Structures of mobilization and resistance: Confronting the oil and gas industries in Russia

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Abstract

Drawing on recent developments in the problematic relationship between the oil industry and local communities in the Republic of Komi, we develop a case study of environmental grassroots mobilization in northwest Russia. Using a qualitative methodology comprising semi-structured interviews and participant observation, we analyse the movement’s actions in terms of the concept of governance-generating networks (GGN), with reference to the global network of non-governmental environmental organizations and other institutions. The article focuses on the network of non-state actors, examining the spatial levels from local to global in an environmental movement seeking to challenge Lukoil, the major oil company in the region. We investigate the strategies adopted by the social movement and the responses of the oil industry and various governmental institutions, with this analysis including an examination of power between the different bodies and networks involved. In particular, we analyse different forms of corporate social responsibility seen in the steps taken by Lukoil to avoid more severe reactions.

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1. Introduction

Indigenous peoples and the oil industry have co-existed for many years in the Komi Republic, a region located in the northwest part of the Russian Federation. Since the 1990s, however, citizens have been affected by oil spills as a result of growing industrial activity. Case studies have found that the industry burdens local communities with an environmental risk adversely impacting their wellbeing (Yakovleva, 2014). The Komi-Izhemtsi, not recognized as an indigenous people by the Russian state but recognized as such by the UN, are making an effort to influence the oil giant Lukoil by engaging with global associations and networks. It is this local resistance to Lukoil, viewed as action embedded in a global network, that is the focus of interest in this paper.

Due to the increasing importance of energy resources for the global economy, the Russian state is determined to rely on the energy sector for its institutional and geo-political existence (Wilson and Stammle, 2016), even in a period of declining oil prices (years 2015–2016). The Russian oil and gas industry accounts for over 70 per cent of the nation’s total exports (EIA, 2014). The country holds more than 20 per cent of the world’s known gas reserves and 5 per cent of its proven oil reserves and the supply of oil and gas makes up a large part of Russia’s exports to Europe (European Commission, 2016). The West is dependent on the Russian oil and gas industry and this constitutes a viable way forward for Russia to develop a geo-political strategy to influence the Western economy. Oil is the main export resource in the Komi Republic, output being 257 thousand b/d1 (EIA, 2014). The oil and gas industry figures prominently throughout the region, with facilities stretching from Ukhta to Pechora and Usinsk being the centre of production (TED, 1997). Lukoil is the main player in the industry in the region today, operating through its subsidiary Lukoil-Komi. Each year, the area produces 2.3 million tons of oil, which constitutes about two-thirds of Russia’s total heavy oil production (Annenkova, 2012). Lukoil was founded in 1991 and is the second-largest oil company in Russia, and the second-largest producer of oil (Lukoil, 2015), producing 89,856 million tons of oil.

1 Barrels per day.
in 2012 (Lukoil, 2015). A major oil spill occurred in Komi in 1994; at that time, oil extraction was carried out by Komineft, which was later bought up by and is now an official subsidiary of Lukoil (Lukoil, 2015). Lukoil has been trying to ‘clean up the effects of the 1994 spill and replace the ageing network of pipelines’ (Wilson, 2016), but oil spills nevertheless still occur.

In this study, we investigate the NGO network constructed around indigenous and environmental organizations – involving grassroots as well as global players – that has mounted and sustained continuous resistance directed towards Lukoil at its headquarters in Moscow and its subsidiary, Lukoil-Komi, which operates in the Komi Republic and Nenets Autonomous Okrug. The major research questions we address are: In what relationship does the bottom-up NGO resistance network stand vis-à-vis the transnational Lukoil; and what factors have enabled the resistance to sustain itself over the years when confronted with powerful players? We look briefly at the emergence and transnationalization of the environmental movement in the Komi Republic. Of interest are the movement’s structure and survival strategies over the years under a political regime that is constantly trying to eliminate such efforts, mostly through the Foreign Agent Law enacted by the Putin administration in 2012.2 In particular, we examine the responses of different stakeholders, such as the oil industry and different levels of government, to the movement on multiple scales (from the local to the global). We also consider the way in which companies make use of corporate social responsibility strategies, basing our analysis on the renewed EU Strategy for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (EUR-Lex, 2011).

After describing the research methodology, we present the theoretical framework, with this including a brief look at Castell’s theories of networks and power in relation to the local-global realm. We then go on to introduce the concept of the governance-generating network (GGN), which forms the foundation of our analysis in conjunction with social movement theory and concepts relating to CSR. This is followed by a description of the case study and a brief history of environmental movements in Russia, building on which we proceed to the globalized movement today. We argue that local resistance is seeking to change a global industry using local as well as global resources and has, through different kinds of framing, succeeded in surviving over the past two decades (Table 1).

2 The Foreign Agent Law has been in effect since November 2012, initiated by the ruling party United Russia, and actively promoted by President Vladimir Putin. It states that non-profit organizations throughout Russia are required to list themselves as foreign agents when receiving grants from foreign sources, in order to avoid ‘any direct or indirect interference in [Russia’s] internal affairs (…)’ (Kremlin, 2013; Krymna, 2012).

### Table 1

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Category</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
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<td>Activists</td>
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<td>University of Lapland, European University St. Petersburg</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
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</table>

2. **Methodology**

The research takes a case study approach in order to provide depth and accuracy (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), focusing on the how and the why of the focal phenomenon (Yin, 1994) – citizens’ resistance to oil companies – and its context. The conclusions of this study are based on semi-structured interviews carried out between February and April 2015 and between 20 January and 4 February 2016. These comprised 16 interviews with local activists in the district of Izhma, five interviews with activists in the urban district of Usinsk – all 21 interviewees being members of the NGO Save Pechora Committee (SPC) and the indigenous peoples’ organization Izviatas – and one interview with members of IWGIA (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs). In addition, three interviews were carried out with local (Izma) governmental bodies, six with regional (Usinsk and Syktyvkar) and three with national (Moscow). Three interviews were carried out with representatives of the Lukoil office in Moscow, and four with
representatives of the Lukoil-Komi office in Usinsk (see Table 1). Interviews with the different actors, ranging from the local to national and global levels, were carried out to illuminate the interplay between local and global actors as well as to investigate the relationship between the NGO resistance network and Lukoil, the sustainability and strategies of the environmental resistance movement over the years and Lukoil’s CSR strategies in response to the movement. The active approach adopted by the research team established contact with the interviewees and the snowballing technique was used for finding and accessing local stakeholders. NGO leaders and leaders of indigenous peoples’ groups also helped to identify other informants. Activists were open to sharing their experiences and opinions with us. Appointments with Lukoil and Lukoil-Komi, as well as state authorities, had to be made formally and in advance through the respective communications and public relations departments. In-depth, semi-structured interviews served as the main research tool. Separate sets of interview guides were developed for civil society activists, Lukoil and state officials. Questions were formulated to provide a view of the social movement in historical perspective, to ascertain the activists’ grievances, the movement’s tactics and repertoire of collective action as well as to bring to light the interplay of local and global actors within the movement and activists’ interactions with Lukoil and the state. Company representatives on different levels were asked what their CSR policies were, both socially and environmentally, how these policies were developed and by whom, and how they were implemented. These questions sought to provide an understanding of the interaction between Lukoil offices, as well as the dynamics of the interaction between civil society activists, the company and the state. The state representatives were asked about the history of oil development in the region, about the benefits – and costs – to the region from oil development, as well as about the dynamic of interactions between the region’s municipalities, state agencies, oil companies and civil society (Table 2).

Apart from two interviews carried out in English, all interviews were conducted in Russian; these were translated into English when needed. The interview data was analysed by means of first transcribing and then coding them, with this revealing shared themes, patterns and relationships. The generalizations that could be drawn were then examined in the context of the theoretical framework. Other data-collection methods included analysis of documents and participant observation (see Table 2). The former encompassed records of meetings organized by the company, agreements proposed by activists, company CSR policies and public reports based on the GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) Guidelines. The latter focused on discerning the structure of the networks involved and delineating the overall interactions and negotiations between actors of different networks.

3. Theoretical approach

3.1. Networks and power

Networks and power structures play an important role in the analysis of the movement’s strategies and their communication and dealings with the oil industry, state, national and international NGO communities. As Castells has pointed out, ‘the environmental movement is a locally rooted, globally connected network which aims to change the public’s mind as a means of influence policy decisions to save the planet or one’s own neighbourhood’ (Castells, 2013, p. 49). He continues that power can be seen as a relationship which is framed by domination. The dominating party can thus always be met with resistance, a counterpower, enhanced by a range of actors, including individual or collective actors, organizations, institutions and networks. It has been argued that collective action, or collective agency, yields higher benefits as compared to individual action in the case of resistance, or when forming a counterpower, against resource extraction (Stammmer and Wilson, 2006). In the case at hand, we are studying the dynamics of interaction in oil governance networks, dynamics determined by the power of the actors involved (Castells, 2007), for example, the economic power of private actors, the political power of the nation-state, and the normative and symbolic power of the NGOs and indigenous peoples involved. Actors exercise power by attempting to influence the behaviour of others through multiple negotiations that occur on both transnational and local levels. We examine the interrelations of the actors in the network, informed by the integrated theoretical framework of ‘a multi-level, multi-actor global assemblage’ known as a ‘governance-generating network’ (GGN) (Tysiachiouk, 2012; Tysiachiouk and Henry, 2015; Tysiachiouk and McDermott, 2016) [see Fig. 1].

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3 Interviews with representatives of: WWF Russia, IWGIA and INFOE.

4 ‘Collective agency is the capacity of a group of actors to act together towards certain goals; as such it is a prerequisite for meaningful collective action’ (Stammmer and Wilson, 2006).
Oil companies, together with state and civil society networks – the oil GGN – link processes at the transnational and local levels. The actors in these networks are involved in continuous negotiations involving interactions within and between networks. To ensure the sustainability of oil production and protection of local and indigenous peoples’ rights, global institutions at the transnational level, such as the United Nations (UN), the Arctic Council (AC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), develop global standards and guidelines for companies. While oil companies often declare their commitments to the global standards, the ways in which they implement these standards on the ground vary significantly (Henry et al., 2016, forthcoming). When the standards are not met, indigenous peoples’ associations and groups may appeal not only to national, but also to global institutions in their efforts to influence the behaviour of the oil companies. Studies show that such transnationalization occurs when a movement’s home state offers it few political opportunities and its influence in decision-making processes is weak (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). It may also be the case that activists have sound political opportunities in their home state and that local and transnational civil society networks intersect and reinforce each other (Kraemer et al., 2013). While mobilization of national and transnational activists’ networks against corporate behaviour has been well studied, there is a gap in our knowledge as regards the interaction between civil societies, state and corporate networks across the full range of scales from local to global; for example, the dynamics of the interactions within oil GGNs have not been well researched. This paper attempts to fill this gap, focusing on the NGO networks – in particular, the environmental movement organized from below by the SPC and the indigenous peoples’ organization IZviatas – and their relationships with the oil companies and state networks in the Komi Republic. On the transnational level and across the full range of scales from local to global, local and global actors can be engaged in the interplay directly, without involving the national actors.

3.2. Grievances and resource mobilization

As Mena and Waeger note, ‘core to social movement research is an understanding of the social world as intimately contentious, and as one in which outsider groups challenge established social and regulatory institutions in their attempts to make their claims heard and bring about social or political change’ (2014, p. 7). In the case at hand, state or corporate institutions, such as Lukoil and the government, fall within the category of ‘established social and regulatory institutions’. We analyse the resource flow in the oil GGN through the lens of resource mobilization theory, which focuses on the willingness and ability of a given NGO network to mobilize depending on the different resources available. According to the theory, social movement organizations often fail because the infrastructure needed for the movement is lacking (McCarthy and Zald, 1977); in other words, the needed (and appropriate) resources, for example time or money, are not available within the NGO network. Social movements need to ‘mobilize resources from inside and outside their movement to reach goals’ (Jenkins, 1983, p. 113).

According to resource mobilization theory, there are various strategies that are used in combination. Edwards and Gillham (2013) name four different supporting strategies: (1) self-production, (2) aggregation, (3) co-optation/appropriation and (4) patronage. Self-production relies solely on the people within the movement, who produce human resources by training people around them. In aggregation, individual or group donations are used in order to reach the group’s goal. In the co-optation/appropriation strategy, relationships with other organizations are of high importance, as resources previously used by those organizations are now used by the mobilizing organization (movement). Patronage describes the case where an individual or a group gives money for the cause, but then is also able to decide on how that money is used. In this research, we assess the available resource mobilization strategies and other factors that have maintained the ability of the environmental movement in the Komi Republic to deal with the conflict between the region’s indigenous peoples and the oil company and state networks.

3.3. Corporate social responsibility

To illustrate how oil company networks relate to state and NGO networks, we look at the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Embracing such responsibility can help companies to facilitate certain activities by easing potential tensions within the community in which they operate. Doing so can also indirectly challenge the resource mobilization of NGO networks. A modern understanding of CSR is that defined by the EU: ‘the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society’ (EUR-Lex, 2011), including ‘respect for applicable legislation, and for collective agreements between social partners’. Furthermore, businesses ‘should have in place a process to integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders, with the aim of:

- maximizing the creation of shared value for their owners/shareholders and for their other stakeholders and society at large;
- identifying, preventing and mitigating their possible adverse impacts’ (EUR-Lex, 2011).

This definition takes into account the size of the enterprise and the field in which it operates, and emphasizes the value of a long-term commitment to CSR in order to ‘contribute to societal wellbeing and lead to higher quality and more productive jobs’ (EUR-Lex, 2011). Large enterprises are encouraged to ‘carry out risk-based due diligence, including through their supply chains’ (EUR-Lex, 2011). Companies contribute to local communities using established and strategic arrangements, such as social-economic agreements with municipalities and indigenous groups, and/or proceed with compensation for damage, although they are not legally bound to do so (CEDR, 2013; Wilson, 2016). These agreements help companies to build relationships with local communities (Henry et al., 2016, forthcoming; Wilson, 2016). Potential benefits and the dynamic of the interactions occasioned by these contributions will be analysed in the case study below.

4. Findings

4.1. Description of the case study

The Komi Republic is a multi-ethnic region lying to the west of the northern Ural Mountains. Half of the population of roughly 881,000 identify themselves as Russian; Komi make up less than 25 per cent of the population, with 15,000 of them identifying themselves as indigenous Komi-Izhemtsi. They are recognized by the indigenous peoples’ association RAIPON, but not by the state (RAIPON, 2014). Oil is the main export resource, providing 63 per cent of the area’s total revenue, while timber-related products account for 16 per cent and coal for 11 per cent. Oil, coal and gas together make up 50 per cent of Komi’s GDP (Alexander, 2009). Timber and agriculture are the main economic contributors in the south part of the republic, where Syktvykar, the capital, is located. Oil and gas dominate in the area stretching from Ukhta to Pechora,
with coal being the main natural resource from Pechora to the north. The town of Usinsk was established in 1966 at the newly discovered deposits of petroleum in the north of the republic; the centre for the production of oil and gas in Komi (TED, 1997), it is also informally called 'the oil capital of Komi'. Seventy percent of the oil in the republic is produced in the Usinsk region (Usinsk Municipality, 2014). The district contains 24 settlements and depends heavily on the socio-economic partnerships formed with multiple oil companies pursuing oil development, such as Lukoil-Komi, RN-Northern Oil (a subsidiary of Rosneft), Enisey company and Kolva Neft. The Izhma district is the second-largest oil district in the Komi Republic, containing 34 settlements accounting for 4.4% of the republic's population. Lukoil-Komi is the only oil company operating in the Izhma district. Its production is falling along with oil prices; for example, the company produced 192.9 thousand tons of oil in 2012 but only 141.17 thousand in 2013. The Izhma district also depends on socio-economic agreements with Lukoil-Komi.

In both the Usinsk and Izhma districts, the population in more rural areas has been dealing for years with several oil leaks, most caused by the Lukoil-Komi. The company operates in both districts, maintaining offices in Usinsk and Narynymar. Lukoil-Komi is a subsidiary of Lukoil, which has its headquarters in Moscow and operates in several regions in Russia as well as abroad. Major decisions, for example those related to CSR commitment to the UN Global Compact or banks, are made at Lukoil’s headquarters in Moscow, with instructions and funds then distributed to subsidiaries, amongst them Lukoil-Komi. Eighty-nine spills were reported between 2011 and 2013, and major spills occurred in 1988, 1992 and 1994 (Staalesen, 2014). In 1994, for example, 100,000 tons of oil leaked from a pipeline between Usinsk and Kharyaga, making it the biggest oil spill in the area (Staalesen, 2014). According to activists in the villages, the spills have caused health problems among the population and its animals, as well as economic problems, constraints on livelihoods and a feeling among the population of betrayal by the government. Polluted soil has been observed by citizens in the summer when the ground is free from snow, indicating that spills in winter were sometimes not reported to the authorities. Polluted water has been spotted in the form of a rainbow-coloured film on the water's surface in the main rivers in the region, the Pechora and the Kolva. According to individual respondents, the water has caused health problems, with cases of cancer being reported, for example. Water has been tested for radiation, but the results have come back negative. In addition, polluted water causes economic harm to the local population when animals, such as cows or reindeer, die from the water but no compensation is paid for the loss. Furthermore, local people reportedly face constraints on their daily lives, as certain areas used at one time for recreational purposes or for subsistence are now cut off because they contain oil deposits. These areas include forests and lakes where people once spent their leisure time picking berries or fishing. Local activists feel they are not taken seriously by the local administration or higher institutions within the government. Citizens complain that they are not involved in the decision-making processes pertaining to the building of new oil-drilling stations. Local inhabitants are often not informed about future plans, although drilling stations are reportedly built close to the villages, for example, within 1.5 km of a school, or near water wells, as happened in the village of Krasnoborsk11 in the Izhma district (see Fig. 2). People have a negative view of the oil company itself: according to local activists in the Izhma district, it has burned leaking oil, covered leakage with moss or not properly cleaned up spillage.12

The state supervisory agency Rospridodnadzor is tasked with ensuring that oil companies take specific steps after a leak has occurred. According to a representative of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Komi Republic, Lukoil scored best in environmental performance among the oil companies in the region, although all companies try to hide leaks. The ministry is working on an online register, eventually to be made available to the public, containing statistics on all the polluted areas and their re-cultivation, as well as information on the condition of pipelines, so that 'no information disappears'. It also plans to include the findings on leaks by NGOs. Greenpeace, for instance, has been involved in uncovering some of the leaks, although a representative for the organization noted that some reports were false as the alleged leaks had in fact only been reflections in water. However, Greenpeace has taken the lead in a local youth summer camp programme in which the organizers showed participants how to find, provide GPS coordinates for, and eventually map leaks and send the information to the ministry. Nevertheless, it is often difficult to locate oil leaks, as the territory is inaccessible in winter; but it is also claimed that the prevention of leaks is difficult, given the lack of technological progress within the oil industry in Russia, which is plagued by aging infrastructure. According to the representative of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, 80 per cent of the pipes are overused. The lifespan of a pipe is estimated at around ten years, and even less when used at full capacity. In the Komi Republic, where pipes were taken over from oil companies previously doing business in the region, the pipes have been used beyond their intended lifespan, becoming corroded and rupturing. Replacing or renewing pipes takes effort and is costly. The existing budget is insufficient, and Lukoil's investment programme for 2015–2016 is meant to cover the development of all of Lukoil's operations, not just the modernization of pipes. Lukoil has stated that it plans to modernize all pipelines by 2025; yet, the local activists doubt this, as it is more profitable for the company to pay fines than to replace pipes. Grievances related to the oil spills, as well as a lack of recognition of indigenous peoples' rights, have led to the rise of an environmental movement stretching from the grassroots to global levels. The following section begins with a history of environmental movements in Russia and concludes with a description of the movement against Lukoil in the Komi Republic today.

4.2. Environmental movements in historical perspective

With Gorbachev's pursuit of a radical restructuring of all institutions within the Soviet regime in 1986, known as perestroika, different informal (neformalnye) groups were founded; by the end

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5 www.zanashix.ru/city/usinsk, reviewer 08.08.2016.
6 Interview with local resident in Krasnobor, 21 February 2015.
7 Interviews and informal conversations in Krasnrob and Schelabin, 21 February 2015.
8 Interview with local activist, Izhma, 20 February 2015.
9 Interview with local activist, Krasnobor, 21 February 2015.
10 Interview with local activist of SPC, Izhma, 20 February 2015; CERD, 2013.
11 Informal conversations and interviews with local activists in Krasnobor, 21 February 2015.
12 Interview with local resident in Krasnobor, 21 February 2015.
13 Interview with representative of Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Komi Republic, Syktyvkar, 4 March 2015.
14 Interview with representative of Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Komi Republic, Syktyvkar, 4 March 2015.
15 Interview with representative of Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Komi Republic, Syktyvkar, 4 March 2015.
16 Interview with representative Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Syktyvkar, 4 March 2015.
17 Interview with Lukoil representative, Usinsk, 26 February 2015.
18 Interview with a representative of Lukoil, Moscow, 23 April 2015.
of the 1990s, environmental movements had gained noteworthy citizen support. However, the movements ultimately ‘struggled under conditions of economic and political instability that led [them] to seek a new mobilizing platform’ (Henry, 2009, p. 48).

The local environmental movement in the Izhma district in Komi arose in the former Soviet Union. SPC was formed in 1989, on the wave of Perestroika, after various economic and social problems had emerged in the region. People on the Committee relied on ‘existing social and cultural arrangements [from the Soviet times] to shape institutions in response to changing situations’ (Cleaver, 2009). The first chairperson of the Committee claimed that ‘something can only be achieved by the resistance of the people’. The Committee reached out to the people in the villages in the Pechora district and held its first conference. Among SPC’s first successes were a referendum on the issue of a national

19 Interview with local activist on SPC, Izhma, 20 February 2015.
park in the region and another against building a nuclear power plant in the Inta district. After the big oil spill near the town of Usinsk in 1994, the SPC and the Komi-Izhemtsi organization Izvitas dedicated themselves to addressing the matter. Working together with the non-profit Silver Taiga Foundation, as well as getting support from Greenpeace Russia (in 2015), they have created a list of ‘ten demands’ for the oil company, most of which emphasize environmental safety issues and the necessity of replacing old, outdated oil pipes.20

The SPC has 29 members from eight villages and volunteers from all over the Pechora region campaigning against Lukoil. Their main goal is to protect the environment and ecology in the district, but they also aim for greater involvement in the decision-making processes of the oil industry and the state. The Committee uses resources of the larger NGO, the Silver Taiga Foundation, and partners with the Komi-Izhemtsi organization Izvitas.

4.3. Local resistance towards a company and the state

Like many civil society organizations involved in global civil society (Veltmeyer and Bowles, 2014), the SPC, an NGO, is situated in a value-based network concerned with the environment, fairness and social justice (Karjalainen and Habeck, 2004). To be able to exist with the intention of changing the environmental situation in today’s Komi Republic, the Committee applies a major strategy of keeping itself an informal civic organization. After having been registered in the past, the Committee strategically decided to gain independence from the state by becoming a non-registered entity in 2012, one with no physical address or accounting system. This is made possible by relying on infrastructural support from the registered NGO Silver Taiga Foundation and partnering with the registered NGO Izvitas, which can accept grants from Russian funding sources but accepts only in-kind support from foreign sources. This limitation is a strategic choice, ensuring that no allegations of being a foreign agent can be brought by the state. Volunteering is possible as most of Save Pechora’s members are retired or have another main job and thus are not afraid of losing their jobs and livelihoods.

One established strategy of the Committee is letting public hearings, officially announced and organized by Lukoil, ‘fail’, declaring them invalid by voting, because the Committee would not be satisfied with the actions and responses of the oil company taken at the meeting and thus would not find a consensus.21 The organization of a public hearing goes as follows: the oil company notifies the local administration that a hearing is necessary; the administration then decides where and when it is going to take place, and publicly announces it in a newspaper.22 Voting is not officially part of public hearings, as they are held to inform citizens about Lukoil’s projects and collect and consider citizens’ suggestions. However, activists of the SPC insist on voting, and then insist that records of the meeting state that the hearings have failed. Such statements jeopardize the CSR of the company and its social license to operate. In one example, the oil company brought some 30 oil workers to a hearing in order to have more pro-Lukoil voices present, resulting in a positive voting outcome for the company.23 Nevertheless, citizens caused the hearing to fail. Public hearings are supposed to give a voice to the public, enabling them to express their opinions and their demands to Lukoil. The local population often complain that they have not been notified about an upcoming hearing and therefore not been able to attend. Earlier, the public hearings were often held in Usinsk, which is very difficult to reach from the region’s villages. Lukoil has responded to these complaints citing infrastructural problems; in other words, it is too difficult to find a location that can be reached by everyone.

Activists in the Izhma district strongly believe in the power of the people, which can be seen as the normative or symbolic power that is used to mobilize and organize the general public around them. With the guidance and aid of larger NGOs, power can then be exercised and results achieved. This power in the movement is directed against the oil company, Lukoil, and government policies that hinder the development of the communities’ values and interests, as there is a discrepancy between these and those of Lukoil and the government.

An example of the discrepancy between the values and interests of the community and NGO network and those of the industry can be taken from Lukoil-Komi’s interference with the media. According to the NGO Bankwatch, Lukoil-Komi blocks information in the media on the company’s environmental violations. The local population ‘fails to receive trustworthy information and sees a big difference between the environmental achievements described in press releases and the real situation’ (Bankwatch, 2008). Bankwatch also reported that in May 2006 Lukoil-Komi bought out an entire edition of the newspaper Novyi Sever after it had published an article on the environmental violations of the company. In another comment, Bankwatch has pointed out that one can see the relation between the SPC, on the one hand, and Lukoil-Komi and the state, on the other, in the cooperation between the company and the regional state authorities: the authorities have refused to respond to reported violations where certain of the company’s activities are concerned and have refused the SPC entry to view drilling sites, giving the company enough time to eliminate traces of pollution (Bankwatch, 2008).

According to a local leader, the people can bring about change by ‘making noise’ and standing up for their rights to fight ‘a disgusting creature’.24 Instances where the people followed the principle of ‘making noise’ were the street protests organized by the Committee in several villages in the Izhma and Usinsk districts and their use of different media outlets to publish information. In large cities in Russia, activists are prosecuted for organizing unauthorized protests; village-based protests are an exception. State authorities only monitor such protests and people can openly express their grievances and publish information about protests on the Internet. It is important to note that the relationship between the civil society network and the state agencies differ on different levels and scales. The majority of activists generally support Putin’s policies, acknowledging the need for the economy to develop additional fossil fuel resources. Most of the protests are against local municipalities for a lack of transparency in using money generated by the oil industry, for violating the terms of socio-economic agreements and for tolerating oil spills and local construction projects. Save Pechora and Greenpeace activists constructively work with the Ministry of Natural Resources of the Komi Republic on identifying and registering oil spills.25

4.4. Structure and communication in the NGO network

In the NGO network the Internet is used as a viable resource and powerful tool for communication and keeping the network alive. Information is published and distributed to members of the

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20 Interview with the leader of SPC, 22 February 2015, interview with the leader of Izvitas, 28 February 2015, documents provided by the NGO leaders.
21 Interview with activist of Izvitas, Izhma, 28 February 2015; interview with the leader of SPC, Syktyvkar, February 2015.
22 Interview with administration representative, Usinsk, 27 February 2015.
23 Interview with activist of SPC, Izhma, 21 February 2015.
24 Interview with local activist, Izhma, 20 February 2015.
25 Interview with the activists of SPC, 20 January, 2016.
network on a website run mostly by one member of the Committee, an example of reliance on the self-production strategy (Edwards and Gillham, 2013), as everything is organized around the available human resources. Additional resources include the newspapers Veskhdy Shorny and Ekologichesky Vestnik, which are published locally by the Committee (Ekologichesky Vestnik) or which describe the activities of the Committee. This normative/symbolic power via communication has brought the Committee some support from international media, such as Al Jazeera TV, which covered some grassroots protests. However, most of the attention the Committee has received has come from local and national media; it could not have achieved global influence on its own.26

The indigenous associations and NGOs in the Komi Republic collaborate with their counterparts in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug (NAO). For example, the SPC is helping the local branch of Izviatas in the NAO to identify issues related to oil development and to bring these to the attention of the media. Save Pechora and Izviatas are working together very closely, sharing active members and resources. Izviatas has links to Komi-Voityr,27 another interregional movement, although the relationship has been marked by recurring conflicts (Shabayev and Sharapov, 2011), as well as with the Silver Taiga Foundation. Izviatas is a member of the indigenous peoples’ association RAIPON28 and through it is connected to the transnational level, for example the UN and the Arctic Council.29 Together with RAIPON, the international organization IWGIA and the German organization INFOE30 are trying to pressure the Russian government by publishing reports on the racial discrimination by the Russian state against Izviatas31, the effort is aided by two UN committees, amongst them the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD, 2016)32 and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR),33 as well as a covenant (ICCPR).34 The organizations argue that the Russian state is denying indigenous peoples the right to practice traditional livelihoods, that authorities and private corporations fail to ‘seek the indigenous peoples’ informed consent prior to extractive activities’, that indigenous communities are being excluded ‘from legal access to fish, hunting rights and other biological resources vital for their collective survival’, and that the ‘combination of a weak and dysfunctional protection regime with the drive towards full privatisation of the country’s natural wealth’ is having a ‘discriminatory effect on indigenous communities by perpetuating their disadvantaged and disempowered status’ (CERD, 2008). In short, the fact that the Komi-Izhemtsi are not recognized by the state as an indigenous people and that Lukoil is therefore not obliged to pay them compensation is framed as racial discrimination. Applying the co-opting/appropriating strategy (Edwards and Gillham, 2013) allows the different committees and NGOs to use each other’s resources.

Ties to Greenpeace Russia have been established via a member of the Izhma district community who worked for the SPC and later joined Greenpeace. Through this connection, a first press conference was held in Saint Petersburg in spring 2015. The in-kind support provided by Greenpeace has made it possible to arrange roundtables with state representatives in Uinsk. Extensive discussions were held centring on combating oil spills and fostering environmental improvements.35 In April 2016, a large oil spill occurred in the Usinsk district, for which Lukoil-Komi was held responsible. This led to another roundtable meeting in June 2016 in Ukhta. Participants included representatives of the local administration, the Komi Ministry of Natural Resources, and activists on the SPC. The possibilities of holding the company accountable for the damage were discussed.36 In 2016, Greenpeace started a large national campaign, collecting signatures with the aim of requesting the federal government to force oil companies to replace outdated pipes and diminish spills in the country.37 In order to raise awareness about the issue of oil spills on a global scale, Greenpeace has sent Izviatas representatives to international meetings, such as the Arctic Council meeting in Iqaluit, Canada, in 1998.38 Here, the activists’ network communicated its grievances to the regional and global levels and mobilized citizens nationally. 4.5. Corporate social responsibility and the oil company’s response

Greenpeace has been involved in targeting oil companies suspected of violating the rights and/or values of the communities adjacent to oil extraction sites. The organization’s actions have identified issues related to safety and the performance of the oil companies, which indirectly set up an agenda for policy changes and called upon companies to honour their environmental and social responsibilities (Pappila, 2015). CSR can serve as a practicable strategy for oil companies, as conflicts with local communities or environmental institutions can be reduced (Pappila, 2015); in addition, employing CSR practices is likely to strengthen a company’s image, leading to higher sales and potentially attracting investment banks. It has also been argued that global movement networks could impact developments by evaluating listed companies based on their environmental performance or the way they deal with the issue of human rights, prompting shareholders and investors to re-evaluate their relationship and overall attitude towards the companies (Castells, 2007).

Lukoil does not play down the importance of CSR. It signed the UN Global Compact (2016) in 2008 and adheres to the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) in presenting its performance to shareholders. Amongst other companies, Lukoil has committed itself to a precautionary approach to environmental challenges, undertaking initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility and encouraging the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.39 Furthermore, in a 2008 report, the company stated that it has made efforts geared to ‘reducing oil and petroleum product losses and decreasing related emissions/discharges’ and to ‘preventing accidents and remedying their consequences’ (Lukoil, 2008, p. 26). CSR commitments are decided upon at the company’s headquarters and, as in other vertically integrated holding companies, environmental and social aspects of CSR are channelled to the regional offices. Regional offices have personnel who are responsible for implementation but must adhere to the budget allocated for them by headquarters. According to our Lukoil-Komi informant, the company’s limited

26 Interview with IWGIA representative, 4 February 2016.
27 Komi-Voityr signed a partnership agreement with Lukoil April 15, 2015 (http://www.lukoil.com/static_6_5id_2256.html).
28 Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North.
29 Interview with the Izviatas activist, Izhma, 28 February 2015; Interview with SPC, Izhma, 22 February 2015.
30 Institut für Ökologie und Aktions-Ethnologie (http://www.infoe.de/web/).
32 UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
33 UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
34 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
35 Interview with regional SPC activist, January 21, 2016.
38 Interview with the leader of Izviatas, Izhma, 28 February 2015.
Regional budget prevents it speeding up replacement of its outdated oil infrastructure.\textsuperscript{40} Other responsibilities that Lukoil must take on originate from bank loan agreements with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).\textsuperscript{41} Since 2000, Lukoil has received five loans from the bank totalling USD 840 million, part of which was distributed to Lukoil-Komi \textit{(Bankwatch, 2014)}. In 2007, for a loan of USD 300 million, Lukoil committed itself to ‘inter alia pollution clean-up, pipeline replacement, gas flaring reduction, health and safety measures, [and] social infrastructure (\ldots)’.\textsuperscript{42} The EBRD provided funds to Lukoil headquarters; funds for the clean-up of legacy spills were allocated mostly to the Khanti-Mansiisky Autonomous Okrug, home to the Khanty and Nenets peoples, who are recognized by the Russian Federation as indigenous.\textsuperscript{43} There, due to the bank requirements, the company expresses its CSR towards indigenous peoples using international EBRD standards and generously pays them compensation for oil extraction and pollution on native lands.\textsuperscript{44}

Furthermore, Lukoil employs a CSR policy, one limb of which is headed \textit{Environment}, to be implemented in a five-year programme titled \textit{Energy Efficiency, Employees’ Well-Being and Sponsorship}. Sponsorship is implemented mainly through social-partnership agreements with the regions in which the company operates. Lukoil-Komi receives approximately 100 million roubles from the company’s national headquarters. This money is distributed between different administrations in Komi and the NAO.\textsuperscript{45} Reindeer-herding enterprises are registered in NAO even if they operate in the Komi Republic. Lukoil-Komi pays compensation to reindeer herders for oil spills and damage to the land. On the local level, Lukoil-Komi spends time and effort on engaging with the municipalities and communities in the republic. The company and local administration have had social partnership agreements for some ten years. These are usually focused on supporting education, culture, the environment, health, preservation of tradition, agriculture and small business.\textsuperscript{46} In 2014, a total of some 15 million roubles\textsuperscript{47} was given to the local administration in Izhma.\textsuperscript{48} Together with the local administration, Lukoil decides what to finance and how much money to give, with the decision based on the wishes of the institutions in need, for example schools or kindergartens. Local activists have complained that the community only receives the money through the local administration, rather than directly, and that its distribution is not transparent.\textsuperscript{49} Furthermore, the social partnership agreement itself is not public and transparent; NGOs and local citizens in the communities affected do not know its exact content, which undermines open and democratic municipal decision-making. Despite its grievances with regard to Lukoil-Komi’s environmental performance, Iziyatas has recognized that it needs to look for different opportunities for benefit sharing, and in February 2015, signed a social economic agreement\textsuperscript{50} with the company. This agreement focuses mainly on social concerns, but takes in some environmental considerations as well. Lukoil-Komi agreed to inform citizens about all oil spills regardless of their extent. Since the agreement has been signed, Lukoil-Komi has become more transparent about oil spills in the Izhma district, where the Iziyatas office is located; however, our informants have reported that Lukoil-Komi continues to hide oil spills occurring in the Usinsk district.\textsuperscript{51} An examination of the EU guidelines on CSR (EUR-Lex, 2011) reveals that Lukoil acknowledges its responsibilities towards social problems and towards society at large. It is ‘doing more’ (Schwartz, 2011) by engaging with the communities rather than simply looking at the production of goods and services for a profit, showing that the bottom line is not the only value of importance.

The company cannot afford to improve its infrastructure and is focusing on social partnership agreements instead. Activists nevertheless insist that the company meet the ten demands they have put forward; as one informant put it, they do not want to ‘sell the environment’,\textsuperscript{52} but protect it. In other words, people would rather have a clean environment without oil leaks than money for philanthropic projects. Protests and discussions continue, but mostly without any changes in favour of the communities and activists, and leading to ‘a silent death of the indigenous people’,\textsuperscript{53} as activists have described the situation.

4.6. Framing the indigenous as a network strategy

The Komi-Izhevtsi have sought indigenous status for many years, as this would make them eligible for benefits on the national level and require oil companies to consult and compensate them for damage. Although environmental impact assessments require consultations with local communities, in Russia indigenous peoples with a recognized status are treated differently by oil companies than unrecognized peoples. For example, on Sakhalin Island the requirements of the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation have been implemented better with peoples that are recognized as indigenous (Wilson, 2016). In the following, we shed light on ways in which the Komi-Izhevtsi, with the help of international players, have explored the international arena, where they are recognized as indigenous peoples, and exemplify how they are seen differently by national and regional governmental entities, which treat them as local communities and not as indigenous peoples.

On the global level, the United Nations Development Group characterizes indigenous people as tribal peoples, using the guidelines set out in the ILO\textsuperscript{54} Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in 1989. In the Russian Federation, 41 groups are legally recognized as ‘indigenous, small-numbered peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East’. To be recognized as indigenous, a group must:

\begin{itemize}
\item Have no more than 50,000 members;
\item Maintain a traditional way of life;
\item Inhabit certain remote regions of Russia;
\item Identify itself as a distinct ethnic community (IWGIA, 2012).
\end{itemize}

The national guidelines are formulated in such a way that they exclude tribes that do not meet all four criteria (Rohr, 2014), whereas the global guidelines are much more flexible, employing self-identification as the key criterion for being indigenous.

\textsuperscript{40} Interview with the head of PR Lukoil-Komi, Usinsk, 25 February 2015.
\textsuperscript{41} \url{http://www.ebrd.com/work-with-us/projects/psd/lukoil-environmental-loan.html}.
\textsuperscript{42} \url{http://www.ebrd.com/work-with-us/projects/psd/lukoil-environmental-loan.html}.
\textsuperscript{43} Interview with the head of corporate coordination unit, Moscow, 24 April 2015.
\textsuperscript{44} Research in progress, conducted by co-author of this paper in 2014–2016 in Khanti-Mansiisky Autonomous Okrug, unpublished manuscript.
\textsuperscript{45} Interview with the head of corporate coordination unit, Moscow, 24 April 2015.
\textsuperscript{46} Interview with the head of PR Lukoil, Usinsk, 25 February 2015.
\textsuperscript{47} At the time of interviewing, 15 million roubles equalled approximately 208,700 €.
\textsuperscript{48} Interview with local administration representative, Izhma, 24 February 2015.
\textsuperscript{49} Interview with local activist of SPC, Izhma, 22 February 2015.
\textsuperscript{50} ‘or social partnership agreement.
\textsuperscript{51} Interview with Save Pechora activist, Syktyvkar, January 21, 2006.
\textsuperscript{52} Interview with local activist of SPC, Izhma, 20 February 2015.
\textsuperscript{53} ‘Poleznuyu Izkopoeanie’ Round-table discussion with local activists, Izhma, 27 February 2015.
\textsuperscript{54} International Labour Organization.
Reindeer husbandry in Komi is in decline (CCPR, 2014). There are only some 90 herders among the local Komi-Izhemtsi (Shabayev and Sharapov, 2011). Reindeer herding enterprises receive compensation from Lukoil-Komi because they have registered their traditional activity in NAO, where all reindeer herders receive compensation (see Fig. 2). Companies appropriating pastureland for oil drilling need to receive herders’ consent and pay compensation to the reindeer-herding enterprises. Earlier, compensation took the form of a social-economic agreement with indigenous peoples’ organizations; since 2011 it has been paid directly to them (Henry et al., 2016, forthcoming).

As noted above, the Komi-Izhemtsi are not registered as an indigenous people on the national level. In 1993, the Izhma region was put on the list of areas inhabited by indigenous peoples of the North, but today competition for finances, land and resources is harsh (Shabayev and Sharapov, 2011). The law would require the governor of each region within the Komi Republic would have to file a petition with the federal government requesting permission to include the Komi-Izhemtsi in the national registry of indigenous, small-numbered peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East. In fact, the life of the rest of the Komi-Izhemtsi, who number around 15,000, does not differ significantly from that of any other local citizens, although they descend from indigenous inhabitants of the region, maintain close ties to the land, regard themselves as a marginalized group (CCPR, 2014) and self-identify as indigenous (United Nations, 2009). Despite the Komi-Izhemtsi being denied indigenous status in Russia, RAIPON, including the Komi-Izhemtsi organization Izvias, is trying to frame their situation differently in the international arena and thereby secure them recognition as an indigenous people. If this effort is successful, the Komi-Izhemtsi could become eligible for protection under indigenous peoples’ rights globally, as the international and Russian national definitions of “indigenous” differ. Indigenous status would bring ‘state support for the preferential right to use the land, tax exemption for the use of natural resources, free license to catch fish and marine animals, giving the young people from among the “indigenous peoples” access to state-commissioned student places in institutions of higher education, and the right to alternative military service’ (Shabayev and Sharapov, 2011).

Izvias has received support from Greenpeace International, RAIPON, IWGIA, or the UN Human Rights Committee in its problems with the oil company and in its fight for indigenous status.55 Representatives of Izvias participate in global indigenous gatherings, including a 2015 Arctic Council meeting in Iqaluit, where Izvias had the opportunity to advise a body of representatives of the Nunavut territory to use its indigenous status to ban drilling around the region.

5. Discussion

In the last resort, it is only the power of global civil society acting on the public mind via the media and communication networks that may eventually overcome the historical inertia of nation-states and thus bring these nation-states to accept the reality of their limited power in exchange for increasing their legitimacy and efficiency (Castells, 2013, p. 42).

As scholars have pointed out, power can be achieved by networks in civil society, with the right resources (Castells, 2013; Wilson, 2016). In the case of the Komi Republic, people have formed a resistance group, the SPC, based on their identity and their environmental and ethnic beliefs. In this union, normative power attempts to appeal to and convince more people to become involved, securing the movement’s objectives. The NGO network to which the committee belongs uses normative power in order to pressure Lukoil to meet the people’s demands by addressing the problems related to oil spills. Within the context of this work, normative power can be seen playing out in environmental and ethnic issues. NGOs in the network have objectives related to environmental protection and sustainability that align with the interests of their constituencies and pursue an ethnic legal demand in trying to gain indigenous status for the Komi-Izhemtsi. People can bring about change and while they have formed networks, these may be outweighed in terms of power by dominant actors, such as oil companies and the nation-state. Our study has examined a GGN with unique power relations and resource flows between actors and networks. As was mentioned earlier, the SPC is engaged in a larger transnational network of NGOs and other institutions. Available resources are mobilized locally as well as taken from the experience and power of larger, transnational players in the network, such as Greenpeace Russia, Greenpeace International, IWGIA, RAIPON and several UN committees. Furthermore, the movement exchanges intangible resources, such as experience and knowledge, with Izvias and the Silver Taiga Foundation. On the local level, activists engage in collective action and receive attention from larger, more powerful entities, such as regional, national, and international NGOs.

The powerful actors in the GGN that oppose the movement include the oil company and, on the national level, the Putin administration, which has made the work of environmental NGOs receiving foreign funding and involved in political activity very difficult. For example, the Silver Taiga Foundation, which provides infrastructural resources to the SPC, may run the risk of being labelled a foreign agent pursuant to the Foreign Agent Law should it accept foreign funding from international foundations. Yet, the NGO network in our case found a successful strategy for overcoming powerful actors in the GGN. It was presented with and seized a political opportunity when an external NGO, INFOE, challenged the national government by framing the treatment of Izvias by the state as racism. The oil spills have also created an opportunity for the movement, as international players have taken an interest and challenged the state through media pressure.

Activists from the SPC joined larger organizations such as the Silver Taiga Foundation and Greenpeace, bringing local expertise to the regional, national and transnational levels. In turn, the Committee has at its disposal the infrastructure and resources of the bigger movements. The fact that it is involved in a wider, global network within civil society means that it can receive support and help in framing issues in global terms. The larger organizations have helped the SPC in mobilizing regional, national and international institutions and in drawing their attention to the local issues in the Komi Republic. The SPC and Izvias have not been isolated: through networking they have learned certain strategies that they can apply on a global scale.

Resources tapped in the global sphere by the NGO network include media support – which frames the problems as an indigenous issue – and financial resources. As we can see, the local is intertwined with the global. If brought to bear in local activism, the power of the global actors could have an influence on companies’ CSR policy by impacting the mind of the public. Due to multiple NGO campaigns, investment banks and global stakeholders demand greater CSR, and Lukoil has developed appropriate policies at its national headquarters. However, these policies are formulated such that regional offices, Lukoil-Komi for example, fail to implement them. This can be attributed to a lack of funding for replacing old, Soviet-era infrastructure.

In GGNs, networks are meant to bring the global closer to the local. Our study demonstrates the mechanism underpinning this global-local interplay of actors. The local (people, activists) are able to get access to national media and even global

institutions, mostly through a broker from within the community or through other individual change agents. The broker knows what is happening on the ground and can possibly combine the different interests and needs of the various stakeholders involved; parts of civil society may become more closely connected to the space in which the environmental pollution, and possibly injustice, is taking place. In the present case, new institutional spaces were created on the transnational level: the roundtables in the Izhma region, the civic action that is taking place, the learning networks established through summer schools initiated by Greenpeace and the possibility of local activists participating in Arctic Council meetings. Without brokers, the Committee probably would not have had incentive to establish connections with transnational institutions such as the UN or the Arctic Council. Reaching out to these brought the Committee tremendous support, allowing it to bypass the national level, on which it felt powerless. We argue that the power of the networks creates an alternative, one that is still a work in progress in enforcing corporate accountability.

Our case reveals a large discrepancy in power and interests on the national level between the state and the oil industry, on the one hand, and civil society on the other. In line with Castells (2013), one sees that the nation-state is guided by traditional political principles, that is, the maximization of the state’s interests and the prioritization of the political (and economic) interests of political actors within the state. We have explored the long-term sustainability of the NGO network in the Komi Republic. The survival of the movement can be explained with reference to factors originating partly from the local and partly from the global level. Some of the members of the SPC are former communist leaders, who share particular ideas and values and are, as leaders, able to understand the post-Soviet ‘system’ as well; they know its ins and outs and can thus adjust very well. The Committee has not registered itself as an official committee, allowing it to avoid the sanctions that would ensue from the Foreign Agent Law. Most of its members are retired or have another primary occupation, which makes them advantageous actors vis-à-vis the state and its surveillance mechanisms.

6. The issue of trust in GGNs and the interplay of actors’ networks

The case of local communities, including the Komi-Izhevtsi, fighting against a giant oil industry in today’s Russia, is a flagship example of how sustainable environmental movements and, more specifically, resource-sharing networks can be. The value of framing grievances and alleged discrimination against minorities in this case should not be underestimated. The World Bank and International Finance Corporation recognize indigenous peoples as social groups with social or cultural identities that are distinct from mainstream groups or the dominant society (IFC, 2012). The Komi-Izhevtsi identify themselves as an indigenous people but have received attention beyond the borders of Russia only with the assistance of international NGOs, indigenous associations and the media. Indigenous peoples have gained noteworthy support, especially with the 2008 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Among other rights, the Declaration provides for the right of control over traditionally owned or used lands, territories and resources (UN, 2008, Article 26) and ensures ‘just, fair and equitable compensation, for [those] lands, territories and resources (…) which have been (…) occupied, used or damaged without their free, prior and informed consent’ (UN, 2008, Article 28). Thus, on a global level, the injustices suffered by the Komi-Izhevtsi are recognized and means of redressing such wrongs are being adhered to.

On the global level, the issue has been framed as such that Lukoil is the culprit and the ‘indigenous’ people the victims. On the national level, the Komi-Izhevtsi are not considered different to any other people living in rural areas, and therefore they are treated as members of local communities. In any event, the current law in Russia does not offer any possibilities for the Komi-Izhevtsi to gain more benefits from oil companies (Rohr, 2014). Therefore, it proves to be difficult for environmental movements and NGO networks to pin down a company operating, as in this case, within national borders and laws and customs; certain global standards do not apply, or differ from the national standards.

The dominating and controlling industry and state are able to plunder the region’s natural resources (Ross, 2009, p. 47–48 and Alexander, 2009, p. 135) without ensuring ‘long-term sustainable benefits for [its] populations’ (Stammier and Wilson, 2006, p. 6). This state of affairs is a consequence of the weakness of democratic institutions, which failed to develop because of a rather weak central political structure (Ross, 2009). We have seen that the distrust in governmental institutions and the oil company, despite their corporate social activities within the communities, signals that there is no control mechanism in place, as local activists have in fact claimed. For example, test results were not fully trusted when they came back negative after water samples were sent in to check for radiation. Activists claim that oil leaks are not properly checked and monitored by the responsible governmental agency. Looking at the relationships between the state and industry in this example, these observations, gathered in talking to local activists, suggest that the agency is working in favour of Lukoil-Komi and potentially against the movement. Confronting Lukoil for failing to meet global standards, such as certain components of the UN Global Compact, proves to be rather difficult. Although many promises are not fulfilled on the ground in the Komi Republic, it is not easy to prove this, as Lukoil’s global commitments are few and, moreover, too vague. One potential opportunity for the Komi-Izhevtsi lies in the commitment that Lukoil signed when engaging in contracts with EBRD for several loans earmarked for the development of a clean environment in the company’s zone of operation. It is thus far unclear whether the movement can claim higher compensation or other sorts of restitution based on Lukoil’s loan commitments. In the past Lukoil has failed to carry out many of the promises it made, and has had to pay fines.56

The distrust of local activists towards governmental bodies and Lukoil is not one-sided. Local and regional administrations, as well as Lukoil, claim that the SPC is using dubious strategies to get its way, despite its peaceful nature. The Committee uses a strategy of causing hearings to fail on purpose in order to get attention and show that they are not satisfied with Lukoil–Komi’s actions and will not rest until a satisfactory result is obtained. Whether the Committee will achieve anything using this strategy is questionable. Our informants from Lukoil–Komi and from the local and regional administrations consider the Committee mostly an inconsistent and incompetent organization due to what they see as its lack of organization and rather rigid attitude. For example, they state that the demands of the Committee are excessive and that they cannot completely discontinue drilling for oil. Izviatas, on the other hand, has become more compromising than its partner, choosing to rely on the social partnership agreements and the positive social impacts these promise for the communities.57 This implies a de-radicalization of the movement on the part of Izviatas, whereas the SPC continues to be more critical. Lukoil–Komi, in turn, continues

56 Greenpeace covered up some spills, which resulted in a fine of 614 million rubles for nine spills since 2011 in the Komi Republic (Bankwatch, 2014: http:// bankwatch.org/sites/default/files/briefing-Lukoil-SGC-22Dec2014.pdf/).
57 Interview with regional activist, Syktyvkar, 20–21 January 2016.
with its CSR activities and honours its environmental commitments, albeit only in part.

7. Conclusion

Our analysis has shown that the NGO network involved in the oil GGN is focused primarily on resolving environmental issues. The citizens involved in the network desire a clean environment, clearly a value they find important in their lives. In this environmental movement in the Komi Republic, industrial development meets with opposition from local communities. Communities have taken action out of a desire to protect their lives and rights and have been supported by several organizations, including global actors contributing to environmental grassroots movements on the local level. In line with Castells (2013) and the concept of a GGN (Tysiachniouk, 2012), civil society networks in the Komi Republic act on local and global levels, but are rooted in the region’s problems; global actors on the local level influence capacity-building across a hierarchy of scales in the GGN, forming a counterpower to the power of a giant industry.

What is remarkable in this case study are the local and global assemblages of the GGN, with the counterpower being a local force trained against a powerful, global player. The local movement is trying to reach the global through networking, mostly with regional and international civil actors. The resistance does not remain local, but rather expands into a larger sphere, involving actors from the international scale and bypassing the national level. Power in society comes from the public recognizing the environmental movement and organizing themselves in support of its objectives, thus driving change through an organized systematic movement. People are fighting for their land and are not satisfied with CSR-mandated promises only. Nevertheless, the movement remains small, as it cannot rise up as a large-scaled and powerful organization against the oil industry. As discussed in this article, there are constant and persistent pressures against such movements, hindering them from growing, as the political and economic direction of the country is different to that of its environmental activists. As we can see, the civil society network is outweighed by companies and the state in terms of power, despite the network’s successful resource mobilization strategy. While the network can survive, can organize and mobilize actors locally and globally and can demand greater CSR, little change has occurred in oil companies’ environmental practices as a result.

The social movement seen in the Komi Republic can be interpreted as activism demanding better CSR (Mena and Waeger, 2014) by appealing to global standards. Whereas Lukoil headquarters has declared its commitment to global standards related to the environment, indigenous rights and the overall sustainability of oil production, the implementation of CSR by Lukoil-Komi is constrained by regional and local factors. These include expectations about the behaviour of the oil company on the part of state administrators involved in shaping the local institutional environment for CSR and the expectations of stakeholders beyond the social movement. The local context is shaped by the low capacity of the state to deliver welfare and infrastructure and the lingering effects of the integration of political and economic decision-making in the Soviet period. Despite privatization in the 1990s, the arrival of transnational corporations, and profound changes in governance since the end of the Soviet regime, the local factors cited have resulted in a high degree of continuity with the past in relations between industry and local communities (Henry et al., 2016 forthcoming). Lukoil–Komi has responded to stakeholder expectations with certain levels of CSR, such as community assistance, the sponsorship of social events, and commercial investments in the community. The funds available are spread among these different activities, leaving very little to address the environmental concerns related to the company’s oil drilling activities; the problems connected to oil spills and the associated degradation of the environment go unsolved. Lukoil–Komi’s response to the movement is one of investing in strategies focusing on communication with the communities at stake, trying to diminish grievances. The company prioritizes this approach over possible investments in technological advances an alternative that would put its profits at risk – as the communities affected are small and are rather easy to handle. For Lukoil, timely financial investments in community services is a strategy to keep the communities from protesting on a much higher level by giving them just as much as is necessary and no more. It can be argued that the state is an instrument of domination along with the oil industry rather than an institution of representation, because it intervenes in the public sphere on behalf of specific interests that prevail in the state (in line with Castells 2013). Sustainable development within environmental policy has been declared a goal, but has yet to be implemented.

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[IDEOLOGEM: FOREIGN AGENT: 3 DAYS IN JULY 2012]


