knowledge about local life. He forgave me in the end since I emerged as a neophyte and we separated as good friends.

Yet on the way back from Kamchatka to St. Petersburg, in the airport of Ielizovo, I encountered practically what I could not get narratively and I realized that my understanding of enigmatic identity of caviar traffic apparition was simply wrong. The airport was really crowded and almost all of passengers were equipped with plastic white boxes or cartoon boxes full of caviar. While I was waiting my queue to the gates and check in, different people approached to me asking if I had a free luggage place and if I did not mind to take a 'parcel' (23 kg) with me to Moscow on board. In Moscow certain people would meet me and take it. I heard similar proposals all around.

These proposals sometimes were distracted by airport advertisements warning passengers not to take any things from unknown people for security reasons. All of this was a paradox. That paradox probably reflected on my face and attracted a young man with the same type of luggage who, suddenly, asked me: *'What does surprise you? Are you not from here?'* I explained my interest and he granted me the rest of the time explaining in a simple manner what was going on: *'We buy caviar in a local market with documents attached. The documents shows its legal origin and then we take caviar on board. There is no law stating how much caviar you can take on board across Russia. Typically, one luggage place - 23 kg is for free, the second one we buy for 2500 rubbles, we can also buy the third one, but it is too expensive - 7500. So, it is 46 kg in luggage and one bag with 10 kg on board. Count. I am taking 56 kg. I bought them for 168 000 rubbles and will sell them for 336 000, minus tickets, so I will earn 128 000, easy. I will sell caviar to my Moscow friends and friends of their friends, well, I have a circle of clients already. Everybody do the same here. Not only in Moscow, someone travels to Novosibirsk and to other places'*



**Pic. 1 - Ielizovo airport**



**Pic. 2, Pic. 3 - Moscow airport**



Although the whole picture looked convincing, I could not believe caviar traffic may be so easily organized. I expected upcoming problems caviar traffickers would meet in Moscow airport. However, nothing happened after landing. Some people passed caviar boxes to other people straight forward in the airport, some took them freely out. Finally, my unplanned airport event-ethnography experience discovered the way networking caviar market can be explored. Further research is highly needed, since this data will help to understand the continuation of local moral economy models and will help to calculate a possible quantity of fish illegally harvested every year.

### **Conclusions: Further steps for research monitoring**

Illegal fishing is a significant part of local informal moral economy in Western Kamchatka. It has a tradition and a historical background and not seen as a criminal practice but as logical continuation of dialogue with former regimes and normal transition from socialism to capitalism as well as the dialogue with the environment. Furthermore, it is attached to local identity concepts and pride of being fishermen. Principles and strategies of poaching are different in Oktiabr'skii and Ozernovskii settlements due to geographical locations and infrastructure. Further social-anthropological and sociological monitoring is highly needed in order to understand both illegally harvested amount of fish and social consequences of models of legalization discussed above. Here is my proposal for further research:

Quantitative research: Questionnaire, 1000 respondents must be covered in Western Kamchatka and PK city - 500 online questionnaires are included. This research should be done in cooperation with local experts - Elena Klipenstein and Alexander Bonk. I propose interviewers should also represent local and external data gatherers.

Qualitative research: in-depth interviews should be gathered after quantitative research analysis completed. Expert interviews - Delphi method is a good tool for deeper understanding of illegal fisheries in Kamchatka context. Qualitative research should also include local experts and a local writer Sergei Vakhrin whose book 'The tragedy of the Kamchatka coast' is very popular among local fishermen.

Ethnographic research: participant observation and deeper engagement with agents and hubs of caviar traffic is of great importance. Thus it is needed to gather data in local airport and post offices as well as gather data in Kamchatka and Moscow circles of caviar traders. It is the hardest part of this research.



## **Appendix: Notes on calculations**

### **Data from Oktiabr'skii settlement**

1990

A box of cigarets - 3 rubbles, 1997 - 4,50

dollar - 6 rubbles,

one captain - 2800\$ and it was expected to cover expenses for a good apartment and a car, or for a very good apartment and a very good car. But

1998 - crisis emerged and one could earn 16800 r.

Gasoline costed 2,3 rubbles.

A sailor earned 168000 rub. Per spawning season

### ***Nowadays:***

Team of fishermen consists of up to eight people.

Now - 1,5 tons per team - eight people. Pink salmon - 1,5 rubs, 2,5 - red salmon [*nerka*] per kilo, white fish - 20 kop. Kg. 6-10 rubble per kg for pink salmon. King salmon [*chavycha*] is most expensive 180 rubles per kg.

Artel consists of 3-5 people. Two people fish in water and two work in the sea shore. They conduct subsistence based fishing: sewing nets e t.c.

Artel fishes 2 tons of fish a day maximum when fish goes normally.

If a year is not rich in fish, poachers prosper. Entrepreneurs [*skupshchiki*] cooperate with local poachers.

In an opposite situation, when a year is good, poachers earn less, they have fish and caviar salted and sell. So they have income anyway. 7 groups - 21 people, 40 is the maximum. The rest is external poachers.

Till Levashovo 200. Covered by identity of small numbered people Kamchatskie malochislennyye narody. Eveny come here and fish although they are not local. He does registration here, it is possible. Temporary registration works too. When fishing police come, they stop fishing and wait saying that spirits do not allow them to fish today and they have to obey and wait until spirits give them a good sign to continue. All fish more than they are allowed. 3 people fish 500 kg - 15000 per summer. 105 tons per all local poachers per summer.

Generally, one brigade earns seasonally 100 000 rubbles per person

Caviar costs 2000 rubbles per kg in Ielizovo - a poacher earns this money for his fresh product.

Fish prices per kg established by entrepreneurs who have licenses but not fish. Sometimes they may fish not in the area mentioned in licenses. They buy fish from poachers and after sell it to factories in PK:

Pink salmon - 90 rub.

Trout [*golets*]- 45 rub.

Red salmon - 30 rub.

Coho salmon [*kizhuch*] - 100 rub.

### ***Data from Ozernovskii settlement - poacher's organic capital***

*Count unemployed. If they have an apartment, car, and snowmobile - they are poachers!*

In Ozernovskii illegal fishing is differently organized in comparison with Oktiabr'skii settlement. In Ozernovskii transport artery is a problem. In spite of the fact that Ozernovskii has a good guardian system, external poachers exist, but they have kinship or other social connections with local poachers.

All my informants mentioned up to five friends from their circle who fish illegally.

Official statistics would not work well for counting illegally harvested fish: *'Well, if they catch a poacher for one ton of fish he will not be able to pay enormous taxes. So they tax him for a minor amount of fish'*

Also, my informants consider indigenous logic [*kak u korenykh*] should be applied to all local people in Ozernovskii:

Poaching here is in people's blood. In Ozernovskii a poacher cannot have his own 'factory' he will be immediately discovered. In Oktiabr'skii people can sell fresh fish [*syrets*] straight forward. Here poachers wait for a call for proposals. In the 2000th we had 25 workshops [*tsekh*]. We cannot salt 300 kg of fish and people from Moscow establish their own workshop and process 200 tons of salmon and earn a million of dollars. However, if local workshops will be legalized again, the herd of red salmon will extinct. Indigenous logic would fit for us - 100 items of fish [*khvosty*] - 200 kg. For a family for a year would be enough.

In Ozernovskii poaching brigades are smaller and typical number of people is two.

A poacher relies only on his own organic capital - the health. He cannot sell fresh product as poachers do in Oktiabr'skii, because he has to process his catches. 10 tons of fish a poacher cannot process, transport, and sell. A poacher keeps frozen fish and sell it when finds a client - five items not more per deal. He can process (salt and smoke) fish and sell. The scale of poaching is not the same here. In Ozernovskii settlement a poacher will catch the amount of fish he can transport in his car and process back home. Generally, a poacher fishes 50 items [*khvostov*], max 200 kg per a fishing day: *'One cannot hide a scrap in a stack of hay, only a needle'*.

In this context calculations should be directed to the ability of a poacher to process fish and fish products, rather than on the amount of fish one can catch per spawning season.