

# **The Conflict over Seal Hunting in Russia**

**Elizaveta Belyakova**



**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Philosophy in  
Culture, Environment and Sustainability**

*Centre for Development and the Environment*

*University of Oslo*

*Blindern, Norway*

June 2009



## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor, Karen V. Lykke Syse, for her fresh ideas and support when I got stuck and was lost in a great amount of work. Thank for your advice “Remember to breathe!”

I deeply appreciate warm welcomes and interesting conversations of all my informants in Russia without whom this thesis would never have been written: Pavel Esipov, Anna Filippova, Aleksey Ovchinnikov, Ivan Moseev, Irina Novozhilova, Oleg Prodan, Aleksandr Rassolov, Konstantin Sabinin, Michael Shirokiy and Aleksey Skrobanskiy.

I sincerely thank the academic staff of the Center for Development and the Environment for their kindness and support. My appreciation also goes to all the people at the Quota Scheme who gave me an opportunity and made it possible to study at this Master program in Norway. I am pleased to thank all my classmates at SUM for the good time that we all had together.

Especially, I would like to thank my fiancé for his love and understanding during these two long years apart. Last but not least, heartfelt thanks to my loving mother who always believes in me.

Elizaveta Belyakova

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*Russia cannot be embraced by mind,  
Or measured by common measure:  
It is a thing in its own right —  
One can only believe in Russia.*

Fedor Tyutchev<sup>1</sup>

## Chapter 1. Introduction

Every spring there is the seal harvest on the ice in the White Sea. Thousands of harp seals (*Phoca groenlandica*) born 2-5 weeks earlier are killed by a hook; seals are bled and pelted on the ice and their skins and pelts are sold domestically or internationally. Local inhabitants of coastal villages in the Arkhangelsk region are the main actors of the hunt and highly interested in a continuation of this harvest. Most hunters are Pomors — officially unrecognized indigenous people of the Russian North. A certain culture and traditions of seal hunting were established where Pomors were the main participants.

In September 2007, the Norwegian company GC Rieber Skinn AS set up a daughter company in Arkhangelsk, called GC Rieber Skinn Pomor'e Lic. The company is the world's leading supplier of dressed sealskin and seal leather. The plan of the company is to participate in the harvest and to utilize hunting quotas that the Russian fishing kolkhozes<sup>2</sup> are not able to use it due to economic

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<sup>1</sup> Умом Россию не понять,  
Аршином общим не измерить:  
У ней особенная статья —  
В Россию можно только верить. (Федор Тютчев)

<sup>2</sup> *Kolkhoz* (колхоз) is a universal term applied to any “collective farm” located within the land area of Russia or the former Soviet Union.

difficulties. On the other hand, there are Russian wildlife advocates who are guided by a concept of animal rights and they vigorously oppose seal hunting. In Russia, the animal rights movement started gaining strength in the early nineties when the country threw off the Iron Curtain and new ideas, movements, and organizations began penetrating into Russia. The environmental non-governmental organizations (generally, the animal rights organizations IFAW and VITA) struggle for a ban of seal hunting in Russia. The supporters of the seal harvest resist them. Thus, there is an obvious conflict between supporters and opponents of seal hunting in Russia which has been growing recently.

## 1.1. Statement of the research problem

For a long time, marine mammals (such as whales and seals) and the discussions of how to treat these animals have remained a stumbling block in the debate between animal rights activists and hunters. In Canada (seals), Japan (whales), Norway (seals and whales) the conflict over the hunting of marine mammals lasts several decades. Books (e.g., by Kalland and Sejersen), articles, reports (e.g., by ICES, IFAW, NAOO), papers about the hunting and struggle between its opponents and supporters are written and published every year; many conferences on marine mammals are convened in the world; hundreds and thousands of people participate in the actions against sealing and whaling. In spite of the fact that the commercial seal harvest lasts more than one hundred years in Russia, the conflict over hunting has recently been latent. The current conflict is characterized as a relatively short-term and small-scale one.

The research problem of the study is mainly defined in the title — **the conflict over harp seal hunting in Russia. What kind of conflict is it? What are the major characteristics and aspects of the conflict?** This thesis is a consequence analysis of the conflict. In terms of Russia, the conflict over the hunting of marine mammals is unique and interesting to explore scientifically. Firstly, the research problem presents a great field for scientific action because this conflict

is poorly studied. Secondly, the conflict over sealing is multifaceted and interesting to researchers of various sciences: anthropologists, sociologists, biologists, and economists. Thus, an angle that one uses to look at the research problem might be varied and an interdisciplinary approach can be used.

## 1.2. Objectives of the study and research questions

As was mentioned above, there are two opposite views on the seal hunting. There are a number of publications supporting or opposing seal hunting. However, the literature that examines both views and analyzes the conflict comprehensively and sufficiently practically does not exist. Especially, there are no such studies in the case of Russian harvest. Thus, in my thesis I will explore the arguments for and against the seal hunting and present various aspects of the conflict from the participants' point of view, who are involved in the conflict over seal hunting in Russia — animal rights and welfare activists, sealers, Pomors, heads of fishing kolkhozes. The objective of this study is to look at the problem at different aspects and from various angles, to elucidate the relation between the opponents and to present an unbiased assessment of the present conflict.

There are three research questions that are set forward in order to understand and explain the research problem of the thesis.

- 1. What kind of conflict is it? What is the matter of the conflict? Who are the main actors in the conflict?**
  
- 2. What are the conditions that have encouraged the conflict?**
  
- 3. What are the possible ways out and complications for settlement of the conflict?**

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### 1.3. Significance of the study

The significance of the current study consists in novelty of its subject both in foreign and Russian researches. Seal hunting in Russia and the conflict that has arisen around it have not been sufficiently studied so far. This study involves numerous aspects of the conflict, historical preconditions and current circumstances, social and cultural peculiarities of people involved in the conflict, and economic and political characteristics of modern Russia. On a larger scale, the study is an attempt to elucidate the subject through all complexity of the Russian culture, history and *a mysterious Russian soul* as the essential guides of everyday life and the decision-making process.

### 1.4. Organization of the study

I learned about the conflict around seal hunting in February 2008 from the heated debates in the Internet, namely in a social network, Live Journal ([www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com)). The post that attracted my attention contained numerous photographs of a helicopter harvest in the late eighties and text about cruelty and inhumanity of this practice — whitecoats were taken away from their mothers and brought to the special enclosures where they grew for several weeks before they were killed. The author of the post called these enclosures *concentration camps*. At that moment I was deeply shocked by what I had seen and read. I began taking an interest in this issue, and when the question about the subject of my master's thesis arose, I decided to choose the seal hunting as the main theme of my prospective study.

I began working on the thesis in May 2008. A thorough review of literature on the topic in English and Russian was conducted in order to form a precise picture of the research problem. The fieldwork was carried out in autumn 2008 in Russia (Moscow and Arkhangelsk) and included mostly interviews and Russian literature review. The purpose of the interviews was to gain sufficient

information about the conflict and answer the research questions. For two months, in 2008, I analyzed and categorized all the interviews and structured my data.

## 1.5. Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of six chapters as discussed below: introduction, general background, theoretical framework, methodology, findings and conclusion.

The first chapter is the introduction. It gives the framework of the study and includes a statement of the research problem, my objectives and the significance of this study. The main research questions, organization of the study and structure of the thesis are then presented.

Chapter two provides the background information which is necessary to understand multifaceted aspects of the conflict. The chapter starts with the general information about the Arkhangelsk region, main characteristics of the harp seals and estimates the harp seal population in the White Sea. The history of seal hunting since ancient times till now is presented. The history of Pomorye and the situation with indigenous status are explored. Then I introduce two animal right organizations and explore their confrontations with the supporters of the seal harvest.

Chapter three presents necessary theoretical aspects of the study such as various conflict theories as well as the framework for analysis of social conflicts. Social movement theories are also discussed in this chapter. The chapter examines the animal rights conception. Finally, I present the concepts of nature and space in Russian history and culture.

Chapter four covers the methodology and research design of the study. I present the research process and the way of information gathering. In addition, I discuss validity and reliability of my findings.

Chapter five provides my empirical and analytical findings. It presents and analyzes parties, type and object of the conflict over seal hunting. The main emphasis is put on the principal preconditions and reasons that have encouraged the current conflict. Finally, the chapter considers possible alternatives such as ecotourism, production of laminaria, traditional practice that might replace the seal hunting in the region and the obstacles to it.

In conclusive chapter I summarize findings and arguments given in the previous chapter. There I give the answers to the research questions: who are really the actors in the conflict?; what are the reasons and conditions of the conflict?; and what are the potential ways out and their complications?

## 1.6. Limitations

The main shortcomings in the bank of knowledge about seal hunting in the Arkhangelsk region are a lack of impartial studies and a lack of availability of sources of information about recent hunts.

The former implies the lack of studies relating to the conflict between the anti-hunting organizations and their opponents, and advantages and disadvantage of seal hunting. There are only studies, articles and polarized statements that support one or another point of view, and criticize the opposite view.

Furthermore, there are several nonscientific sources (such as interviews, newspaper articles, statements of political and non-governmental organizations) that speak for or against seal hunting and offer arguments which are not grounded on scientific evidence or even in some cases are based on misconceptions.

The latter shortcoming implies the lack of precise information about hunting and its participants. Are they townsmen or villagers? How many hunters are there? What is the target of the hunt? How is the hunt conducted? It should be mentioned that although such information is not a secret it has not been found in

any sources. Only incomplete or partial information about the latest hunts has been found in certain articles; however, this does not describe the whole picture.

Another problem was remoteness of the villages where sealers live. The majority of sealers who used to participate and still participate in the seal harvest live in the coastal villages. The average distance between the regional centre, Arkhangelsk, and the coastal villages is about 120-250 kilometers without any roads. There are two ways to reach the villages — by helicopter (which is expensive and difficult to organize) and by maritime transport (which does not work during late autumn and winter). That is why it was impossible to conduct more direct interviews with sealers.

## Chapter 2. General Background

In this chapter I will start by presenting the general facts about the Arkhangelsk region and giving main characteristics of the harp seals. Then, the history of seal harvest in Russia and history of Pomors will be explored. Finally, I introduce the Russian animal rights organizations that struggle against seal hunting and briefly discuss the negotiation process between opponents and supporters of hunting.

### 2.1. Geography

*Map 1. The Arkhangelsk region and its surroundings*



The Arkhangelsk region is located in the northern part of the European Russia and washed by three seas — the Barents, the White, and the Kara Seas. The area of the region is 587.4 thousand square kilometers, including the islands: Novaya



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Zemlya, Franz Josef Land and Solovetsky Islands. The territory of the Arkhangelsk region is a vast plain with a feebly marked slope towards the White and the Barents Seas. The region is located in polar desert, forest-tundra and taiga ecozones. The region's climate is strongly influenced by its location which is close to the northern seas and the Arctic Ocean; thus, the climate is characterized as transitive between marine and continental. There is cool summer and long cold winter. Frequent changes of air masses coming from the Arctic and middle latitudes are typical for the region. Natural resources abound widely in the Arkhangelsk region; it has significant wood and water resources. The deposits of mineral resources such as oil, gas, coal, diamonds, and peat are found in the region. The most significant mineral resources are gypsum (the biggest field in Russia — Zvozkoe), limestone, anhydride, mine salt (Arharea 2008a, KTMZ 2008, RCN 2008).

Territory of the region was inhabited in the late Stone Age. In the XII century, it was affiliated with Novgorod Rus. The city of Arkhangelsk was established on the cape of Pur-Navalok, in the mouth of the Northern Dvina River in 1584. Until the late XVII century Arkhangelsk was the only seaport in Russia. Tsar Peter the First (1672-1725) who organized marine shipbuilding in Arkhangelsk had played a significant role in development of the Russian North. Arkhangelsk accounted for 80% of foreign-trade turnover of Russia at that time. During the Soviet era, the Arkhangelsk region was transformed into an industrial area of the USSR. Pulp, paper, fishing, knitted, clothing and other industries were founded; the timber industry was cardinally reconstructed (Bazarova *et al.* 2005, KTMZ 2008).

At present, timber industry is perennially the leading industry of the region's economy and unites a great number of sawmills, woodworking enterprises and pulp-and-paper mills. The industry accounts for 3/4 gross production of the region. Fish industry, whose production is delivered to regions within Russia and also for export is very important to the region. Besides, fishery enterprises

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conduct coastal hunting of marine mammals, salmon fishing, animal husbandry and seaweed farming. The only seaweed plant in Russia and CIS<sup>3</sup> is located in Arkhangelsk. Military industrial complex of the Arkhangelsk region is unique in Russia; it has powerful industrial, scientific and technical potential. The state Russian centre for nuclear shipbuilding is located on the territory of the region. The Plesetsk space vehicle launching site, the only one in Europe, is also located in the Arkhangelsk region. Today, especial attention is paid to development of the Russian northwest oil & gas complex (Arharea 2008b, Dvinaland 2009a). Tourist industry has a great potential and is developing in the region. Besides the beauty of the landscape, there are also a great number of historical and cultural sites.

According to the 2002 Census, the population of the Arkhangelsk region was 1,294,993 people, including 973,349 (75.16%) urban population and 321,644 (24.84%) rural population. The main nationality is Russian (95.21%), including Pomors — 6,289 people (0.49%). The administrative centre of the region is the city of Arkhangelsk. It was founded by the order of Tsar Ivan the Terrible on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1584. The population of the city is 354,682. The region consists of 21 administrative districts, 14 cities, 31 settlements of urban type, and about 4,000 villages. The largest cities are Severodvinsk, Kotlas, Novodvinsk, and Koryazhma (Perepis' 2008).

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<sup>3</sup> The Commonwealth of Independent States — a political entity consisting of nine former Soviet Union republics.

## 2.2. The harp seal

Kalland and Sejersen (2005:8) argue that “each species poses different challenges to the hunters in terms of knowledge, technological infrastructure, and social organization”. Whereas this fact, it is necessary to briefly outline the most important characteristics of harp seal and its life cycle. Table 1 shows the vital statistics of harp seal.

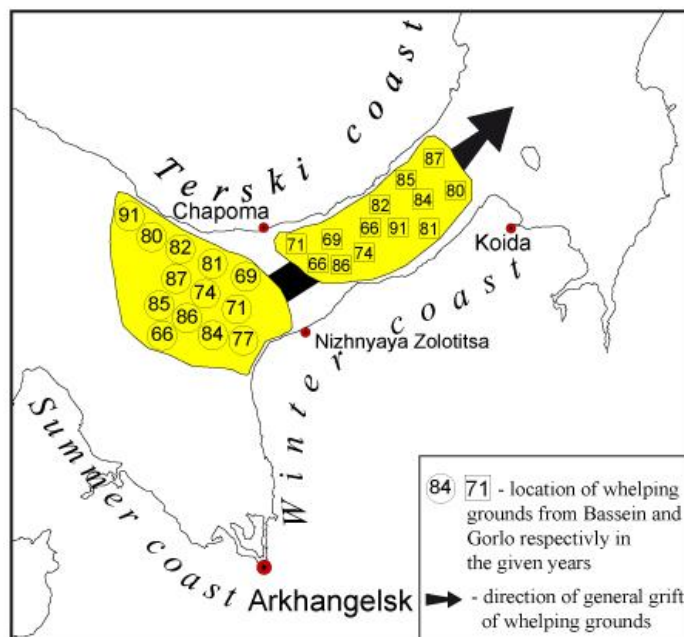
**Table 1. Vital statistics of harp seal (*Phoca groenlandica*)**

Weight of adult (females and males)	130 kg
Length of adult (females and males)	1.7 m
Age at sexual maturity	approx. 4 yrs.
Age at first reproduction	approx. 6-7 yrs.
Life span (max.)	approx. 30 yrs
Number of pups per year	1
Pup weight at birth	10 kg
Blubber at birth	no
Duration of lactation	about 12 days
Growth rate of pup	2 kg per day
Weight at weaning	34 kg

Source: Lavigne and Kovacs 1988:22

Harp seals, whose population is estimated to be 6-7.9 millions, are described as a highly gregarious species. There are three distinct harp seal populations in the world, and each population is identified by a different breeding site. The Northwest Atlantic population forms the largest stock — 5.9 millions in 2004 (NOAA 2007) — dividing into two herds: Newfoundland’s and Labrador’s breeding sites. The second population — 861,000 individuals in 2007 (ICES 2008) — lives in the Barents Sea and breeds on pack ice in the White Sea off the coast of Russia (the East Ice). The third and smallest population (the West Ice) — 756,000 seals in 2007 (ibid) — lives in the Greenland Sea between the islands of Jan Mayen and Svalbard. In this study, the White Sea harp seal population is examined.

**Map 2. Areas of formation of harp seal whelping ground in the White Sea at the end of February-beginning of March 1966-1997**



Source: Lukin and Vasil'ev 2004

Since harp seals are migratory species the White Sea population spends most of the year in migration to the waters of the Barents Sea. At the end of the February or through the first days of March, seals come for breeding on the ice in the White Sea. Generally, two main pupping gathering areas are formed in the eastern part of Bassein and in Gorlo<sup>4</sup> (Map 2) (Lukin and Vasil'ev 2004). The birth process and subsequent nursing and molting of pups take place exclusively on the ice. Lukin and Vasil'ev (ibid: 242) say that:

As a rule, the pups do not leave the ice floe on which they were born and do not go into the water up to the end of suckling and complete change of their embryonic *white coat* to the secondary fur coat.

<sup>4</sup> The formation of whelping grounds highly depends on particular ice conditions. For more information, read Lukin 2002, Likin and Vasil'ev 2004.

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The newborn pup has a yellowish coat<sup>5</sup>. In two-three days the color changes and the *yellowcoat* becomes *whitecoat*. During first twelve to fourteen days, pups are rapidly gaining weight and develop a blubber layer on the fat, high calorie milk of their mothers (Ronald and Dougan 1982). By the end of the nursing period, pups become known as *greycoats*<sup>6</sup> because of their spotted, grey pelage underneath the white coat. During the molting that lasts for two weeks, firstly, pup transforms into *ragged-jacket* and then into *beater* (late March—early April). Beaters are characterized by black-spotted, silver-grey pelt<sup>7</sup>, and this coat remains until next spring (Lavigne and Kovacs 1988). With the end of molting (early April—mid-April), pups have been already carried out to Voronka with the drift ice. At this time, ice floes start breaking up and pups go into the water and are taken away with the stream into the Barents Sea.

### 2.3. The White Sea population

Aerial surveys of whelping patches are performed in order to study the population of seals. Originally, single aerial surveys were conducted (in 1927 and 1928), but since 1952, aerial surveys have been performed on a regular basis (Kuznetsov 2004). Until the 1990s breeding females on whelping patches were counted. According to survey results (Surkov 1963), between 1928 and 1952 there was a huge reduction in the White Sea stock as the result of overexploitation: in 1928 — 3-3.5 and in 1952 — 1.2-1.5 million seals. The seal

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<sup>5</sup> In Russian sources the color of pup coat is called *greenish* (зеленец).

<sup>6</sup> In Russian sources *greycoat* is called *khokhusha* (хохлуша).

<sup>7</sup> In Russian sources *beater* is called *serka* (серка) that means grey color of seal coat.

population continued reducing until 1963 (224,000 seals). However, from 1968 to 1980, annual increment of the seal population was about 5%. Nevertheless, the method of assessment by counting females has a number of disadvantages — impossibility to count the percentage of females in water that results in a gross error of the assessment (Kuznetsov 2004). Since 1998, annual aerial surveys have been resumed on an annual basis and a fundamentally new method of assessment has been used — precise counts of pups on whelping patches are made instead of counting breeding females. The assessment is performed with the help of thermovision, video filming and photography (Chernook *et al.* 2000). Table 2 shows that since 2000 year the pup number has been declining. The total seal population has decreased from 2 million of individuals in 1980-early 1990s to 861,728 individuals in 2008 (ICES 2008).

**Table 2. Assessment of pup number**

Year	Pup number
1998	287000 <sup>a</sup>
2000	340000 <sup>a</sup>
2002	333000 <sup>a</sup>
2003	327000 <sup>a</sup>
2004	239000 <sup>a</sup>
2005	122400 <sup>a</sup>
2006	n/a
2007	n/a
2008	123104 <sup>b</sup>

Sources: a - Shafikov *et al.* 2006, b - ICES 2008

## 2.4. History of seal hunting on the Russian territory

The tradition of seal hunting has existed for more than four thousand years. During the millennia, seals have served as a valuable renewable resource and played a vital role for communities in Canada, Greenland, Norway, and Russia. The history of seal hunting as well as the history of the state provide “an important background without which contemporary seal (...) hunting, and local responses to anti-hunting campaigns, cannot be understood” (Kalland and Sejersen 2005:16).

During the last century Russian history has been characterized by radical political and, consequently, economic changes that had a great influence on various fields

of human activity. The overthrow of the tsarist government and the formation of the Soviet Union in the early XX century, the Great Patriotic War<sup>8</sup> from 1941 to 1945 years are important in this respect as well as the beginning of perestroika in the late 1980s, the downfall of the USSR, the subsequent formation of the new democratic state, the 1990s severe economic crisis and gradual stabilization of economics. These transition points of Russian history have also influenced seal hunting through changing methods, tools, scopes, and targets of the harvest. For this reason, I will divide the history of seal hunting into these main periods starting with premodern hunting.

#### **2.4.1. Premodern seal hunting**

In various areas of the White Sea coast the sites dated III-II thousands years BC have been discovered by the found stone tools for hunt and skin processing and bones of marine mammals. Such archaeological evidence indicates that one of the main activities of local inhabitants was hunting of marine mammals. In the written sources information about marine mammals hunting on the northwest of Russia first appeared in the IX century. The Finno-Ugric tribes, who inhabited the coastal regions of the White Sea at that time, rendered tribute to the princes of Northern Russia with their hunting products (Bulatov 1999). The Slavs that lived on the Far North were also engaged in the hunt. The main targets of the hunt were walrus, polar bear, white whale, and harp seal. Seal hunting played a great role in the life of coastal communities. Pelts were made into clothes and straps; blubber was used for food and for the lighting and heating of dwellings; and meat

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<sup>8</sup> The term, *Great Patriotic War*, is used in Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union to describe the war between the USSR and Germany during the Second World War.

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was used for dog food (Potelov 1999). Seal hunting became an independent industry during the XVII century.

#### **2.4.2. Sealing before the USSR**

For a long time, the seal hunt had been conducted with the help of primitive methods with great difficulties and at the risk of a hunter's life. It was carried out mainly as coastal hunting on the pack ice and drift ice, and about 2,000 local villagers participated in the hunt (Poletov 1999). The villagers united in *artels* — a quasi-cooperative association of people engaged in the hunt. The coastal hunt was conducted by using small flat-bottomed boat (called a *ledyanka* in Russian). Each artel used several boats in the hunt and each boat carried a crew of four to seven men, on average. On the open seas, the sealers rowed their boats, but when there was ice, they had to drag the boats over it (Tsiropukha).

The seal hunt was divided in three seasons. The first harvest was conducted in December when seals began arriving in the White Sea. This was a short-term rather than a massive hunt. The main targets were males and females; therewith, pups were pulled from females (Tsiropukha). The second and large hunt began in early February and continued until the end of March. Sealers dressed in white clothes and clubbed animals by a wooden hook with an iron tip. Animals were skinned on the ice and their pelts with blubber were loaded onto boats. Sources show vagueness concerning the target of this season. Some data (Gemp 2004, *ibid*) state that pups were the main target of hunt. For example, Tsiropukha (*ibid*) claims that at that time Pomors hunted whitecoat because of its nice pelt, and pelts went for sale as fur coats. However, there is conflicting information from other authors such as (Poletov 1999) who asserts that pups were not the main target and were hunted in single instance; adult seals were mainly hunted for their pelt, meat and blubber. In the late spring during the third season, the target of hunt was molting seals.



The exact date of the beginning of vessels use in the seal hunt is unknown. However, it started a long time ago. It is known that during the XVI century foreign vessels hunted in the White Sea (Potelov 1999). In the early XX century, Russian vessels were employed for the seal harvest for the first time. Three sailing vessels, which belonged to a merchant Antonov, successfully took part in the hunt in the White Sea (Bulatov 1999). The use of vessels in the hunt had considerably increased seal harvest (App. III). A high point in White Sea hunting was in February-March and the first two weeks of April. The main hunt concentrated on the ice in Gorlo of the White Sea (see Map 1) where a great number of seals came for whelping or molting. Hunters came to sealing patches on special sealing vessels. Animals were usually attacked lying on the ice and were shot from a rifle. If hunters managed to come from the leeward side, the animal was clubbed to death by a harpoon. In one season, a single vessel could yield about 2,000 to 5,000 pelts, on average. In 1913, about 2,500 Pomors-hunters participated in the hunt (Bulatov 1999).

### **2.4.3. Seal hunting in the USSR**

After the Russian Revolution in 1917 year when famine and epidemic diseases were rife and rampant, the main products from seals were meat and soap that were made from blubber (Bulatov 1999).

In 1921, icebreakers participated in the hunt for the first time (Polovnikov 1999a). This was a fundamentally new method of hunting — the icebreakers could come straight to whelping patches, thus saving sealers from having to drag heavy seal carcasses and from having to drag their boats over long distances on the ice. The harvest of these years averaged 2,000 tonnes per year. From 1925, four icebreakers were already used in the hunt; in 1935-1936, the number of vessels was five. The use of icebreakers increased the catch many times over (App. III). For example, only in 1928 about 163,000 seals were hunted on the ice, whereas harvest of the coastal hunt was 15,000 seals (Bulatov 1999). Aerial

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surveys had simplified to some extent reconnoitering of whelping patches. In 1925, the first airplane survey of whelping patches was performed; and in the sequel, the aerial survey was an indispensable condition of hunting. At that time, the participants of the hunts were still mostly inhabitants of the coastal villages.

### *The Great Patriotic War*

During the years of the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945), harp seals played a special role in the life of the Arkhangelsk region. Seals had virtually saved many residents of Arkhangelsk from starvation. Only Leningrad (current name St. Petersburg) had more victims of starvation than Arkhangelsk. In 1943, ice-breaker hunting was resumed (in 1941-1942, the harvest could not take place because of hostilities in the White Sea). Meat and blubber from the hunt were directed to the population in Arkhangelsk and other towns and such practices remained until 1949. During the darkest days of the blockade, tank cars with seal blubber were sent on to Leningrad, helping Leningrad's citizens to survive the war. Blubber was used to produce soap and through this practice, lice were overcome. Throughout the war, the total catch was 55,000 seals (ICES 2008, Potelov 1999) — half the amount of the five year period before the war. Recently, townsmen of Arkhangelsk have proposed several times to erect a monument to the harp seal or to sealers to commemorate their important role during fighting (Bulatov 1999, Maslov 1999, REGNUM 2006).

### *After the Great Patriotic War*

From 1947 to 1952, the White Sea harp seal population halved and numbered about 400,000 as the result of overexploitation during the previous 30 years (Potelov 1999). For this reason, sealing quotas were cut from 100,000 in 1955 to 35,000 in 1965 animals per year (ibid). Additionally, hunting of adult females on whelping patches was prohibited and hunting of adults on molting patches was cut down in 1962 and 1965, respectively. Thereby, the main target of the hunt in

these years became seal pups, and the products of kolkhozes changed. Along with the production of blubber and meat for animals, the production of fur raw materials from whitecoat pelts had become the main business.

This tendency required a shortening of hunt because of short period of seal molting (4-6 weeks). The using of icebreakers had become impossible; however, helicopters solved this problem. In the spring of 1962, helicopters were used in the hunt for the first time —

42 sealers were transported on the ice where they caught 4,800 pups (whitecoats) during six days (Potelov 1999). This method became the most economically sound in the years that followed. Thus, in 1964 the use of vessels in the hunt and coastal hunt was phased down.

***Figure 1. Helicopter hunt in the USSR***



Source: [www.ifaw.org](http://www.ifaw.org)

### ***The invention of the sealing farm***

***Figure 2. The sealing farm in Koida***



Source: [www.ifaw.org](http://www.ifaw.org)

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In the season of 1971, the experimental capture of twenty five greycoats was performed. They were placed in special enclosures in the village of Nizhnyaya Zolotitsa (*Нижняя Золотица*) and kept until the stage of beater. Then, animals were killed by a lethal injection of dithylinum. In 1973, the world's first sealing farm started operating in the fishing kolkhoz "Osvobozhdenie" (*"Освобождение"*) in the village of Koida (*Койда*). Generally, around 10,000-17,500 animals were kept in enclosures each year (Polovnikov 1999a). Since then, the hunt was conducted in two phases (both in March): harvest of whitecoats with a base in Nizhnyaya Zolotitsa and capturing of greycoats and subsequent raising them in the farm in Koida.

In 1975, a clothing factory was opened in Koida. The main products were headwear, footwear, collars, and souvenirs. In those years, the fishing kolkhozes realized large profits from hunting: one seal pelt cost up to 70 US dollars at a fur auction. It is interesting to mention the fact that at the Winter Olympic Games in 1976, the team of the Soviet Union was dressed in short coats of greycoat fur from Koida. In the spring of 1987, a production line of baktofak (*бактофак*) — a special preparation for the microbiological industry, which was made out of seal meat — went into operation in Koida. In 1973, Russia established contact with the Norwegian company, Rieber Skinn, for the purpose of pelt manufacture by Norwegian technology (Polovnikov 1999a).

It should be mentioned that there were kolkhozes in the Murmansk region and in the Republic of Karelia that participated in the seal hunt. The hunt also took place in the White Sea. However, their catches were not considerable in comparison with the catches of the Arkhangelsk kolkhozes.

#### **2.4.4. Seal hunting in Russia**

In the early nineties, the political and economic changes in Russia had a destructive influence on the seal hunting industry. Helicopter fuel prices increased and this led to the closure of the sealing farm in Koida in the season of

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1995. Only the hunt for whitecoats was continued. The flying time needed for capture of greycoats was three times as much as for whitecoat hunting. The consequence of the closure of the sealing farm was the phasing out of the production of baktofak. At that time, annual seal harvest numbers were nearly cut in half from those in the years from 1986 to 1990 (App. III). Moreover, in 1998, the hunt in the Arkhangelsk region did not take place for the first time in over a century.

In the late nineties, seal hunting in the Murmansk region and the Republic of Karelia almost ceased. The fishing kolkhoz “Volna” (“Волна”) in the Murmansk region went bankrupt. In 2003, the fishing kolkhoz “Чапона” (“Чапона”) purchased the kolkhoz “Volna” at an auction. The kolkhoz was trying to revive the seal hunt. However, the sharp price for fuel and aviation, higher taxes and contrary weather conditions made them giving up (REGNUM 2005a).

#### **2.4.5. Contemporary seal hunting**

##### *Total allowable catch TAC (quotas)*

Seal hunting as well as fishing operates on catch quotas. The quota estimates proceed from a calculation of 5-10% of the total seal population. Since 1982, the Joint Norwegian-Russian Fishery Commission (JNRFC) annually determines the amount of total allowable sealing catch distributing it between Russia and Norway. In Russia, the Federal Fishery Administration (Госкомрыболовство) distributes these quotas among the fishing kolkhozes in Karelia, the Arkhangelsk and Murmansk regions. The kolkhozes are allowed to utilize their quota or sell it to other enterprises. In the 2000s, sealing quotas were not utilized completely by the kolkhozes. Therefore, in 2004, the inter-departmental commission made a resolver to redistribute sealing quotas since the number of kolkhozes increased from two to five. There are three fishing kolkhozes — “Osvobozhdenie”, “Zimnyaya Zolotitsa” (“Зимняя Золотица”), “Beloe more” (“Белое море”) —

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and two companies — Co Ltd “Beloe more” and Co Ltd “Sevnauchflot” (“*Севнауцфлот*”). Moreover, in 2005, the JNRFC decided to turn over 10,000 tonnes of seals to Norway (REGNUM 2005b). The reason was again that Russia did not utilize the quota.

During the last decades (since 1999), the special conversion rate of “one year and older seal = 2.5 pups” has been used. For instance, by quota for 10,000 seals it is allowed to catch 25,000 whitecoats, greycoats or beaters. The conversion rate was abolished in the October session of the JNRFC in 2008. Moreover, the TAC for the following season (Spring 2009), was decreased from 55,000 seals (season 2007) to 35,000 seals. In addition to high prices for aviation services<sup>9</sup>, the kolkhozes are obliged to pay tax up to 350 rubles (approximately 14.5 US dollars) for each seal. The tax was reduced to 140 rubles in 2005.

### *Seal hunting in 2001-2008 years*

Since 2001, the Republic of Karelia and the Murmansk region have not participated in the seal harvest for various reasons. Today, seal hunting exists solely in the Arkhangelsk region.

In September 2007, the Norwegian company GC Rieber Skinn AS — the world’s leading supplier of dressed sealskin and seal leather to garment, footwear and accessory manufacturers — proposed a joint Russian-Norwegian seal hunting project. In the same year, CG Rieber Skinn AS established a daughter company in Arkhangelsk, called GC Rieber Skinn Pomor’e Lic. with a charter capital in 200,000 rubles (Smirnova and Emel’yanenkov 2008). Rieber Skinn was planning to fully utilize quotas in the White Sea while creating jobs for local people. The

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<sup>9</sup> One flight hour costs around 30,000-40,000 rubles (approximately 1,250-1,500 US dollars).

company has proposed to use plastic boats instead of costly helicopters. In 2008, Rieber Skinn Pomor'e participated in the seal harvest for the first time using quota of the kolkhoz "Chapoma" of the Murmansk region.

**Table 3. The catches of the seals per year in Russia**

Year	Catch
2001	39,116 seals were caught with quota for 48,000 seals.
2002	34,187 seals were caught with quota for 48,000 seals.
2003	37,939 seals were caught with quota for 43,000 seals.
2004	The hunt did not take place because of high prices for aviation services and taxes.
2005	Only one of five kolkhozes ("Beloe more") participated in hunt. 7,258 whitecoats were hunted. Considering the conversion rate, the catch was 2,903 adults or 14% quota for the Arkhangelsk region. The kolkhoz also caught 7,200 pups and 19 adults (97% quota) for the Polar Research Institute of Marine Fisheries and Oceanography (PINRO). It was a research quota. Poor ice layer made the hunt impossible for other kolkhozes.
2006	7,107 seals were caught with quota for 68,200 seals.
2007	5,476 seals were caught with quota for 63,200 seals.
2008	The first phase of the hunt did not take place because of the lack of ice. During the second phase 12,352 beaters were caught: 12,000 were caught by Rieber Skinn Pomor'e and 352 — by the kolkhoz "Beloe More".

Sources: AAO 2006, ICES 2008

In conclusion it should be mentioned that commercial seal hunting takes place only in the Arkhangelsk region. The main target of the hunt is beater, not whitecoats. The catches of one-year-old and older animals are performed only for scientific sampling protocols (ICES 2008).

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## 2.5. Pomors and Pomorye

### 2.5.1. The history of Pomorye

The territory of the northern part of the European Russia had already been populated by Finno-Ugric tribes when Slavs began settling it. The Slavs settled by the sides of the river and along the coastline. The low density of the aboriginal population made it subordinate to the colonizers.

The ethnonym, *Pomors*, appeared not later than in the XII century in the southwestern coast of the White Sea (the Pomor's coast). This term literally means people who live near the sea. During the XIV-XVI centuries, the term, *Pomors*, was extended far to the south and the east from the place of its appearance. The ethnogeny of *Pomors* was caused by the confluence of the cultures of the proto-Pomor, mainly Finno-Ugric tribes of the White Sea and the first Old-Russian colonists who actively populated the coastal region at that time (Esipov 2008).

In the XII-XV centuries, Pomorye (literally, *coastal area*) was the colony of Great Novgorod. In the XV-XVII centuries, Pomorye was the vast economic and cultural region that included the coasts of the White Sea and Lake Onega and the banks of rivers Onega, Northern Dvina, Mezen', Pinega, Pechora, Kama, Vyatka. The territory stretched up to the Urals Mountains. The advance of the Slavs to the north was caused by the growing needs of the Russian and European market. The Russian exports were furs, honey, items from harp seal and walrus and later, ship timber (Bazarova *et al.* 2005). By the early XVI century, Pomorye was annexed by the Grand Duchy of Moscow. At that time, the bulk of population consisted of free peasants. In the XIX century, Pomorye became known as "the Russian North" or "the North of European Russia".



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### **2.5.2. Pomors as indigenous people of the Russian North**

According to the 2002 Russian Census, there are 6,571 Pomors in Russia and 6,295 of them live in the Arkhangelsk region; the others live in the Murmansk region and the Republic of Karelia (Perepis' 2008). Pomors were registered in the census under the codifying number 208. In Russian academic and public circles, there are two opposite views on the status of the Pomors. Some claim (Esipov 2008, Pomor-rus 2008) that it is necessary to declare Pomors as a separate ethnic group and to give them the status of indigenous people of the European Russian North. In other data (Gumilev 2007) Pomors are called an ethnical subgroup of Great Russians. Lisnichenko (2007) asserts that Pomors are descendants of Finno-Ugrians and Slavs that created a unique culture under severe natural conditions of the north. It should be mentioned that until recently no studies of the Pomors as an ethnic community has been carried out. The sole attempt at such a study is in the papers of Tatyana Bernshtam (1978, 1983) — the head of the Social Anthropology Department of the Peter the Great's Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstammer), Doctor of Historical Sciences. According to her opinion letter, in 2002 the Ministry of Regional Development of the Russian Federation refused for a second time to include Pomors in the list of indigenous people of the Russian North.

Pomors and their representatives in the Arkhangelsk region (Esipov 2008, Pomor-rus 2008) insist upon the official recognition of the Pomors as indigenous people that will enable indigent people to acquire supplementary rights and social and tax benefits. At present, Pomors must purchase fishing and hunting licenses and pay tax charges for the utilization of animals and fish, or work in kolkhozes. In the Arkhangelsk region, the national-cultural autonomy of Pomors and four Pomor organizations support and struggle for the rights of Pomors as an indigenous people.

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## 2.6. The animal rights organizations in Russia

For almost 45 years, commercial seal harvesters have been at odds with animal rights and welfare advocates who claim that seal hunting is unacceptably cruel and inhumane (IFAW 2008a). As the result, whitecoat seal hunting (pups under 14 days old) has been forbidden everywhere in the world (in 1987 in Canada and in 1989 in Norway) except in Russia. Although, anti-harvesting campaign has been around in other places for several decades, in Russia, public interest in seal hunting really caught on in just the past decade. Substantially, the reason for this was the pressure exerted by NGOs in the last 10 years in Russia.

Until the nineties, there were no environmental non-governmental organizations in Russia at all. Living behind the Iron Curtain and tough ideological policy during 70 years have not made possible to form environmental movement (Golubev 2002). Among other things, the beginning of perestroika was accompanied by increased environmental activity in the society. The international organizations got an opportunity to set up their branches in Russia, for instance, Greenpeace in 1989, the Bellona Foundation in 1990, and WWF in 1994. At the time, the main anti-hunting non-governmental organizations were established in Russia — the International Fund of Animal Welfare (IFAW) and the Russia Animal Rights Centre (VITA).

### 2.6.1. International Fund of Animal Welfare (IFAW)

IFAW was established in 1969 by Brian Davies with the goal of protecting the harp seals from hunting in Canada. The actions of IFAW drew an attention of international community to the fate of seal pups, and the result was the successful worldwide campaign of the censure of seal hunting. At present, the commercial hunting of whitecoats in the ice fields on the East coast of Canada is declared illegal. IFAW continues to document and to notify the community of any abuses connected with commercial hunting, and it stands “for an end of this cruel, unsustainable slaughter” (IFAW 2008b). Nowadays, IFAW is the leading

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international animal rights and welfare organization in the world, with 200 specialists who are experienced in conducting campaigns —lawyers, politicians and scientists — and with branch offices in 13 countries.

In 1994, IFAW set up the office in Russia, Moscow. The first goals of the organization were a ban of seal hunting, the supporting of research studies of marine mammals and the detection of alternatives to the seal harvest in the White Sea. Then, its program has included the protections of whales, brown and polar bears, pets, tigers and other animals. The main idea of the organization is in the creation of a world that it pleases both animals and men to live in and where the life of animals and men are inseparably united.

At present, IFAW conducts various actions, campaigns and photo exhibitions in Russian cities, organizes conferences, and produces movies calling to stop hunting. The organization provides financial support to scientists who perform the aerial surveys of the harp seal population in the White Sea. Largely, due to these surveys the quota for the spring 2009 season has been reduced (IFAW 2008c).

### **2.6.2. Russia Animal Rights Centre (VITA)**

The center VITA was officially registered in 2003. However, it began activities in 1994, working in the composition of the center of ethical treatment of animals and the Russian department of International Network for Humane Education (InterNICHE). The mission of the organization is built on the concept of animal rights and welfare. Employees and activists of VITA are biologists, physicians, veterinarians and it allows performing professionally animal protection work. The center speaks against exploitation and murder of animals for meat, for fur and skin, for experiments and tests, or for entertainments such as hunting, corrida, circuses, zoos, or photo-zoobusiness. VITA together with the international organizations conducts work on the replacement of experiments on animals by humane alternatives in educational institutions (VITA 2008a).The

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prohibition of sealing is not the basic aim of the center; however, VITA recently performed a number of extraordinary campaigns against seal hunting with the participation of celebrities from Russian show business.

## 2.7. Negotiations between opponents and supporters of seal hunting in Russia

The beginning of negotiations for a ban of seal hunting in Russia may date from May, 1994, when the founder of IFAW Brian Davies visited Russia. He visited the city of Arkhangelsk and the main seal hunting centers — Nizhnyaya Zolotitsa and Verhnyaya Zolotitsa, met with the head of the kolkhoz “Severnyi Rybak” (“*Северный рыбак*”). Davies proposed to stop seal hunting in the White Sea and recommended to do ecotourism. In autumn of 1995, Davies visited the Arkhangelsk region for a second time (Polovnikov 1999a).

In 1999, IFAW conducted the multiform anti-sealing campaign in Arkhangelsk. There was a big display layout done in the local newspaper, a photo exhibition and a film titled, “Save and forbid” (“*Спаси и сохрани*”), shown on the local TV channel, a meeting with pupils and teachers from a school in Verhnyaya Zolotitsa (Polovnikov 1999b).

In recent years, a number of various campaigns, publications, press conferences, round tables and, consequently, public interest have increased enormously. A great wave of protests from animal protectionists and celebrities took place in early 2008 in many regions of Russia. In January 2008, in Moscow a protest action of animal rights activists took place. The action was against the agreement which the administration of the Arkhangelsk region signed with Norwegian company GC Rieber Skinn AS. In March 2008, in the Republic of Karelia there was a ten-day festival of whitecoat pup protection. For ten days, the activists disseminated information by means of movie-showings and the distribution of literature about the problem of seal hunting. At that time, IFAW organized the

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photo exhibition “Born on ice” in Moscow. In May 2008, the organization conducted a demonstration near the walls of Kremlin and began a signature-gathering campaign against seal hunting.

The most extraordinary campaign — “Cruelty-free zone” — broadly reported in the press, was organized by VITA. On March 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008 five Russian celebrities — singers, musicians, a TV commentator — together with film and TV cameramen, made a flight to the Letnyaya Zolotitsa village. There, they disembarked a site on the coastal ice where harp seals give birth to pups (VITA 2008b). At the same time, the local residents of Arkhangelsk organized a meeting against the ban of seal hunting. Slogans on the posters read, “Seal and fish are the bread of Pomor” and “Stop the genocide of Pomor”. However, the representatives of the VITA branch in Arkhangelsk conducted an action against seal hunting. There was a press conference that gathered together the supporters and opponents of the sealing. The great number of publications in local newspapers and reportages on local TV channels covered the current situation around the seal hunting in the Arkhangelsk region (Antipin 2008, Percev 2008, REGNUM 2008). Additionally, VITA organized annual competition of children pictures, and one of the judges was Brigitte Bardot — active supporter of a seal hunting ban.

The supporters of seal hunting accused anti-hunting organizations and their opponents of venality, misunderstanding of problems of local people and Pomors. The main activity of Pomor organizations concentrates on the recognition of the Pomors as an indigenous people that will enable people to acquire supplementary rights and social and tax benefits.

## 2.8. Legislative policy

As result of the dramatic decrease of harp seal population in the White Sea, the hunting of adult females on whelping patches was prohibited and the hunting of adults on molting patches was cut down in 1962 and 1965, respectively. In

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autumn of 1996, at the session of the Northwestern parliamentary association the project of federal act “Of the prohibition of hunting for pups of the harp seal — whitecoats — in the White Sea” was considered. In January 2000, a bill to ban of seal hunting was passed by the Russian parliament with 273 votes to 1. However, it was vetoed by the then President Vladimir Putin. In March-April 2008, several campaigns in defense of harp seals were conducted and petitions against hunting were signed and a bill to ban of seal hunting was submitted to the Russian Parliament.

The current legal basis for the industry of seal hunting is “a combination of amended laws inherited from the Soviet times and more recent laws, decrees, rules, regulations and standards” (COWI 2008:74).

## Chapter 3. Theoretical Framework

As we see from the background information, the conflict over seal hunting takes place in Russia and has been flaring up recently. The main purpose of this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework in order to analyze the conflict between supporters and opponents of seal hunting in the Russian North. The theories presented below are an attempt to describe and understand the basis and reasons of this conflict. At the beginning, I will discuss the definition of the term *conflict* in general and examine a variety of types of conflicts. Secondly, I will present the main conflict theories that might be an explanation of the present conflict. Then, the framework for analysis of conflict will be presented. I will also consider animal rights theory and hunting in terms of value of wildlife. Furthermore, I will present social movement theories. At the end, I will discuss the concepts of space and nature among Russians as a result of the complex and unique Russian history.

### 3.1. Conflict in general

Conflicts exist since the very beginning of mankind. Individuals, groups and organizations are surrounded by conflicts and are involved in various conflicts throughout their lives. They are provoking conflicts, participating in conflicts, trying to resolve conflicts and eventually winning or losing in conflicts. Conflicts vary from inner conflicts and family conflicts to international conflicts, from domestic quarrels to world wars. Conflicts might last five minutes or many centuries, they might be innocuous or harmful, two persons or entire nations might participate in conflicts.

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### 3.1.1. What is conflict?

The original dictionary definition of the term *conflict* is “a struggle or clash between opposing forces; battle” (Collins 1999:306). However, the definition that is used in a sociological context is a state of “opposition between ideas, interests, etc.; controversy” (ibid). These contrary ideas and interests might be expressed both in a family conflict and a scientific polemic, both in a disagreement between friends and an international political conflict. According to the definition of conflict, the general empirical condition for the emergence of conflict is the cardinal different and incompatible views on any issues. Rössel (2006:92) claims that “conflict can be defined as a structural relation between two or more individuals or collective actors pursuing incompatible [or even adverse] interests or intentions”. Consequently, there is more than one involved parties that pursues one or another interest or has one or another view and, therefore, participates in a conflict. Moreover, according to Oberschall (1973:33), a social conflict “arises from the structured arrangement of individuals and groups in a social system — from the very fact of social organization”.

However, not every conflict runs obviously and can be precisely identified. The definition of conflict implies that conflicts might be differentiated into *latent* and *manifest* conflicts (Rössel 2006). Conflict is defined as latent when one of the parties does not follow its interests. The reasons of nonparticipation in conflict might be diverse — a lack or unequal distribution of resources to pursue its interests, an exclusion from the decision-making process. Rössel (ibid: 93) argues that “manifest or overt conflict results from two or more parties actually pursuing their conflicting interests or intentions”. It should be noticed that a great number of conflicts was latent conflicts in the beginning of their formation and has turned into manifest conflicts under the specific conditions of their history.



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### 3.1.2. Conflictology and conflict theories

Pruitt and Kim (2004:9) claim that “conflict is found in almost every realm of human interaction and [...] episodes of escalated conflict are among the most significant and newsworthy events of human life”. For this reason, conflict was a subject of interest and study of people since ancient times. Many current and diverse conflict theories in sociology have been evolving for two centuries. However, the general idea of all conflict theories is that “inequality is the driving force behind conflict” (Turner 1994:21). Turner (ibid: 21-22) also argue that:

Sources of tension which erupt into many diverse forms of conflict — violent crime, riots, protests, demonstrations, strikes, and social movements — stem from the unequal distribution of valued resources like money, power, prestige, housing, health care, and job opportunities.

Below I will present the main theories and schools in sociology of conflict or, in other words, conflictology.

The first significant conflict theory — *socio-biological theory* — was proposed by Charles Darwin in the XIX century. The theory implies that man is an animal and, consequently, conflict is an essential part of human behavior as well as a part of animal behavior. Darwin developed the theory of natural selection or a struggle for existence where the fittest survives. In social Darwinism, all social processes and progress of society are described from the point of view of a struggle for existence between individuals.

The main founder of theory of class divisions or *class conflict* was Karl Marx. Although, Marx was not a pioneer in profoundly discussing theory in the sociology of class struggle, the fullness and profoundness of his works have assured him a status as a distinguished theorist of conflict sociology (Grishina 2003). The existence of class structure — that gives different classes different rights and freedoms and different forms of property, gives one class more power over another class — inevitably erupts into various social conflicts. Collins

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(1975:75) argues that “Marx added more specific determinants of the lines of division among conflicting interests, and indicated the material conditions that mobilize particular interests into action”. Marx pointed out that the class struggle as a conflict promotes social changes and is a main driving force of human history (Marx *et al.* 2002).

Another leading figure in conflictology, and whose name is closely associated with Marx, is the German philosopher, Georg Simmel. The term *sociology of conflict* is ascribed to Simmel, the author of it. He claimed that conflict in society is inevitable, and a source of social conflicts is a contradiction between various forms of social life and individuals who form this society. However, in contrast to Marx, Simmel believed that conflict can lead to social integration, save and consolidate social relations and social systems, and it is not obligatory to lead to destruction (Simmel 1890 after Stepanenkova 1999).

The followers of Marx and Simmel are the German sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf and the American scientist Laub Coser. Their ideas, the basis for *dialectical conflict theory*, have become a conceptual paradigm of contemporary conflictology. According to Dahrendorf (1959), social conflict is an integral part of every society on the strength of incompatible interests. However, in post-industrial society social conflicts have moved from economic sphere and sphere of property to sphere of supremacy-submission relations. The concept of *conflict* has been distanced from the concept of *struggle*. Coser (1956:197) points out that conflict has many positive functions for society — “conflict prevents the ossification of the social system by exerting pressure for innovation and creativity”.

Talcott Parsons’ *functionalism theory* regards social conflicts as pathology, deviant process in an operation of social systems. Functionalists claim that compromise, balance and collaboration have to prevail in a well-functioning social system, while conflict possesses destructive functions for social systems (Parsons 1961).

### 3.1.3. Analysis of social conflicts

Social conflicts are complex and various and require detailed study and analysis. The analysis of conflict consists of several aspects including type and reason (or reasons) of conflict, mobilization and confrontation processes, conflict resolution and function of conflict (according to Oberschall 1973) and prediction of conflicts (Simmel 1890 after Stepanenkova 1999).

*An object of conflict* might be tangible (such as money, resources, territory) or intangible values including either social values (such as power, prestige, and honor) or spiritual values (such as ideas, principles, and religions). Furthermore, both interested parties of conflict aspire to possess these values that are situated on an intersection of their interests. In other words, conflict erupts when one group sees its own and other group's interests as incompatible (Pruitt and Kim 2004).

Every conflict is *personalized*, i.e. every side of conflict has its own leaders, chiefs, ideologists who give utterance to ideas and principles of the party. However, it is not always obvious whether a leader is nominated by a conflict situation or if the leader himself creates the conflict situation due to his personality characteristics. In any case, these personal characteristics of a leader play an exceptional role in formation, process and resolution of conflicts. A leader of conflict is always accompanied by certain group of people who pursue their objects

There are a great number of *types* of social conflicts and their classifications under what circumstances emerge. For instance, some sociologists base their typology on the forms that conflicts take and their ultimate outcomes (Oberschall 1973). However, Oberschall (ibid) argues that such kind of typology is not promising and insists that the preferable way to classify conflicts is to examine the causes of conflicts, conditions and preconditions of conflicts. Conflicts might be classified by the participants of conflict: interpersonal, intergroup conflicts.

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On the other hand, Pruitt and Kim (2004:19) differ conflicts in size or magnitude — “the apparent ease with which they can be resolved”. Conflict is larger than more rigid interests of groups are, and one of the conditions that makes interests are more rigid is “strongly felt principles underlie the aspiration” (ibid). In other words, Coser (1956:118) says it that:

Conflicts in which the participants feel that they are merely the representatives of collectivities and groups, fighting not for self but for ideas of the group they represent, are likely to be more radical and merciless than those that are fought for personal reasons.

The *conditions* (or reasons) that encourage the development of a conflict are numerous. Firstly, every conflict depends on several historical preconditions that cause conflict in a varying degree. The historical preconditions are included economic crisis, social tension, political instability and so forth. Secondly, the conditions might be divided into four categories: features of situation (scarcity or limited resources, rapidly expanding achievement), features of the groups (zero-sum thinking), features of the relationships between groups (ambiguity about relative power, invidious comparisons, status inconsistency, distrust) and features of the broader community surrounding the groups (the security dilemma, lack of normative consensus) (Pruitt and Kim 2004). I would like to consider zero-sum thinking as a condition that encourages conflict. Such kind of conflict emerges if there is a belief among the groups that “the other’s gain is one’s own loss” (ibid: 22) and there is no way for both (or more) groups to achieve their contrary goals. Pruitt and Kim (ibid) add that often the problem is not truly zero-sum in nature but because the groups treat it this way.

Oberschall (1973:31) claims that the *confrontation* process consists of

the interaction between the antagonists, the dynamics of the struggle, precipitating factors, polarization, escalation, the factors that account for the dampening or deepening of conflict, the determinants of violence, and so on.

The dynamic of conflict is divided into three phases — pre-conflict, conflict proper and post-conflict. The first phase<sup>10</sup> involves “developing of a common group goals identity, producing a leadership structure, and adopting group goals in pursuit of common interests” (Pruitt and Kim 2004:35). The conflict escalates (or turns into conflict phase) when the incident that plays a role of a trigger event happens. At this phase the antagonists choose the way of following conduct — to find a resolution or to continue escalation until a victory of one of the involved parties. The last phase of conflict — post-conflict — is characterized by slackening of tension between groups; reasons that have caused conflict and struggle are smoothed over or removed. In the end, summing-up and result estimation take place.

The *function* of social conflict implies “the consequences of conflict for the conflict groups themselves and for the social system” (Oberschall 1973:31). Hence, functions of conflict might be divided into constructive (positive) and destructive (negative). The constructive functions of conflict include a function of relaxation between antagonists; a “communication-information” and “connecting” functions uniting people by community of interests and making it possible to know each other and to bring them together; a function of stimulator and driving force of social changes; a function of social balance formation; a function of reappraisal of values and contrary interests in society, etc. The functions that are ascribed to destructive ones and impeded achievement of goal are an absolute devotion to group; a notion about other group as enemy and interests of other group as negative; a rise of hostility and hate and a decrease of communication between groups; a desire to win in conflict than to solve a problem (Grishina 2003).

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<sup>10</sup> Pruitt and Kim (2004) call a pre-conflict phase by the term *mobilization*.

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In the study of conflicts Simmel includes the *prediction of conflicts* (Simmel 1890 after Stepanenkova 1999). There are three possible ways out of conflicts:

- victory of one of the interested parties;
- compromise between the parties;
- conciliation of the parties (ibid).

*Victory* — the achievement of objects of one party — is the simplest and the most radical way of transition from struggle to peace. Victory might be a consequence of not only preponderance of one party, but also a consequence of recognition of powerlessness by another party and accepting its loss.

*Compromise* in a conflict is not always possible way out. First of all, compromise takes place in conflicts where objects of conflicts are tangible values. However, the parties with intangible values also are able to achieve compromise in their struggle only if an object of conflict is replaceable. In this case, one party wins and another party is compensated by other coast for its pliability. *Conciliation* of parties is a subjective form of conflict completion because it postpones the resolution of conflict that will erupt in future over and over again.

According to Simmel, conflict might be endless unless one of the groups renounces its goals and objects (Simmel 1890 after Stepanenkova 1999). Under this theory, only a reconsideration of ideas guarantees a total end of struggle. Otherwise, *finished* conflict is able to erupt at any time. However, such reconsideration of ideas and objects is a rare situation and, in other words, conflict is a universal phenomenon and its solutions are temporary.

## 3.2. Social movement and collective action

The term *social movement* was introduced by the German sociologist Lorenz von Stein in 1850. Contemporary social movement theories emerged in the 1960s in the West when the sociologists of that time (McCarthy, Zald,

Gamson, Oberschall, Tilly) offered a viable alternative to previous traditions in scholarship concerning social movements (Mueller 1992). This was a way to understand and study a great number of movements that took place at the time. A concept of social movement includes many theories and classifications. The diversity of social movements across their expressed dimensions, targets and methods, times of existence, and political and cultural boundaries enables social movements to be presented in every social structure of our lives.

The American sociologist Charles Tilly (2004) defines social movements as a series of contentious performances, campaigns and displays by which ordinary people can make collective claims on others. He claims that there are three major elements of social movements. The first element is campaigns which are a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on the target authorities. The social movement repertoire is the second one. It implies an employment of combinations among the subsequent forms of political action: creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions, public meetings, demonstrations, petitions drives, statements to and in public media and so forth. The last one is participants' concerted public representation displays worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitments on the part of themselves and/or their constituencies (Tilly 2005:308).

Porta and Diani (2006:20) argue that social movements are “a distinct social process, consisting of the mechanisms through which actors engaged in collective action”. Actors are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents, are linked by dense informal network and share a distinct collective identity. Furthermore, the authors (ibid) claim that conflictual collective action implies that actors of social movements are engaged in conflict, political or/and social.

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### 3.3. Animal rights and hunting

Regan and Singer are the major philosophers and animal rights ideologists. The concept on animal rights implies that animal interests should be afforded the same consideration as those of human beings and every animal has an intrinsic value. In his book *“The Case for Animal Rights”* (1983), Regan states that all kinds of hunting (commercial, sport and traditional hunting) are wrong. He (ibid: 357) say that “the goal of wildlife management should be to defend wild animals in the possession of their rights, providing them with the opportunity to live their own life”.

Singer (2003) argues that when humans change the environment they often harm not only humans but also nonhuman beings — all living things — and, particularly, nonhuman animals. The general question that he suggests to ask ourselves is “how the effect of our actions on the environment of nonhuman beings should figure in our deliberations about what we ought to do” (ibid: 55). Should we give preference and priority to nonhuman animals or rather should we regard nature as a hierarchy where animals exist for the sake of man? The latter notion that “[animals] were created for people to utilize” (Kalland and Sejersen 2005:144) obviously has come from Christianity. Although, cruelty to animals is condemned in the Old Testament, it implies that “[we] can love animal only to God’s honor and man’s use” (Singer 2003:56). The effects of our actions in nonhumans can be regarded in two different ways:

- directly, i.e. animals possessing an intrinsic value must be taken into account in any moral calculation;
- indirectly, i.e. the effects of human actions on nonhumans are taken into account only in case of their consequences for humans (ibid: 55).

For instance, the impact of building new roads or increasing fish quotas on the environment and wildlife is included indirectly in cost-benefit studies on new



projects. Singer (2003:56) comes up with an interesting example — “the cost-benefit study will be neutral between forms of recreation like hunting and shooting and those like bird watching and bush walking”. Moreover, hunting and shooting are likely to be more profitable businesses because they benefit retailers and manufacturers involved in those activities. Singer (ibid) argues that the existence of suffering making no difference to possessor of suffer (animal or man, black or white man) is morally significant. Further, he states that people should understand that cruelty to animals is as awful and vile as would be cruelty to a human baby. However, Regan (2003) claims that animals (and sometimes large number of them) can be harvested humanely and for improvement of the welfare and benefit of humans and nonhumans.

In the article “*The Value of Wildlife*” (Chardonnet *et al.* 2002), the authors differentiate the values of wildlife according to the respective interests of the stakeholders involved. Thus, there are four categories relying on a pragmatic approach:

- the economic importance of wildlife;
- the nutritional value of wildlife;
- the ecological role of wildlife;
- the socio-cultural significance of wildlife (ibid:16).

According to Chardonnet *et al.* (2002), hunting being the activity whereby the wildlife resource is exploited by removing certain quotas of dead animals, is the consumptive use of wildlife from the wildlife economics’ point of view.

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There are various reasons for hunting — subsistence, commercial, and sport hunting<sup>11</sup>. Chardonnet *et al.* (2002:24) claim that:

Commercial hunting has the advantage of generating significant income and work for many people involved in the trade of valuable wildlife products, particularly if intended for international market.

However, as mentioned above, the benefit of this business does not include the cost of animal suffering and animal lost. Animal rights philosophers and activists call for a total end of commercial hunting for skins “for purposes of human vanity” (Regan 2003:70).

Chardonnet *et al.* (2002:38) say that “the perception of nature (including wildlife) depends on the social context, including all the usual components of human sciences”. For example, people regard wildlife as a resource of food, clothes, tools, medicine, and, eventually, money. However, wildlife is also a resource for non-consumptive uses, such as wildlife watching, viewing in parks and recreation areas. Thus, wildlife might constitute a motivation for humans not only to use but also to protect nature. It makes wildlife profitable without an environmental degradation. One of the possible activities is ecotourism as a form of tourism that allows enjoying pristine wildlife. Moreover, ecotourism is “one of the most effective options for sustainable development” (Goodwin and Swingland 1996:275). Tourism can provide immediate local employment and generate revenues for local development funds.

Kalland and Sejersen (2005) mark out three views on management of marine mammals (whales and seals) depending on people’s perception of nature. Firstly,

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<sup>11</sup> Sport hunting is not considered in the thesis because sport seal hunting is forbidden in the Arkhangelsk region particularly and in Russia in general.

there is the traditional view on marine mammals where they are natural renewable resources and nobody's property. Animals "can be utilized (i.e., hunted) sustainably if managed through appropriate scientific advice and regulation measures" (ibid: 173). Such consumptive utilization is a general view among sealers and whalers. The next two views are opposite. The position of animal rights implies that animals are not resources at all. This position is built on the ecocentric view in which nature possesses intrinsic value. The third and less radical view is non- or low-consumptive use. Marine mammals are regarded as the "common heritage of mankind" and can be utilized only "for fundamentally different purposes and in different ways than was historically believed" (ibid: 174). Low-consumptive utilizations are closer to the anthropocentric view.

### 3.4. The concept of the world in Russian history and culture

In my thesis I study human society and namely the interactions and conflicts in a society. The philosophical approach that is relevant to studying human society is relativism. The term *relativism* maintains that humans in their relations with each other and with society are inextricably bound up with past and present events in the world (Walliman 2004). Thus, the interrelation in society might be understood and interpreted in different ways by individuals from different cultures and backgrounds. Especially, it is a very true about Russia that it "cannot be embraced by mind"<sup>12</sup> and Russians with their *mysterious Russian souls*. In order to avoid possible misunderstanding and confusions among readers below I

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<sup>12</sup> By Fedor Tyutchev.

will discuss the Russian concept and attitude towards the outer and inner world — nature, culture, space. Moreover, I might say with certainty that I share some of these concepts and those present my world view.

The next reason why these concepts need to be presented is that the events and subsequent attitudes to the world determine our actions and behavior in every level of society — individual or organization, executor or manager. The discussion that is presented below will be considered in the chapter finding putting emphasis on actors in the conflict.

### **3.4.1. The concept of space**

Norberg-Schulz (1980) in the chapter “*Place*” of his book “*Genius Loci*” claims that when people dwell, they are located in space and surrounded by the environment that has a certain influence on them. The two psychological functions are involved in this process — *orientation* and *identification*. Firstly, for gaining an existential foothold man has to know *where* he is, to orientate himself. Secondly, he has to identify himself with the surrounding environment, that is, “(...) he has to know *how* he is a certain place” (ibid: 18). Norberg-Schulz (ibid) attaches an importance to the process of *identification* that means becoming friends with a particular environment.

Medvedev (1999) states that in the modern world the significance of the friendship with the environment has been depreciated. People live in the quickly changing world of technology and communication. People forget little by little that they are surrounded by space and nature that they have already conquered and subdued in their opinion. However, Russia that “cannot be measured by

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common measure”<sup>13</sup> is an exception. Russia is the country where “(...) space reigns supremely, defying modern communications, technologies and beliefs, and defining the political institutions, economic activity, and mentality of its population” (ibid: 15). It is a well-known fact that Russia is the biggest country in the world (17 million square kilometers) located in the northwest hemisphere and stretching from south to north and from east to west. Even after the collapse of the USSR when 14 republics have achieved independence, Russia still has the biggest territory in the world. Russia is very big indeed. For a long time, the extent of Russia’s physical space has agitated minds of historians, travelers, poets, writer and artists and who have reflected it in their works. Vast spaces, rich and diverse nature, an abundance of resources, have determined attitudes, beliefs and aspirations of the Russians<sup>14</sup>. Medvedev (ibid) gives a good metaphor when he states that to the Russian population Russian space is like a suitcase without a handle: it is hard to carry it, but it would be a pity to throw it away. Thus, the Russians have to manage it somehow and this is what they do in their own way. Medvedev (ibid) points out properties that Russia’s immensity involves:

- The Russian space is characterized by a conglomeration of peripheries, low population density and a big sparseness of resources. This, in turn, causes high costs of production and transportation.
  
- The developed centers in Russia are mostly situated in the big cities of the western part of the country along the Trans-Siberian Railway

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<sup>13</sup> By Fyodor Tyutchev.

<sup>14</sup> In Russia, apart from the biggest territory, there are situated the highest peak of Europe, the coldest place in the world, the deepest lake in the world Baikal, etc.

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stretching to the east. The northern territories are populated only in the west of Russia.

- It is interesting to mention that in spite of the fact that Russia is the biggest country, there is a cultural lack of a spatial sense among the Russians. Great distance and not delineated natural boundaries have led to relatively vague sense of distance, border and places. The author claims that this factor accustomed the Russians “to defining their geographical surroundings according to administrative/territorial divisions, rather than by historical/cultural regions” (Medvedev 1999:18).

### 3.4.2. The concept of nature

According to Coates (1998:1), nature “is often presumed to be an objective reality with universal qualities unaffected by consideration of time, culture and place”. Yet, in the West the new attitude towards the environment was established in the 1960s when the book “*Silent Spring*” by Rachel Carson was published. The ideas and statements of the book have changed the perception of nature among readers towards the conservation of the environment for coming generations.

In Russia, the perception of nature differs from the one in the West. The Russian perception of nature was established and strengthened mostly during seventies years of the Soviet era. In Russia, there is a conception *Avos*’ (*Авоось*) that does not have analogues in other languages and cultures. *Avos*’ can be translated as *perhaps* or *maybe* and is used in phrases — “*Perhaps it will work*” or “*Maybe we will manage it*”. In Russian mind, Russia has such a big territory that any mistake and failure would be unnoticeable. A vacuum of environmental law and environmental education has been formed in the Soviet time. Martynov (2009) claims that today’s Russians interpret environmental problems and crises as

things that don't concern them and they view any actions to protect the environmental as unnecessary.

It is interesting to mention that in the Russian language the feminine gender is used to explain Russian nature. For instance, the word *matushka* or *mat'* (both mean mother) is used: *zemlya-matushka* (land-mother), *Rossiia-matushka* (Russia-mother), *rodina — mat' moya* (homeland is my mother). On the other hand, there are the words *otchizna* and *otechestvo* (fatherland) of masculine gender that differ from the word *rodina* (feminine) in the languages with Slavic roots. *Rodina* has natural, native, family, home meanings, “while *otechestvo* has overtones of citizenship and state affiliation of a person” (Medvedev 1999:19). This difference in grammatical genders implies the opposition between space (feminine) and power (masculine).

## Chapter 4. Methodology

In this chapter the general methodological approach will be considered. I will present the principal ways of data gathering. Then, I will discuss validity and reliability of the current study.

### 4.1. Research design

This study presents a practical investigation of social subject, how people act, behave and interact. According to Walliman (2004), the techniques of enquiry that used in the thesis are tracking through time (the history of seal hunting), describing (the present situation of seal harvest in Russia) and comparing (two opposite views on sealing). Consequently, the research method of data collection and analysis that has been chosen for the study is qualitative method. A qualitative approach is “one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (i.e., the multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historical constructed)” (Creswell 2003:18). The interviews are the most suitable way of collection data in qualitative researches. This study employed two distinct methodologies — textual analysis and in-depth interviews. These two methods were combined in order to answer the research questions.

### 4.2. Collection of information

The collection of information included two stages — preparing for the fieldwork and the fieldwork proper. The first stage was gathering literature in the university library and sufficient data in the Internet — textual analysis to study the context. My fieldwork took place over a period of four weeks from mid-October to mid-November 2008. During the fieldtrip I visited two cities in Russia — Moscow (2.5 weeks) and Arkhangelsk (1.5 week). The fieldwork included both collection



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of information and conducting of interviews. In Moscow, most of the time was spent in a library studying sources; in addition, two interviews were performed. In Arkhangelsk, I conducted the rest of the interviews, searched literature in a local library and visited the museum of wooden architecture and folk arts *Malye Karely* (*Малые Карелы*) that has an exhibition about culture and history of Pomors.

#### **4.2.1. Collection of secondary data (textual data)**

The collection of the necessary background information about the research problem was performed in April-May 2008 before and during writing the project description. I focused on the review of general literature about the issue both in a library and in the Internet as the first access points of information. The main object of the review was to learn more about existing studies on aspects of my research problem (in Russia as well as in other countries like Canada and Norway) and superficially investigate the present situation of the conflict in the Arkhangelsk region. The second stage included gathering of more in-depth and particular data and searching for the possible answers to the research questions. This stage took place in Norway (summer-autumn 2008) and during the fieldwork in Russia (autumn 2008).

There are three sources of literature that I have used in the study:

- Literature on the general overview of the issue including the fundamental anthropological study of the relationship between marine mammals and northern cultures (Kalland and Sejersen 2005), the book about vital characteristics of harp seals (Lavigne and Kovacs 1988) and so forth. Such literature was mostly in English and was found in the university library.
- Literature in Russian (books, articles in newspapers and magazines, reports) on the particular issues — the conflict over seal hunting, the

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history of Pomors and seal hunting in the Arkhangelsk region. In Russia, scientific literature is published mostly in the Russian language, and knowledge of Russian, which is my native language, is essential to study such literature. The textual materials were mostly found in the Russian State Library and the Arkhangelsk Library during the fieldwork. Thus, I have found an informative anthology “*The Thoughts on the White Sea Seal*” (Polovnikov 1999c) that includes several chapters about the history of sealing among Pomors and the attitude Pomors toward the anti-hunting organizations, the books of the Russian academic Tatyana Bernshtam (1978, 1983) on culture of Pomors and their ethnical characteristics.

- Web sources including articles on the web sites of organizations (IFAW, ISRAS, VITA, the Cultural Autonomy of Pomors), reports (ICES), articles of online newspapers and magazines (Pravda Severa, Forbes, BIZNES-KLASS Arhangel’sk), publications of social network (Live Journal) and so forth. The sources were available both in English and Russian.

#### **4.2.2. Collection of primary data (interviews)**

I decided to use interviews to collect primary data and to answer to the main research questions. The prime aim of interviews was to make up for existing deficiencies in the level of knowledge that remained after my literature review. To find appropriate informants I firstly designated the organizations or persons that actively participate in the conflict. On the side of opponents of seal hunting were two non-governmental organizations VITA (offices in Moscow and Arkhangelsk) and IFAW that actively struggle for a ban of seal hunting. The representatives of these organizations (Filippova, Novozhilova, Sabinin, and Skrobanskiy) that directly take part in the conflict were interviewed. The supporters of seal hunting are interested in continuation of the Russian harvest.

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Firstly, there are Pomors as principal participants of the hunt. In the Internet, I have found the main organizations of Pomors in the Arkhangelsk region and contacted with their chiefs (Esipov, Ovchinnikov, and Moseev). Secondly, sealers themselves are extremely interested in seal hunting. Here it was significant to conduct interviews both with sealers (Ovchinnikov, Shirokiy) and a heads of a fishing kolkhoz (Shirokiy). Thus, in certain cases one informant was interviewed as a Pomor and a sealer or as a head of a kolkhoz and a sealer.

In addition, during the interviews I was advised to talk to other persons that are also related to the conflict. Thus, Irina Novozhilova gave me a contact of the director of the tourist hotel “Letnyaya Zolotitsa” Oleg Prodan and Pavel Esipov gave a contact of a Pomor and a hunter (not sealer) Aleksandr Rassolov. Thereby, the conducted interviews enabled me to answer the research questions (the list of the interviews App. D).

### *Questionnaires*

A semi-structured interview gives “defined answers to define questions [and include] more open-ended questions for issues to be explored” (Walliman 2004:169). In my case, semi-structured open-ended interviews were necessary because it helped me to gain as much information as possible and elucidate the issues that were not clear and understandable for me after the literature review. The questionnaires were designed in September 2008. There were five types of questionnaire — for the representatives of the animal rights organizations, for the representatives of Pomors, for a director of the tourist base “Letnyaya Zolotitsa”, for sealers and a hunter (App. II: A, B, C, D, E). Some questions are repeated in all five questionnaires, but some of them are unique to certain informants. During the interviews, I was following a questionnaire; however, I raised additional queries between fixed questions in order to get the informants talking and to find usable and deficient information for answering the research questions.

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### *Interviews going*

I have decided to choose the face-to-face interview method<sup>15</sup>. The interviews were conducted during my fieldwork in Russia — in Moscow and Arkhangelsk. Before the fieldwork I established contacts with the main informants. The interviews were carried out in a variety of places: in the house of interviewee (Rassolov), at the offices (Esipov, Filippova, Shirokiy), at the home-office (Novozhilova, Sabinin), in cafes (Ovchinnikov, Prodan, Skrobanskiy), by telephone (Moseev). The interviews were naturally performed in Russian as a native language of all informants and myself. I translated all the quotes of the informants that are cited in this thesis into English.

All interviews were digitally recorded. I decided to use a recorder because it allowed me to focus on an interview and not deflect my attention on writing. Since the interviews were semi-structured, it was extremely necessary to follow answers and to ask proper questions. Before an interview started, I asked an interviewee if he/she did not mind using of a tape recorder. Most of the informants (Filippova, Novozhilova, Sabinin, Skrobanskiy, Shirokiy, Esipov, Ovchinnikov, Moseev, Rassolov) were either public people or were used to giving interviews. I did not notice that using a recorder made the interviewees insecure and reserved. The interviews lasted at the average 1-1.5 hours — from 40 minutes (Esipov) to 4 hours (Novozhilova, Sabinin). In my opinion, the atmosphere during all interviews was friendly and warm. The informants answered the questions with enthusiasm trying to convince me of the truth of their statements; they showed me books, videos, and pictures; they gave books and booklets; they even fed me with some home-cooked meals. Several times

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<sup>15</sup> Only one interview was conducted by telephone in view of a lack of time at the interviewee (Ivan Moseev).

interviews changed the direction and various topics from problems of vegetarianism in Arkhangelsk (Skrobanskiy) to economic crisis (Prodan) in the world were discussed.

### 4.3. Validity and reliability of the study

A typical technique for attaining validity and reliability in a qualitative study is by using a variety of sources of data and information and by using many different methods for gathering them (Golafshani 2003). In this study I tried to follow this technique.

Using interviews as a method provides several limitations. One of them is *indirect* information filtered through the views of the interviewees (Creswell 2003). In the case of the conflict over seal hunting, this limitation might be especially great — both interested parties are trying to present their ideas and intentions as solely correct ones. Moreover, this limitation also concerns the majority of literature that have been used in the thesis. I aimed to be impartial through the interviews and the following interpretation of data.

The interviews were performed in Russian, thus, bias and misunderstanding of information gathered from the interviews are insignificant. However, the quality of the interview recordings that were conducted in cafes was bad due to side tones and noise. In order to prevent information loss, I transcribed the taped recordings right after the interviews were conducted, while I remembered the statements of the interviewees.

Since I have used several web sources, the quality of the contents should have been judged. Walliman (2004) suggests seven different tests that enable a person to evaluate web sources. The tests include evaluation of authors, authority and relevance of sources, correctness and detail of presented information. I have followed this recommendation.

## Chapter 5. Findings

In this chapter I will discuss the conflict over seal hunting in Russia built on the conducted interviews and textual analysis. The conflict will be examined with the help of the analysis framework of conflict that is suggested in the theoretical chapter — the type, the conditions that have encouraged the development of the conflict, the function and the parties of the conflict. Firstly, the interested parties of the conflict will be identified and arguments of each party for or against seal hunting will be presented. The main emphasis will be laid on the reasons and causes of the conflict — historical, social, cultural and economic — as these are the basic research questions of the study. In addition, I will discuss the alternatives that might replace seal hunting and the complications and barriers on the way to the development of these alternative practices.

### 5.1. The presence of the conflict

Conflict in sociological context is an “opposition between ideas, interests, etc.” (Collins 1999:306). In other words, the general condition that encourages conflict is cardinal different views on any issue. In the case of marine mammals hunting, Lavigne (2003:34) states that:

Different individuals and groups in society attach different values and hold a variety of different attitudes toward animals generally and toward marine mammals in particular. [...] It is because of these differences in values, attitudes, and objectives, that calls for culling marine mammals give rise to a variety of conflicts among different segments of society.

Such conflicts might be called conflicts over resource exploitation or management. In the case of the studied question, the resource is seals and the issue is harp seal hunting in the Russian North, namely in the Arkhangelsk region. As we see from the background chapter, there are two opposite views on

this issue. The first interested party is against the seal hunting and appeals to ban it. On the other hand, the second party is opposed to such view and is interested in continuing seal hunting. Consequently, these two attitudes to seal hunting are incompatible. According to Pruitt and Kim (2004), this is when a conflict erupts.

## 5.2. The actors in the conflict

### 5.2.1. The actors that support continuation of seal hunting

Most key actors that support the seal harvest are individuals or organizations that are associated with the hunt in some manner. The object of each actor will be discussed below. Doubtless, the most interested parties in the conflict are the fishing kolkhozes that take part in the hunt, and the sealers. The kolkhozes obtain hunting quotas from the Federal Fishery Administration and utilize it. In spring 2008 there was only one kolkhoz that used its quota — “Beloe More”. In September 2007, the Norwegian company GC Rieber Skinn AS — the world’s leading supplier of dressed sealskin and seal leather — established a daughter company in Arkhangelsk, called GC Rieber Skinn Pomor’e Lic. Since Rieber Skinn Pomor’e does not have its own quotas, the company buys it from the kolkhoz “Chapoma” in the Murmansk region. In this case, there are two more actors that are interested in continuing seal hunting — the kolkhoz that sells quota and the company that buys quota. Moreover, the kolkhozes that do not take part in the hunt might lease their property including vessels, boats, storages and so forth. In this case, the interested actors are heads of the kolkhozes that gain profit from leasing.

The sealers that participate in the hunt also hold an interest in sealing. The hunting and fishing are the only available jobs and only ways to make a living in coastal villages of the region. Basically, these sealers are Pomors that live in the villages or have recently moved to Arkhangelsk. In addition, Pomors as a national community are interested in continuing seal hunting as a traditional practice.

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There is a Council of the National Cultural Autonomy of Pomors that is an official authority speaking for the Pomors. The chief of the Council Pavel Esipov (interview 10, 2008) insists on an official recognition of Pomors as indigenous people of the Russian North like Chukchis and Nenets. The inclusion of Pomors in the list of indigenous people will enable them to hunt freely; but this hunt implies the traditional practice and not commercial harvest. However, it should be mentioned that the ability to hunt freely is not the only one goal that Pomors and their representatives pursue. The major reason is to receive subsidies and utilize fishes and marine animals without purchasing fishing and hunting licenses and paying tax charges. In Arkhangelsk, there are also two Pomors' representative organizations that actively assert Pomors rights — the National Cultural Center “Pomorskoe Vozrozhdenie” (*the Pomor Revival*) and the Agency of Environmental Information “Econet”. During the interviews, the representatives of Pomors (Esipov: interview 10.11.08; Ovchinnikov: interview 07.11.08; Moseev: interview 10.11.08) insisted upon the fact that the seal hunting is a traditional practice and it still plays a vital role in socio-cultural and economic life of Pomors.

There is one more party that supports the commercial seal harvest. It is a commercial fishery and fishermen. In the case of seal hunting, the Russian fishermen claim that seals have eaten up all fish (cods, in particular) in the White Sea (REGNUM 2005b). According to their statements, adult seals eat up to 15 kg of fish every day (Potapova 2008). Moreover, according to fishermen if sealers do not regulate the seal population by hunt, fish stock will be reduced and, consequently, the fish quotas will have to be cut down and fishers will lose their jobs. Lavigne (2003:32) states that:

Wherever the distribution of a marine mammal population overlaps with that of a commercial fishery, there exists the potential for various interactions between them. Such situations frequently result in calls for culling the marine mammal population, ostensibly to benefit fish stocks and commercial fisheries.



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This was also in accordance to two informants (Shirokiy: interview 11.11.08; Ovchinnikov: interview 07.11.08). Thus, these actors are involved in the conflict because they are interested in continuing the seal harvest and oppose the animal right organizations. However, they do not participate in any actions or debates openly and are not the main target of the anti-hunting organizations activities. For this reason, this actor is not considered in the analysis.

### **5.2.2. The actors that declaim against seal hunting**

The main actors who are against the seal hunting are the environmental non-governmental organization, namely animal welfare/rights groups. Although, there are many organizations that are against the sealing, it is merely the International Fund of Animal Welfare (IFAW) and the Russia Animal Rights Centre (VITA) that participate actively and appreciably in the struggle for the ban of seal harvest in Russia. The activities of both organizations are based on the concept of animal rights and welfare. During the interview with the representative of IFAW (Filippova: interview 05.11.08), the informant stated that the struggle for the total ban of commercial seal hunting in Russia (as well as in Canada) is the basic and primary goal of the organization. In addition, IFAW is also engaged in activities for preservation of bears, whales, and other endangered animals in Russia. In its part, for VITA (both offices in Moscow and Arkhangelsk) seal hunting is not a primary scope of activity. In the five main areas of VITA (exploitation of animals for meat, for experiments and tests, for fur and skin, for the entertainments and as pets), the struggle against the fur industry (particularly, against seal hunting) is on the third place. During the interviews with VITA (Novozhilova and Sabinin: interview 02.11.08), I was told that many employees and activists of the center adhere to the way of life which excludes killing and exploitation of animals. Most of them are vegetarians or vegans.

Kalland and Sejersen (2005:198) state that:

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The strategies [of the campaigns against sealing] can be grouped under three main headings: direct actions to prevent catches of marine mammals; destruction of markets for such products; and efforts directed at changing society's perceptions of marine mammals.

However, in the case of Russia, the anti-hunting organizations do not use the first two strategies in their activities. There are common characteristics in the methods that the organizations use in the conflict. First of all, both organizations use the Internet as an informational arena for their statements — they publish articles that cover the history and present situation with seal hunting in the world and in Russia; publish reports about past and future events and actions; organize signature-gathering campaigns against the seal harvest on the websites and so forth. Secondly, IFAW and VITA organize public actions in defense of seals in various cities in Russia. The latest action “Don't beat someone who is lying” took place on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009 in 20 Russian cities and was organized by IFAW (IFAW 2009). In addition, both organizations are trying to inform as many people as possible by arranging actions, photo exhibitions, producing movies and participating in public debates on TV and radio.

Yet, it is obvious that there are differences in the strategies that both organizations use in the conflict. Firstly, one might say that IFAW uses more efficient and scientific approach to the issue than VITA. It is expressed especially in the financial support by IFAW to the Polar Research Institute (professor Chernook) that have been performing aerial surveys of the harp seal population in the White Sea since 1998. The results that were achieved during the surveys — e.g., the decrease of the seal pup population — are used by IFAW as an argument for the ban of hunting. The informant of IFAW (Filippova: interview 05.11.08) argued that seal hunting (in addition to global warming and sailing of oil tankers' courses through pupping gathering areas) contributes to the reduction of seal population in the White Sea in the last years. The interviewee (*ibid*) admits that low catches during the hunts in the last decade cannot considerably reduce the seal population, but in some degree hunting is the reason of it. It should be mentioned that the activities of IFAW for protection of harp seals are not limited

by attempts to ban hunting. The organization also takes various measures to prohibit sailing of oil tankers' courses through pupping gathering areas. On the other hand, there is VITA that arranges more spectacular actions such as "Cruelty-free zone" campaign with Russian celebrities in March 2008.

The list of the opponents of seal harvest might be supplemented with latent actors in the conflict. One representative of such actors is the director of the tourist camp-hotel "Letnyaya Zolotitsa" ("Летняя Золотица") on the coast of the White Sea Oleg Prodan. His goal in the conflict is to entice away local inhabitants from the hunt and to offer them "better, more humane job" (Prodan: interview 12.11.08).

### 5.3. The object of the conflict

#### *For supporters*

The two parties that support seal hunting in Russia were defined above; they are the participants of the hunt and Pomors. From the theoretical framework it is known that the object of conflict might have tangible or intangible values, the latter includes either social or spiritual values. Both of the parties have a tangible object in the conflict which is money. The basic object of profit-making organizations is to raise money. There are several ways to make a profit for the organizations that more or less participate in the seal hunt. The fishing kolkhozes that obtain quota from the Federal Fishery Administration might utilize quota and gain money from selling seal pelts. The other way to gain money for the kolkhozes is to sell their quotas to other enterprises. In their turn, these enterprises (such as Rieber Skinn Pomor'e) utilize quotas, process skins and sell their products at fur auctions and/or to fur factories. The other possible way to gain money for the kolkhozes — more exactly, for the heads of these kolkhozes — is to lease their property to other enterprises.

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During the interviews with the representatives of the Pomors and participants of hunting<sup>16</sup>, I was told that nowadays seal hunting remains one of the main employments among the local population of the coastal villages. Moreover, seal hunting and fishing are often sole employments during last years and are sole ways to make living. However, Pomors pursues one more object in the conflict. The representatives of Pomors claim that the hunting activities among local inhabitants define to a large extent personal and national identity. Thus, the object of the conflict over seal hunting is to maintain the traditional practice of seal hunting as social values for Pomors. This object possesses an intangible value.

### *For opponents*

On the other hand, there are opponents of seal hunting that pursue a spiritual object or, to be more precise, moral and ethical values. The general idea of the animal right organizations as the main opponents is that the seal hunt is a cruel and bloody harvest and should be banned<sup>17</sup>. However, these NGOs have different attitudes toward the ban of the sealing. IFAW opposes merely the commercial seal hunt and has nothing against the traditional hunt. By commercial hunting IFAW implies that products of the hunt are put on the market and are not intended for individuals or community's needs. In its turn, VITA states that all kinds of the seal hunting, either commercial or traditional, must be banned. These are the official views of both organizations.

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<sup>16</sup> Shirokiy: interview 11.11.08; Esipov: interview 10.11.08; Ovchinnikov: interview 07.11.08; Moseev: interview 10.11.08.

<sup>17</sup> Filippova: interview 5.11.08; Novozhilova: interview 02.11.08; Sabinin: interview 02.11.08; Skrobanskiy: interview 08.11.08

The implication of the discussion shows that each opponent pursues its own objects and, moreover, there can be different objects even between the supporters of sealing.

## 5.4. The type of the conflict

As was stated previously, conflict is characterized as latent if one of the interested parties is not able to follow its interests and does not have the power resources to pursue their goals. In our case, the animal rights organizations were not able to follow their interests during the Soviet Power, although, anti-hunting campaigns were already widespread in Canada and Norway. The conflict over seal hunting in Russia was latent for a long time. From the nineties the conflict has developed into a manifest conflict. Many environmental NGOs including IFAW and VITA have set up operations in the Russian cities. Thereby, the conflict was started by the animal welfare organizations, their antagonists were involved into the conflicts. At the present moment, the conflict over seal hunting in Russia is in a conflict phase proper.

## 5.5. The reasons of the conflict

There are numerous conditions and circumstances that encourage the development of social conflicts in general. In the case of seal hunting in Russia, there are also multifaceted complex of reasons for this conflict — historical, social, cultural and economic, different perceptions of nature, misunderstanding and distrust.

### 5.5.1. Historical preconditions

Evidently, several preconditions provoked the conflict. Here I will consider these features of seal hunting in the life of Pomors, Pomor history and history of the

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environmental movement in Russia as the conditions that have promoted the development of the conflict over seal hunting.

### *Seal hunting in the life of Pomors*

For a long time, seal hunting has played a great role in the socio-cultural and economic life of Pomors. According to Kalland and Sejersen (2005), there are three common socio-cultural characteristics among the hunters from the North Atlantic. The first one is that mainly men take part in the hunt of marine mammals and that “hunting plays a vital role in the self-identity of participating men” (ibid: 93). Undoubtedly, it was true about residents of the Pomor communities — for many centuries only the menfolk participated in seal harvest. There were omens about it, for instance, pregnant women were not allowed to see sealers off to the hunt (Pomorland 2008). Secondly, a cultural transmission of hunting skills and traditions from generation to generation is evident. Sealing was dangerous work and required experience that was transmitted from father to son. Crews of sealing boats consisted mostly of relatives. A third common socio-cultural characteristic is that the hunting activities and the subsequent consumption of hunt products define to a large extent personal and national identity. In Pomor communities, clothes, footwear, and food were made from seals (ibid).

The participation in seal hunting and a close connection to the sea are reflected in the culture of Pomors. Traditions, folk poetry and songs, proverbs, and lullabies reproduced the perception of nature among Pomors. The old Pomor proverbs

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about the sea go, “the sea is our arable land” or “we live for the sea and are fed by the sea”<sup>18</sup> (Gemp 2004; my translation).

The economics of northern hunting communities show several similarities (Kalland and Sejersen 2005). First, there is a flexible use of natural resources according to their seasonal availability. The second and third similarities are that the economics of the communities can be characterized as “mixed” and “simple commodity production”. Seal hunting could not be named as the main occupation among Pomors. First of all, it was seasonal activity (December-May). Secondly, fishing took the first place in Pomor’s life. Seal- and fish-products were consumed by the communities themselves; what was left over was put up for sale or went to an exchange.

From the very beginning of the Soviet Union, Pomors, as well as other village inhabitants in the USSR, were forced to join kolkhozes that were managed and owned by the state. Thus, the old traditional system of Pomors (including way of life, communities, fishing, sealing, sailing practices and other traditional trades) was destroyed and lost (Filippova: interview 05.11.08; Ovchinnikov: interview 07.11.08; Smirnova and Emel’yanenkov 2008). A new structure of life was created and directed by the government. In the case of seal hunting, the new structure was characterized by the formation of fishing kolkhozes. That time, it was obligatory to be a member of kolkhoz, and it was a sole possibility of making living and participating in the hunt. In addition, the new structure of life had changed the method and target of hunting. Firstly, instead of flat-bottomed boats the hunters started using icebreakers in the beginning of the twentieth century. Then, in the second half of the century icebreakers were replaced by helicopters.

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<sup>18</sup> In Russian “Море наше поле” and “Морем живем, морем и кормимся”.

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Secondly, the invention of the sealing farm and using helicopters in hunt were marked as “a new era of seal hunting” (Polovnikov 1999a:120; my translation). Whitecoats and beaters became a target of sealers. During the interviews, I was told that the seal harvest was the main activity in the coastal villages of the White Sea:

Everybody — young and old — made their living by the seal harvest. And not only one or two kolkhozes lived on the hunt but the whole seaboard. People worked for half a year participating in preparation, repair, hunt, pelting, processing. Government paid much attention to the seal hunting. There was a state program of consolidation of young people in villages. Now everything is gone. (Shirokiy: interview 11.11.08)

The time after the downfall of the USSR was characterized by Russia’s transition to a free-market economy. This implied that the state renounced the policy of a socio-economic support to cities and villages, organizations and enterprises (Yanitsky 2005). Consequently, Pomor villages of the White Sea as well as many other villages and towns throughout Russia began to degrade. According to the interview (Shirokiy: interview 11.11.08), many fishing kolkhozes in Pomorye went bankrupt and were shut down; there were no jobs. Young people had to move to cities looking for a job. The infrastructure was destroyed. The local inhabitants were glad to find any job in the villages in such a disastrous situation which in a certain degree has remained until now (ibid).

Pomors are opposed to banning of the seal hunting because sealing as well as fishing is the only well-paid job in the villages. Pomors are very pleased with the new Russian-Norwegian company Rieber Skinn Pomor’e. The monthly salary has increased up to 40,000 roubles (approximately 1,600 US dollars) per sealer (Smirnova and Emel’yanenkov 2008). During the interviews, the representatives of Pomors (Esipov: interview 10.11.08, Ovchinnikov: interview 07.11.08) characterize “the arriving of Norwegians” as positive for creating new jobs, a possibility to earn money, being engaged in the traditional trade. The informant (Esipov: interview 10.11.08) claims that Pomors are glad to receive help from



everybody. “If ours do not help, let somebody else help us” (ibid) and by *ours* Esipov implied the Russian government and local administration.

There might be also a historical reason why Pomors and their representatives oppose the idea of banning seal hunting and give a hostile reception to the animal welfare activists. There is a common notion among the Russians towards new and unknown situations. This position is expressed as distrust and suspiciousness. Perhaps this attitude might be explained by the experience of living in the Soviet Union. Yanitsky (2001:30) claims that:

The experience of many years living under the conditions of the totalitarian system created distrust and a negative attitude in Soviet citizens toward any changes, which were perceived by them as a threat to the stability of their day-to-day life.

Pomors have such a negative attitude toward any attempt to ban the seal hunting. The representatives of Pomors refer to it as “extermination of Pomors” (Moseev: interview 10.11.08) and “ethnocide of Pomors” (Ovchinnikov: interview 07.11.08). In a newspaper article (Lemehov 2007) I even met the phrase “genocide of Pomors”.

### *Environmental NGOs in Russia*

The existence of non-governmental organizations with international funding and their struggle against legislation of those times were impossible in the Soviet Union. While the environmental organizations were actively carrying on a struggle in the West, they did not have any arena for speech and action in the USSR for a long time. Certainly, there were some organizations with an environmental orientation in the Soviet Union. However, these organizations were pro-government and the main scope of their work was “specialized and often practical environmental activities such as maintenance of protected areas and prevention of illegal logging” (Wilhelmsen 2007:22). Merely after the downfall of the Soviet Union, international environmental NGOs were able to set

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up offices in Russia and local NGOs were able to start working. The first NGOs that set up their branch offices in Russia were Greenpeace in 1989 and Bellona Foundation in 1990. The main field of work of Greenpeace is to solve environmental problems. Bellona with the main office in Oslo works with nuclear problems in Russia, the organization set up in response to the Chernobyl disaster in 1986.

The Russian environmental movement as well as animal rights movement might be characterized as young and inexperienced. In comparison with the long history of struggle against the commercial seal hunting of IFAW in Canada and other countries, Russian history is relatively short. For almost 45 years IFAW has been trying to stop the hunt in Canada and to ban import and sale of seal products. Russian history of struggle for animal rights started as late as in 1994 when the Russian branch office of IFAW was set up. It could be stated that the history of Russian animal rights and welfare movement counts less than 20 years. However, one might claim that the environmental NGOs are able to use their experience learning from successes and failures during long-termed activities in the West and, thus, they can score a success in a shorter space of time in Russia. Nevertheless, in Russia such experience hardly could help. Brown and May (1991) argued that environmental NGOs needed to develop new and unique strategies to work in the USSR/Russia. The unique strategies consisted in that they “were not based on the existing style of direct action campaigning, as this made little sense in a society with no tradition of peaceful civil protest” (ibid: 184).

### *Conflict today*

The findings that were presented above might explain why the conflict over seal hunting has appeared in the post-Soviet Russia, after the downfall of the USSR. The conflict has flared up in last two years. The respondent from VITA Arkhangelsk (Skrobanskiy: interview 08.11.08) said that there was not any

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necessity to ban seal hunting earlier. The sealing in Russia was on the brink of its commercial extinction in 1990s-early 2000s — there were no governmental subsidies, vessels and equipment were deteriorating and the product market was decreasing. However, the formation of the joint Russian-Norwegian company Rieber Skinn Pomor'e has made the anti-hunting organizations act more progressively in the last two years. It could be added that all opponents of seal harvest with whom the interviews were performed<sup>19</sup> expressed a great apprehension concerning the activities of Rieber Skinn Pomor'e in the Arkhangelsk region. Rieber Skinn Pomor'e possessing money and material resources is able to revive seal hunting in the region and increase the total harvest. During the last ten years, only 50% of quotas were utilized. Rieber Skinn Pomor'e is planning to utilize the entire quotas (REGNUM 2007). According to the data, the total catches in spring 2008 doubled in comparison with the catch in 2007 (App. III). So, the reasons for growing apprehension of opponents concerning the hunt are perhaps not groundless.

### **5.5.2. Seal hunting in economics perspective**

In the economics of the Arkhangelsk region the sealing does not take the first place. Fishery and seal hunting in the regional economics constitutes only 1.2% (Dvinaland 2009b). The reasons are that seal harvest is a short-seasoned and costly business, and that the economics of the region which possess great forest resources is oriented to the development of the timber industry.

Yet, the supporters of the hunt insist upon the significance and profitability of the seal hunting in Russia (REGNUM 2003). During the interview, the head of the

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<sup>19</sup> Filippova: interview 05.11.08; Novozhilova: interview 02.11.08; Sabinin: interview 02.11.08; Skrobanskiy: interview 08.11.08; Prodan: interview 12.11.08.

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fishing kolkhoz “Beloe More” Michael Shirokiy (interview 11, 2008) said that “if the seal hunting was not profitable for me, I would not be in this business”.

Another argument of the seal hunt supporters is that the seal hunting creates jobs, especially for the local inhabitants.

Seal hunting is a costly and labour-intensive business requiring investment of money, special infrastructure and human resources with particular skills. This is why the fishing kolkhozes are still the only way to hunt. However, because of the economic grievances in the nineties some kolkhozes were not able to maintain business and went bankrupts.

Although, the seal hunting is not a significant part in the economics of the region, it occupies the second place after fishery in the economics of the Pomor community. The fishing kolkhozes are almost the only working enterprises in the coastal villages. The kolkhozes are enterprises that form villages and are summoned to meet economic and social challenges. The kolkhozes participating in the hunt are situated or have their base merely in three coastal villages — Koida, Verhnyaya and Nizhnyaya Zolotitsas with the population of 489, 222 and 115 people, respectively (Naval Board 2008). There are approximately 500-600 people who are connected to the hunt including immediate sealers and guest sealers from Arkhangelsk, workers on the coast, managers and so forth. There are up to 200 people who directly participate in the hunt from time to time.

Realizing that the commercial seal hunting can be banned, Pomors wish to claim their indigenous rights and prevent the ban. Local inhabitants do not want to lose both the source of income and an old traditional practice. If Pomors get the status of indigenous people of the Russian North, they would be allowed to freely hunt and fish by themselves evading kolkhozes. However, the hunt would not be commercial but traditional. In this case, a series of difficulties of the hunting practice might appear. The major difficulties are the lack of vessels and tools for hunt, infrastructure for processing of skins, sharp reduction in amount of catches

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and, consequently, the loss of segment of product market. Probably, this would be the coastal hunt and catches would be insignificant.

The opponents of the seal harvest claim that the commercial hunt is not a profitable business anymore (Filippova: interview 05, .11.08; Novozhilova: interview 02.11.08). Furthermore, the seal hunting was not a profitable business even in the USSR. At the time, the sealing was supported by government subsidies. Moreover, IFAW (Filippova: interview 05.11.08; IFAW 2007) claims that even the seal harvests in Canada and Norway are subsidized by the governments of these countries. In the animal rights organizations' opinion, nowadays, without grants and subsidies from the Russian government or the foreign companies, the enterprises do not earn large profit. The informant (ibid) performed an unofficial cost-benefit calculation of the hunt in 2008. Calculating approximate numbers of costs of seal pelts, lease of vessels and ice-breaker, sealers' salaries and other expenditures, the remainder was negative.

### **5.5.3. The socio-cultural aspects of seal hunting among Pomors**

Marine mammals and fish cannot be regarded merely as resources in economic terms. As was previously stated, Kalland and Sejersen (2005) argue that there are three common socio-cultural characteristics of sealing and whaling among hunters of the North Atlantic: only men take part in the hunting that plays a vital role in the self-identity of men; the importance of the cultural transmission of hunting skills and traditions from generation to generation; and a significant influence of hunting activities on personal as well as national and ethnical identity. Some socio-cultural characteristics of the hunt among Pomors in the past were presented above. Here I will discuss how these characteristics relate to the present day.

There is no matter how Pomors are treated — indigenous people of the Russian North or not. Though, they have participated in the seal harvest for a very long time, and only Pomors (inhabitants of the coastal villages) possess the tradition of

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hunting. The opponents of the hunt claim that firstly, the Soviet power and subsequent long period of the economic and social collapse have destroyed the old traditions and skills of hunting among Pomors and have changed their perception of the environment. It was replaced by a new hunting practice using helicopters, harvesting whitecoat pups and growing them in farms. However, Pomors tell a different story.

During the interview with the representative of Pomors, Ovchinnikov (interview 7, 2008) who took part in the helicopter hunt in 2005 I was told that “there are no outsiders taking part in the hunt”. All sealers are Pomors from the coastal villages or towns. He claimed that the tradition and skills of hunt still remain, — when the helicopter flies away and a sealer remains on ice floe, the hunt goes as it was hundreds years ago. The informant said that a sealer comes face to face with environment and seals, alone on the ice floe (ibid). The hunt is frequently associated with the risk of one’s life. Kalland and Sejersen (2005:137) argue that “with the sea or the ice as a workplace, one must be able to accept and live with risk and unpredictability”. Sealers have to possess a special state of mind and a number of particular skills, and not to be afraid of the surrounding sea. Pomors have been storing knowledge about the environment and hunt for many centuries, and passed it on from father to son. During the interview with a hunter (Rassolov: interview 11.11.08), the informant said that his father taught him to hunt practically since he was a boy and he first shipped out when he was 12 years old. Therefore, there were and still are many generations of sealers in families, the skills and knowledge are passed from father to son. An individual who does not possess these skills is not able to behave adequately during the hunt. Although, sealers may not be experts of zoology, they possess their own knowledge which has been stored for years. This lay knowledge might be characterized as a practical one — how animals behave, from which side one should approach an animal, which animals are more suitable to be hunted. According to Pomors’ view, only such kind of knowledge is necessary for the hunt. Practical knowledge

about animals and proper behavior on ice floe allows Pomors to hunt successfully and to reduce possible risks.

For Pomors and sealers, the hunt is a great event despite its complexity and peril. The informant with sparkling eyes described his feelings during the hunt as the feeling of celebration and excitement — “light blue sky, dazzling white snow, scarlet [seals] blood — it is very beautiful!” (Ovchinnikov: interview 07.11.08). Although, the significance of participation in hunting has decreased in comparison with centuries ago, it is still of great importance for the local dwellers. During the interview (Shirokiy: interview 11.11.08), I was told that every man in coastal villages aspires to take part in the hunt. The participation in the hunt proves courage and fortitude of sealers; this is especially true for young people (ibid).

#### **5.5.4. The different perceptions of nature**

One of the possible reasons that encourage the development of the conflict might be the differences in how the supporters and opponents of seal hunting perceive seals. Furthermore, if one looks at the conflict on a large scale, the differences might be discovered in the different perceptions of nature on the whole by the actors in the conflict. The differences in the perception of nature imply as well as the difference of the view on the management of marine mammals. Indeed, Kalland and Sejersen (2005:173) argue that:

Considering the wide variances in people’s perception of nature in general and marine mammal in particular, it should be not any surprise that the management of marine mammal hunting is a highly contested issue.

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*“Nature is not a temple, but workshop for a man”*<sup>20</sup>

In the first place, I will start with the perception of nature among the Russians that should be presented before the further discussion. The perception of nature among the Russians was forming during seventy years of the Soviet Power. At the time, all natural resources belonged to the state. At the beginning of the existence of Soviet Union, the nation was in difficult economic circumstances. For the improvement of the situation, the prompt and considerable economic growth was necessary. People accepted a myth about the necessity of economical growth forgetting about nature and neglecting environmental problems and believed the stories about communism and belief in radiant future. *“Growth is good”* is still a generally accepted myth all over the world. In the USSR, the machine of the creation and promotion of this myth worked perfectly. Firstly, the power of this myth was based on fear, and what is more, on the fear of death. Repressions were basic methods in assuring the production efficiency at that time. Any sabotage, any doubt in correctness of the Party path, any dissent were punished cruelly — a term in prison of 10 years and more or even an execution. People were afraid to make mistakes, to have their own thoughts and opinions and a fortiori to express them aloud. Secondly, the propaganda played a significant role in creation of new perception of nature and was up to the mark. Agitation placards and sections, political meetings, slogans and so forth were ubiquitous. During that time the widespread mottos were *“Nature is not a temple, but workshop for a man”* and *“We can wait a favor from nature. Our task is to take it from nature”*<sup>21</sup>. These actions had a great influence on the reorientation of attitudes towards nature among the Russians. Keeping in mind that any

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<sup>20</sup> From the novel *“Fathers and Sons”* (*“Отцы и дети”*) by Ivan Turgenev (1862).

<sup>21</sup> In Russian *“Природа — это не храм, это мастерская”* and *“Мы не можем ждать милости от природы, взять ее у природы — это наша задача”*.



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environmental failures would be unnoticeable on the vast territory of Russia, nature was used and exploited for the economic benefit like “a machine in the service of humankind” (Egri 1999:61).

The perceptions of seal and nature, in general, among sealers differ from that of the animal rights activists. I have already discussed above the perception of nature, namely the seas as a work place, among Pomors. Because of the complexity of agriculture, the sea was and remains the sole source of livelihood for Pomors (fishing and sealing) and, consequently, the sea has defined the structure of their economy. The old Pomor proverb goes that “we live for the sea and are fed by the sea” (Gemp 2004; my translation). Pomors as hunters do not perceive themselves as outsiders who burst into nature, harm and destroy it. “On the contrary”, claims Dizard (1999:106), “[hunters] see themselves and their activity as an integral part of the nature of things”.

Attitudes towards seals were changing through time. In the past, Pomors ascribed human features to marine mammals and fish, they believed that seals spoke a language and alerted each other in case of a danger (Tsiropukha). At the present, marine mammals and fish are seen as natural renewable resources. Pomors argue that seals and fish are like bread for them. The Pomors that participate in the hunt do not think of themselves as killers or marauders; they do not interpret the hunt as a bloody and cruel work. “We are not killers. We are hunters” (Ovchinnikov: interview 07.11.08). In case of seal hunting, I was ensured by the informant (ibid.) that Pomors are also just as interested in the harp seal conservation as the animal rights activists are. Ovchinnikov said:

Seals are hunted in accordance with quotas and these quotas are science-based and officially approved by the Joint Norwegian-Russian Commission. If the seals population were under risk of depletion or extinction, quotas should have been reduced. The Pomors and sealers would hold a great interest in such arrangements.

When the issue of cruelty and inhumanity of the hunt came up during the interview (Shirokiy: interview 11.11.08), the respondent advised the animal rights

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activists that they would better worry about old people, homeless and orphans in Russia.

### *Totemization*

IFAW and VITA use deep ecology and animal rights as the key concepts of their ideology (Filippova: interview 05.11.08; Novozhilova: interview 02.11.08; Skrobanskiy: interview 08.11.08). This implies that every animal has an inherent right to live (Regan 1983). Seals in general and whitecoat pups in particular are considered by the activists of the animal welfare organizations as *innocent, defenseless, peaceful, gentle* creatures. The activists question how it is possible to kill such beautiful animals and kill them just for their fur or skin (Novozhilova: interview 02.11.08; Skrobanskiy: interview 08.11.08). Thus, seals have become a powerful symbol or totem for the struggle of the organization. Kalland and Sejersen (2005) call this process *totemization* — a process of turning a certain animal into a powerful symbol. According to the authors (ibid), there are four such symbols that are used in a discourse of environmental disaster: the seal, the whale, the elephant and the rainforest. An emergence of animals-totems might be caused by the fact that “modern man’s need to compensate for being alienated from nature or (...) by his/her inability to satisfy social and emotional (...) cravings” (ibid: 168). IFAW has a whitecoat which is held by a human’s hand as a logo of the organization. On the web sites of both organizations there are a great number of various photographs and pictures of adult seals and mostly whitecoats. They are presented as happy creatures surrounded by ideal, pure nature. However, on the web sites one might find the photographs of the hunt which demonstrate inhumanity and cruelty of seal hunting — a man with a hook side by side with a bloody carcass of a seal.

Kalland and Sejersen (2005:169) assert that “environmentalists and animal rights advocates are actually turning hunters of [seals or whales] into inhuman beasts”. However, during the interviews none of the informants that opposed seal hunting

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considered hunters as *inhuman beasts*. They are aware that living in villages is hard especially in the Russian North, and nowadays, the participation in the seal harvest and fishery remains virtually the sole opportunity to make a living for the local inhabitants. I do not argue that Kalland and Sejersen are wrong; however, in case of the Russian seal hunting, this statement is not appropriate. This is a cultural difference between the Russian and Western animal rights paradigms.

Even so, there are obvious gaps between the differences in perceptions of seals among the opponents and supporters of sealing. Such gaps have encouraged to a large extent the conflict over seal hunting in Russia.

### **5.5.5. Misunderstanding and distrust**

Another possible reason for the conflict that I state is misunderstanding between the supporters and opponents of seal hunting and distrust of the animal welfare organizations.

Firstly, misunderstanding implies debates around the whitecoat hunt. The animal rights organizations insist on the ban of the whitecoat hunt claiming that this hunting has been forbidden in the whole world except Russia. Sealers reply to them that since the nineties the whitecoat hunt has not taken place. During interviews with the anti-hunting organizations, I clarified that the organizations imply pup hunting instead of whitecoat hunting. “Whitecoat and beater are both baby seals and the difference between them is just two weeks” (Novozhilova: interview 02.11.08). During the interview with the representative of VITA Arkhangelsk (Skrobanskiy: interview 08.11.08), the informant shared an interesting consideration:

Our organization [VITA] has made a mistake by emphasizing only whitecoat hunting. In the newspaper articles covering our protest actions only whitecoats are mentioned and it is claimed that we are against whitecoat hunting. Today, whitecoats are not the target for sealers, it is beaters, especially for Rieber Skinn Pomor’e. If whitecoat

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hunting is officially banned, we will continue our struggle for a total ban. However, it will be very complicated.

In addition, there is also a misunderstanding in interpretation of seal hunting. The animal rights organizations interpret the sealing as a big problem and a threat of seal extinction. IFAW claims that “the history of wildlife conservation has shown that the commercial trade of dead animals or their parts is impossible to regulate, and usually leads to disaster for the hunted species” (IFAW 2008d). Certain characteristics of harp seals (they are long-living mammals, they reproduce in large groups, females bear only one offspring each year) make these animals more susceptible to being overhunted and becoming more endangered than others. Moreover, taking into account the fact that seal pups under one year are the main hunting targets, it should be mentioned that “behavior ecological studies suggest that the effects of removing large proportions of subadult animals may have severe consequences” (FitzGibbon 1998:460). In turn, the supporters of the seal harvest insist upon the fact that hunters do not overexploit seals and harvest is kept within the limits of quotas that are scientifically confirmed. For Pomors and sealers the sealing is a job like others and a tradition that they want to maintain.

Distrust and negative attitudes towards NGOs implies a doubt in honesty and objectivity of their intentions. I saw such attitude in the interviews with supporters of seal hunting (Esipov: interview 10.11.08; Ovchinnikov: interview 07.11.08; Moseev: interview 10.11.08) and in various articles and publications (Polovnikov 1999a, 1999b). Furthermore, a national survey dated September 2002 showed that only 3% of 1600 respondents trust the environmental NGOs. However, according to this survey, about 28% of the Russians trusted to the then President Vladimir Putin and 50-60% trusted to their friends and relatives (Remington 2004). The reasons of negative attitude might be explained by short history of NGOs in Russia and an implicit faith in authorities. In addition, the common attitude among Russians toward any help from outside is “*we know better what to do*”. The animal right organizations suggesting their ideas and

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visions provoke on the contrary negativity and even anger among local inhabitants and sealers.

This situation might be explained by a conflict of expert and lay knowledge (Skogen 2001). The environmental movements and environmental organizations “seem to display a *known-all*, patronizing attitude, rooted in a claim of superior knowledge” (ibid: 221), while lay knowledge is rarely taken seriously by experts. Gibbens argues (1990:28) that “expert systems are disembedding mechanism, (...) they remove social relation from the immediacies of context”. During the interview with the representative of Pomors (Esipov: interview 10.11.08), the informant claimed that Pomors are practically excluded from the decision-making process.

Let us abstract now and discuss an interesting finding that evolves from the discussion above. The fact that Pomors or sealers (here actors might be united) do not need and do not want any help from the outside is opposite to the statement that was given by Esipov, the Pomors’ representative (interview 10, 2008). Esipov said that Pomors and sealers are glad to receive any help from the outside. Why are there such opposite attitudes to external help among Pomors and sealers? The reason might be concealed in the different attitudes to helpers and to ways in which help is given. When help is directed to support the seal harvest, Pomors and sealers are absolutely for it. However, when the anti-hunting organizations propose help and support instead of hunting, they refuse. The motive of Pomors and sealers might be hidden in an ingrained habit and negative attitude towards any changes. As it is said that habit is a second nature, it could be difficult for Pomors to give up the habit of hunting and replace it by tourism, gathering or any other practice. This would mean infringement on the stability of their everyday life. Below I will provide some certain examples of unwillingness of Pomors to accept help.

Additionally, distrust toward the environmental NGOs might be seen in governmental and decision making circles. In the West, NGOs participate in

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political debates and have legitimate voices. In case of the Russian environmental NGOs, they generally do not participate in decision making process. Bellona argues that the access to environmental information (in spite of the fact that such information is constitutionally open) is hampered; and the Russian environmental organizations are even blamed for espionage and lobby for interests of foreign companies (Bellona 2009). Thus, Wilhelmsen (2007:15) claims that “the scale of success [for the environmental NGOs in Russia] is limited”. The reason of such distrust might be explained by the history of environmental movement in the USSR/Russia. The book “*Silent Spring*” by Rachel Carson published in 1962 was an outbreak for the public and founded a whole movement of environmentalism. In the West during last 30-40 years new disciplines like environmental sociology, environmental politics, environmental history, and environmental education have separated into separate branches of learning with their own institutions, scientific societies, courses and interdisciplinary *bridges* (Yanitsky 2008). In the West, the environmental NGOs have obtained legitimate voices in the political discourse. Policy makers, scientists, members of NGOs and volunteers work together using their knowledge and methodology to provide for better understanding of this field. However, there is little interdisciplinarity between politics, science and NGOs in Russia — what was achieved in the Soviet time has almost been destroyed in the nineties, and several decades of hard work would be needed to achieve mutual understanding and fruitful relations. I believe that the roots of such a lag are in bureaucracy, in conservatism of scientific thinking and in peculiarities of Russian culture. Yanitsky (ibid) claims that the government as a policy maker is not able to interpret scientific data, and scientists, in turn, do not have possibilities to explain it. In this case, the environmental NGOs are able to cement two parties. NGOs might argue with their objects using and interpreting scientific data. For example, in autumn 2008 IFAW achieved a decrease of seal quota and an abolition of conversion rate “one-year-old and older seal equals 2.5 pups”. The organization used the data from

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recent aerial surveys of whelping patches that demonstrated a decrease of seal population in the White Sea.

## 5.6. The alternatives of seal hunting

In addition to the main conflict over seal hunting, a dispute between the contrary parties has arisen over the possible consequences of the ban of the sealing. The supporters of the hunt claim that there are no alternatives that government, local administration or other interested individuals suggest to the local inhabitants instead of seal hunting (Shirokiy: interview 11.11.08; Moseev: interview 10.11.08). The informants (*ibid*) said that in the coastal regions the seal hunt and fishery are the only well developed business; particularly as it has infrastructure and product distribution markets. Furthermore, these activities are the only where local inhabitants can participate in.

On the other side, the opponents of the hunt<sup>22</sup> assert that the coastal region of the White Sea is incredibly scenic; it is also natural resources and cultural heritage. According to accounts of the opponents, there are a great number of possibilities to organize ethical practice and to set up profitable business instead of the cruel and inhuman hunting. Filippova (interview 05.11.08) made an example that the Republic of Karelia which voluntarily abnegated seal hunting in the 2000s has staked on its tourist potential. Today, Karelia which has almost the same nature is one of the most visited places in Russia by international and domestic tourists.

The alternatives suggested by the opponents of seal hunting are intended in the first place for the local inhabitants of coastal villages, namely Pomors. Perhaps

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<sup>22</sup> Filippova: interview 05.11.08; Novozhilova: interview 02.11.08; Skrobanskiy: interview 08.11.08; Prodan: interview 12.11.08.

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Pomors are given more consideration than other interested parties because of their vulnerable situation. Pomors are the most socially and economically exposed actors in the conflict and the most defenseless party concerning possible consequences of the ban of the seal harvest (Esipov: interview 10.11.08).

### 5.6.1. Ecotourism

The most widespread alternatives to seal hunting that opponents<sup>23</sup> suggest is ecotourism in the region which is “a treasure of opportunities for tourism” (Novozhilova 2008:52; my translation). According to Chardonnet *et al.* (2002:17), “the non-consumptive use of wildlife is mostly based on the aesthetic values of wildlife”. Nowadays, ecotourism including bird-watching, animal-watching, safari is growing rapidly in the world. In the Arkhangelsk region, the opponents suggest replacing of seals killing by seal-watching — a helicopter excursion to whelping grounds on ice floe taking place from late February to mid-March. It should be mentioned that in Canada seal-watching is already highly developed and widespread<sup>24</sup>.

The first step towards development of ecotourism in the region has already stated. In 2002, opponents of seal hunting founded the club “Animate nature” (“Живая природа”). Through the efforts of participants of the club, the first touristic “camp-hotel” was built and named “Letnyaya Zolotitsa”, in the coastal village by the same name. In spring 2008, the hotel received the first visitors — the participants of the anti-hunting campaign “Cruelty-free zone”. In addition to seal-watching, the club offers bird-watching and whale-watching, active tourism

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<sup>23</sup> Filippova: interview 05.11.08; Novozhilova: interview 02.11.08; Prodan: interview 12.11.08.

<sup>24</sup> The 7-8 day tour in Canada costs 4,900-5,100 US dollars (NHA 2009).



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(skiing, skating, sledging), extreme sport (ice diving), spa treatment and other activities (WDC 2008). The magazine Forbes (Forbes Style 2008) included the hotel in the shortlist of the ten best country hotels of Russia. Oleg Prodan, the director of the club and hotel, claimed that 200-300 tourists taking part in seal-watching can make a larger profit than a profit from seal hunting (interview 12.11.08). Seal-watching is an expensive kind of tourism, mostly because of the high price for fuel and aviation. An approximate price of a two- to five-day tour is 3,500-4,500 Euros. Like all new businesses, the hotel offers actual new jobs for local people and the business creates demand in additional services, such as for transportation and for food. During the interview, I was told that the director of the hotel has faced a problem that local inhabitants did not want to work there:

At first the local people distrusted the idea of organization of the hotel. Nobody wanted to work at the hotel. Then, they have realized that the hotel works well and it is a great opportunity to find a job. Now people work with readiness and pleasure. They like to work. They even want to work more. Today about twenty Pomors work at the hotel. But this is not a limit. (Prodan: interview 12.11.08).

In the anthology *“The Thoughts on the White Sea Seal”* (Polovnikov 1999c) on defense of seal hunting, the author calls suggestions of IFAW to organize tourism, such as seal-watching, a “Canadian bluffing” (ibid: 123). They add that “Pomors are hunters but not tour guides” (ibid: 150; my translation). The situation that the authors describe is that in spring, 1995 the founder of IFAW Brian Davies on his visit to Arkhangelsk presumably offered the head of the association of fishing kolkhozes D. Volonetz a sum of money in exchange for closing of the hunt and organization of ecotourism in the coastal villages. Polovnikov (1999a) supposes that behind this offer the actual interests of anti-hunting activists were hidden. The author (ibid) also complains about that there is unhealthy and biased interest of the animal rights activists (who see too much risk for the seal population exactly in the hunt in the White Sea) and that the many facts about Canadian and Russian hunt are misinterpreted by the opponents of the seal harvest. For instance, the hidden facts are that 14-days-old and older

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seals are still target of hunters in Canada and the total Canadian catches are higher than the Russian ones. During the interviews with the representatives of Pomors (Esipov: interview 10.11.08; Moseev: interview 10.11.08), I was told that they are not against the development of ecotourism in the region. However, they consider it as an addition to seal hunting and fishery. Moseev added that “we will see what is better for Pomors” (interview 10.11.08).

### **5.6.2. The production of laminaria**

Laminaria is brown seaweed of the genus *Laminaria* having large fluted leathery fronds (Collins 1999). Laminaria planting in natural conditions possesses a great number of useful properties. Firstly, laminaria is a source for medicines and biologically active supplements, a source for agar-agar (using in confectionary industry). Secondly, laminaria is a source for food and cosmetic industries. In addition, the seaweed is regularly used as a nutritional medium for planting cell culture in research activity.

The representatives of VITA and VITA Arkhangelsk (Novozhilova: interview 02.11.08; Skrobanskiy: interview 08.11.08) claim that laminaria gathering is more promising business than seal hunting. Laminaria gathering is not a costly and labour-intensive practice. It provides five-month job (from June to October), higher salary, accommodation and food during gathering. The White Sea is one of the two places where laminaria grows in Russia. The second place is the Pacific shore of the Far East. Harvesting laminaria takes place in the basin of the Solovetsky Islands, along Summer and Onega Coasts (see Map 1.). However, the current situation is not encouraging. There is a seaweed factory in Arkhangelsk (“Архангельский опытный водорослевый комбинат”) — the unique factory in Russia and CIS — and it is hardly operating. In 2005, only 15% of the total quota was used by two enterprises (AAO 2006).

Moreover, the situation with seaweed *Focus* also does not look favorable. In 2005, the catch was 6 tonnes of seaweed focus that was only 0.8% of the quota.

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One of the possible reasons of failure was the lack of vessels at operating teams and the lack of production facilities for primary treatment of seaweed. Nowadays, Russia imports cultured laminaria products from abroad, namely from China, instead of using domestically planted seaweed.

### **5.6.3. The traditional practices**

There are various old traditional and ethical and the Soviet time practices that might replace seal hunting in the region. The opponents of the hunt insist that the traditional practices could be more profitable and easier for local inhabitants. The representative of VITA (Novozhilova: interview 02.11.08) have counted about 50 traditional activities including potato planting, salt production, wood handicraft, berrying (cloudberries, cranberries, stone brambles, bilberries) and mushrooms gathering. In the past, agriculture and farming were well-developed in the region even in spite of adverse weather conditions. Nowadays, agriculture and farming are on the decline and enormous efforts and capital investments are needed to recover it. Cloudberries are expensive<sup>25</sup> and valuable berries that are well spread in forests and bogs of the Arkhangelsk region. Many restaurants in Arkhangelsk and even in Moscow and St. Petersburg would be glad to have dishes of cloudberries on their tables (Filippova: interview 05.11.08; Prodan: interview 12.11.08). The berrying does not require capital investments or infrastructure, just a bast basket. Mushroom gathering shares similar advantages from a business point of view. Undoubtedly, the disadvantage of gathering is that it is not an annual practice and varies during a year. One might argue that the seal harvest is also not an annual and year-round practice. Another disadvantage is relatively a short storage time of berries and mushrooms. Especially, it concerns remote

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<sup>25</sup> The cost of tree-litre bottle varies from 500 to 1,000 rubles (approximately 17-33 US dollars).

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coastal villages where the transport service between villages and the district centre is not developed well, while sales of berries in the same villages are pointless. Firstly, people do not have extra money to buy it and, secondly, they are able to gather berries themselves. However, in villages there is an old common practice of pickling and sealing berries and mushrooms in jars. These products can be sold when an opportunity presents itself.

#### **5.6.4. The complications for the development of alternative practices**

As we see from the statements above, there are numerous activities that might be undertaken by Pomors instead of seal hunting. However, there are a great number of complications and barriers that are obstacles to the development of these alternatives practices. The first one that the informants<sup>26</sup> note is a lack of initiatives in the coastal villages. It implies that local administration does not show any initiative in the development of rural areas. In the past, there was the state program of consolidation of young people in villages; houses and schools were built, living in villages was well-organized and developed. After the USSR collapse it was gone and lost (Shirokiy: interview 11.11.08). One might assume that nowadays for the economic reason and social backwardness of the state, the government and, consequently, the officials from the local administration are occupied with other problems.

The heads of local fishing kolkhozes do not take an initiative because they are absolutely not interested in it. They make a stable profit from fishing, selling of seal quotas or/and leasing of vessels and other infrastructures of kolkhozes or even from plundering (Prodan: interview 12.11.08). The Russian common

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<sup>26</sup> Filippova: interview 05.11.08; Prodan: interview 12.11.08; Skrobanskiy: interview 08.11.08.

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proverb might describe the situation — “My house is aside, I know nothing”<sup>27</sup> what means that nobody is interested in others’ problems and do not try to solve them. Obviously, one might claim that there are many such proverbs in other cultures. However, from my experience of living in Russia, I could say with confidence that unfortunately many Russians, especially officials, seem to apply this proverb at every turn.

Another barrier to implement alternatives to seal hunting is unwillingness and distrust towards any new changes among local people. According to the interviews (Filippova: interview 05.11.08; Prodan: interview 12.11.08), people in villages drink alcohol, namely cheap vodka. It should be mentioned that this situation is common for the Russian remote places. The lack of jobs and any entertainment have caused mass drunkenness in villages. Thus, it is hard to revert to habit of working (Prodan: interview 12.11.08). The same thing about Siberian hunters is also noted by the Danish anthropologist Rene Willerslev (2007) in his book “*Soul Hunters*”. The hotel keeper (Prodan: interview 12.11.08) said that he is encountering the problem of drunkenness of service staff in his hotel. It is interesting to add that in the interviews with the hunters (Shirokiy: interview 11.11.08; Ovchinnikov: interview 07.11.08) they stressed that there is an unspoken dry law between sealers during the hunt. Basically, it is explained that being drunk on ice floe is a great risk of one’s life. In villages where social and economic problems are going on, there is no person who can deliver an initiative. In the beginning of the nineties, there were initiatives from IFAW and a head of kolkhoz Sergey Paholov (the actual president of the Rieber Skinn Pomor’e Company). IFAW supplied the equipment for vacuum packing and Paholov

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<sup>27</sup> In Russian “Моя хата с краю, ничего не знаю”.

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supplied freezing plants to a coastal village. However, after several years the equipment became unusable from disuse. (Filippova: interview 05.11.08).

The representative of VITA Arkhangelsk (Skrobanskiy: interview 08.11.08) noted in the interview that Pomors are executors. “Give them a hook — they will hunt, but give them bast basket — they will gather”. Thus, without other alternatives Pomors have no choice but to participate in the seal harvest and, thus, are interested in continuing the hunt.

I believe that the complications for the development of alternatives in the region are not confined only by the lack of initiative and distrust towards changes. First of all, one should be aware that only the inhabitants of three coastal villages and a dozen townsmen from Arkhangelsk participate in the hunt. Thus, for replacing the seal hunting the alternatives should be set up in these villages and proposed to the local dwellers. However, today there are no possible alternatives of sealing in the villages. Firstly, ecotourism as well as the necessary transport system and infrastructure are not developed. The hotel “Letnyaya Zolotitsa” is situated in hundreds kilometers away from the hunting area and could not offer jobs for inhabitants of Koida, Verhnyaya and Nizhnyaya Zolotitsa. The hotel might be considered as only a good example of developing ecotourism in the region. Sites of laminaria gathering are also located away from the villages, and it is probably inconvenient for dwellers of the villages to take part in this practice. Gathering of berries and mushrooms might be considered as an addition to a main work due to its seasonality and other disadvantages.

## Chapter 6. Conclusion

In this chapter I will discuss the function of the conflict and possible ways out. As a conclusion I will present the summary of findings and the answers to the main questions of the study. At the end I will state my recommendations.

### 6.1. The function of the conflict

The major function of the conflict is its informational and enlightening roles. The controversy over seal hunting has spilled over into central and local newspapers and magazines and is under way in state and public, domestic and international organizations. The number of articles and publications has grown markedly since the nineties. Especially, the conflict gained in strength before and during hunt seasons. I became *a victim* to current debates in press — in February, 2008 I read an article that covered the problem of seal hunting in Russia and has taken an interest in it. Thus, I have to claim that the propaganda function of the conflict works properly.

In addition, the function of conflict implies the consequences of conflict for the opposition parties themselves and for a society. For this reason, social conflicts are important causes of social changes. Certainly, the conflict over seal hunting would not cause a revolution or cardinal changes in the country. However, the interest in seal hunting has increased in the Russian society enormously since the anti-hunting organizations have been operating in Russia. On March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008 an action of VITA in Arkhangelsk was “the largest animal protection campaign in the city — about 60 people came to the action” (Skrobanskiy: interview 08.11.08). In April 2008, 350,000 signatures of Russians against seal hunting were collected and taken to the Russian Ministry of Natural Recourses by IFAW (Filippova: interview 05.11.08). Debates of supporters and opponents of the seal

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hunting in social networks like Live Journal and VKontakte ([www.vkontakte.ru](http://www.vkontakte.ru)) in spring 2008 and 2009 were heated and sharp.

## 6.2. The possible ways out and complications for settlement of the conflict

Here I will answer the third research question — what are the possible ways out of the conflicts and their complications. The study of conflict implies the prediction of the conflict. Simmel claimed that there are three possible ways out of conflict — victory of one of the parties, conciliation of the parties or compromise between parties (Simmel 1890 after Stepanenkova 1999). In the case of seal hunting in Russia, the most probable result is the victory of one of the interested parties (namely, the opponents of the seal hunting). By *victory* I mean the achievement of objects of the party that were discussed above. Conciliation of parties is only a postponement of conflict settlement and in future conflict will erupt over and over again until it is eventually resolved.

The compromise in the conflict over seal hunting is impossible since there is *zero-sum thinking* among the interested parties. As it was mentioned in the theoretical chapter, zero-sum thinking implies that there is no way for both parties to achieve their contrary goals (Pruitt and Kim 2004). The animal rights organizations do not want seals to be killed. On the other side, there are the Pomors and sealers who want to take part in the hunt. There are obviously two opposite goals. However, compromise in conflict is possible in case if one party completely wins and another party is compensated for by other values (Simmel 1890 after Stepanenkova 1999). In this case, a compliant party would be Pomors and/or sealers. For them, equivalent values might be achieving of status of indigenous people and/or developing alternative activities to seal hunting.



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### 6.2.1. If the animal rights organizations win

The victory of the anti-hunting organizations means the ban of seal hunting in Russia. However, what do IFAW and VITA imply by the ban of seal hunting — a complete ban, a ban of commercial hunting or a ban of whitecoat hunting?

Above I have written about the misunderstanding of VITA's object of concerning the whitecoat hunting. If the whitecoat hunting is officially banned and VITA continues the struggle, the attitude of people and officials towards activities of the organization can be changed for the worse.

It will turn out that we will supposedly get what we were struggling for, and our opponents will use the ban of whitecoat hunting as a trump card against our attempts to the further struggle" (Skrobanskiy: interview 08.11.08).

Skrobanskiy claimed that in this case subsequent activities of VITA would not to be trusted and would not carry any weight in future.

The representatives of VITA (Novozhilova: interview 02.11.08; Sabinin: interview 02.11.08) consider that it is not important to save the traditional method of seal hunting among Pomors and call the seal hunt a bloody trade and, moreover, claim that the participation and even the observation of the seal hunting have a negative influence on human brain. During the interview with the representative of IFAW (Filippova: interview 05.11.08), the informant, in turn, insisted just on the ban of the commercial hunting (pup hunting in the first place) and did not object to the traditional hunting in case if the Pomors achieve the status of indigenous people. By the traditional hunting IFAW means the hunt that took place hundreds years ago, i.e. using the Pomor traditional flat-bottomed boats (instead of helicopters and diesel boats) and hooks, hunting on sea coasts with relatively low catches, traditionally utilizing seal products, and participating merely coastal dwellers.

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In case of the ban of one-year-old seal hunting, the hunt will not take place in future. The ban of one-year-old seal hunting is equal to a complete ban of seal hunting in Russia (Esipov: interview 10.11.08). One-year-old and older seals are not easy to catch (by hook or shoot) in comparison with whitecoats and beaters that are sedentary and do not go into the water. Adult seals are mobile and fast and can be aggressive. Furthermore, the kolkhozes and companies are not greatly interested in adult seals' pelts — the quality of their pelts is poor and market value is reduced. The one possible reason of establishing Rieber Skinn in Russia was that the company is interested in beaters' pelts. According to the data (App. III), the catch of the company in last year (spring 2008) was 12,000 beaters. Thus, in case of the ban of pup hunting, Rieber Skinn will not be interested in continuing business in Russia and will return to Canada where the pup hunting is not forbidden so far.

The logical question that appears after the discussion above is if there is an illegal seal hunting that can be present after an official ban. During the interviews (Shirokiy: interview 11.11.08; Moseev: interview 10.11.08), I was assured that the seal poaching has never taken place and does not take place in the White Sea. The production of pelts from harvesting to transportation is labour-intensive process and requires special equipment and treatment. Thus, the probability of the appearance of poaching after the ban of seal hunting is negligibly small.

On the other hand, the ban of commercial sealing might develop into a new conflict. For this once, the initiators of the conflict would be sealers and the Pomors who will be not allowed to participate in the seal hunting. Here one might quote Simmel that conflict is a universal phenomenon and its solution is provisional (Simmel 1890 after Stepanenkova 1999).

### **6.2.2. If Pomors achieve the status**

If Pomors achieve the status of indigenous people of the Russian North, will this affect the present hunt? The status of indigenous people implies freely hunting

(animals and marine mammals) and fishing for community's needs in the White Sea and in rivers and traditional utilization of the seal products. During the interviews with the representatives of Pomors<sup>28</sup>, I was told that the achievement of the status will not primarily concern seal harvest. The main reason why Pomors and their representatives are actively seeking the status is to get allowance for free riverside and coastal fishing. Today, without the status and other permissions any attempt to fish (but with a fishing rod) by Pomors is considered poaching. Furthermore, as it was noted above, the Pomors do not possess special equipment and funding for hunting. Even if they are given special boats from Rieber Skinn (as the company plans to do) and are able to take the sea and coastal zone, catches will be insignificant and mostly for individual's or community's needs.

### 6.3. Summary of findings

Through the analysis I have demonstrated findings that I have obtained in the interviews with actors in the conflict over seal hunting in Russia and through textual analysis. Here I will present the major findings and answers to the research questions — what is the matter of the conflict?; who are the main actors in the conflict?; what are the conditions that encouraged the conflict?

The conflict over seal hunting in Russia presents a struggle of one people for the ban of the harvest and the confrontation of others. The conflict had been latent for a long time and became a manifest conflict since the animal rights organizations set up their offices in the post-Soviet Russia. The main parties of the conflict might be divided into two camps — the supporters (Pomors,

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<sup>28</sup> Esipov: interview 10.11.08; Ovchinnikov: interview 07.11.08; Moseev: interview 10.11.08.

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inhabitants of coastal villages, hunters/sealers, heads of fishing kolkhozes, fishers) and the opponents of seal hunting (the anti-hunting organizations and their activists, defenders of animal welfare and rights). The object of the conflict is tangible and spiritual for the supporters of the hunt and spiritual for the opponents. The conflict is characterized by impossibility of the victory of both parties.

The conflict gained strength when the Norwegian company Rieber Skinn established a daughter company in the Arkhangelsk region in 2007. The animal rights activists are concerned about that this might change the situation and revive the seal hunt which was decreasing in the 2000s.

There is a multifaceted complex of the reasons that have encouraged the conflict — perception of nature as a commodity among Russians, political changes in the nineties and complicated economic situation as an echo of the Soviet planned economics, the short term history of animal rights movement in Russia and distrust of the environmental NGOs on decision-making level, non-recognition of indigenous status of the Pomors, traditionality of seal hunting among Pomors, socio-cultural features among inhabitants of the Russian North and *a mysterious Russian soul*.

The main participants of sealing harvest are officially unrecognized indigenous people of the Russian North, Pomors, living in the White Sea coast. The seal hunt is a traditional practice of Pomors that numbers many centuries. However, the old traditional methods have almost been lost. According to the Pomors' representatives, the socio-cultural and economic prosperity of Pomors is closely linked to the continued use of marine resources, especially seals and fish. Basically, it is because the seal hunt along with fishery is almost sole occupations in the coastal villages. However, there are merely up to six hundred people involved in the hunt, and the sealing ban most likely will not cause dramatic consequences for the coastal dwellers. Nevertheless, due to the lack of

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sociological and anthropological researches on this subject one might meet various obstacles foretelling the social and economic consequences of the ban.

There are diversified alternatives to seal hunting in the region — ecotourism, production of laminaria, and traditional practices. However, there are a large number of obstacles on the way to development of these alternatives: the lack of initiatives of the local administration and in the coastal villages; unwillingness and distrust towards any new changes among local inhabitants; financial problems; seasonality and variety during a year of gathering practices; backwardness of infrastructure and transportation in the region.

## 6.4. Final remarks

The major problem that I met while writing this paper is a lack of open and official information about the seal hunt in the Arkhangelsk region. In the report “*Assessment of the Potential Impact of a Ban of Products Derived from Seal Species*” (COWI 2008), the authors were not able to summarize the description of the practices and context of the hunt due to the lack of sufficient information. The information presented in the report was only received from IFAW. The major need is open and easily accessible information sources that present data about the hunt (dates, number of vessels and hunters, killing methods), about participants of the hunt (sealers’ age, residence, salary, and fishing kolkhozes’ catches, profits, import), about seal products, about export of the products and so forth.

It should be mentioned that today there is no monitoring during the hunt. There is a representative quote from the newspaper article (Zvonarev 2008:4) of an anonymous sealer that took part in the seal harvest in season 2008:

They [seals] are very tenacious: I hit and hit, but they still moved. Once an alive seal came out from a pile of dead seals and tried to roll overboard, so sealers finished off the seal by hooks. Or a kolkhoz

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member started disemboweling a seal and it appeared to be alive (my translation).

This is not a unique example of improper treatment of seals during the hunt that I have met in publications (e.g., Percev 2008). The hunt should be monitored by the third party. The third party should supervise the observance of the norms and animal welfare principles. The monitoring of the seal harvest and following publication of information about the hunt should be conducted at the local administration level. It is also necessary to publish an official handbook that would state harvesting, killing and handling methods and to train hunters according to these norms.

There is a lack of modern sociological and anthropological researches, interviews and a public opinion poll of inhabitants of the White Sea coast participating in the seal harvest. It is necessary to conduct the investigations either by local administration or by researchers. Without such information it is hard to give a precise assessment of the social and economic consequences of the ban of seal hunting among the coastal dwellers. At the beginning of the work on this project, the main intention was to study the economic and socio-cultural aspects of the seal hunting among sealers. However, remoteness of villages and limitation of time and money did not allow implementing this intention.

Finally, I argue that the variance in perception of nature between actors in the conflict is the principal condition of the conflict. These perceptions of nature among the supporters and opponents of the seal hunting are incompatible. The differences in the perception of nature explain the differences in the view on the management of seals — the *animal rights* position and the *consumptive utilization* position. The rest of the examined reasons of the conflict are collateral ones; however, these reasons are escalating the conflict and are creating complications for settlement of it. The activity of the animal rights organizations in Russia is attended with difficulties due to the short-term history of animal

rights movement and subsequent distrust among Russian population and official decision-makers. It is obvious that in case of a ban of one-year-old seal hunting, the harvest will not take place in future. The achievement of the indigenous status by Pomors will not considerably affect the seal harvesting, but according to Pomors, it will make their lives better.

## 6.5. Post scriptum

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009 the Russian government officially banned the hunt of the one-year-old seals. This year (spring 2009) the hunt has not already taken place. Most probably, the ban has determined harp seal hunting in Russia. So, a reader might read the findings and conclusion chapters in the past tense. Pomors and sealers disapprove of the decision about the seal hunting ban. Pomors have not yet received the status of indigenous people. The animal right organizations continue their animal protection work. However, there is unofficial information that IFAW is shutting down its operations in Russia probably due to the victory in the struggle and the financial crisis.

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## Appendix I. List of interviews

Esipov, Pavel: The chief of the Council of the National Cultural Autonomy of Pomors. Arkhangelsk: November 10, 2008

Filippova, Anna: The project manager of IFAW. Moscow: November 5, 2008

Ovchinnikov, Aleksey: The managing editor of the Agency of Environmental Information "Econet". Arkhangelsk: November 7, 2008

Moseev, Ivan: The chief of the National Cultural Center "Pomorskoe Vozrozhdenie" (the Pomor Revival). Arkhangelsk: November 10, 2008

Novozhilova, Irina: The chief executive of VITA. Moscow: November 2, 2008

Prodan, Oleg: The director of the tourist base "Letnyaya Zolotitsa" and the Club "Zhivaya Priroda". Arkhangelsk: November 12, 2008

Rassolov, Aleksandr: Hunter (retired), Pomors. Arkhangelsk: November 11, 2008

Sabinin, Konstantin: The project manager of VITA. Moscow: November 2, 2008

Shirokiy, Michael: The head of the fishing kolkhoz "Beloe More". Arkhangelsk: November 11, 2008

Skrobanskiy, Aleksey: The project manager of VITA Arkhangelsk. Arkhangelsk: November 8, 2008

## Appendix II. Questionnaires

### A. Interviews with the representatives of the animal rights organizations (Filippova, Novozhilova, Sabinin, Skrobanskiy):

1. Name of the informant and position in the organization.
2. Name and profile of the organization.
3. Is seal hunting the main area of a struggle of the organization?
4. Does the organization struggle for a total seal hunting ban or a whitecoat hunting ban? What is the priority?
5. What tactics has the organization chosen in the struggle for a ban of seal hunting? What actions does the organization plan in future?
6. How you think why a law of a seal hunting ban has passed yet? Who are interested in continuous sealing?
7. What do you think about a new Norwegian-Russian company Rieber Skinn Pomor'e?
8. What do you think about problems of Pomors? Do you think that Pomors are indigenous people?
9. Do you think that it is important to save traditional methods of seal hunting among Pomors? If yes, what is the traditional seal hunting in your opinion?
10. What do you think about alternatives to seal hunting in region? For example, traditional practices or ecotourism? Do you think it is possible to set up these alternatives in the region?

**B. Interviews with the representatives of Pomors (Esipov, Moseev, Ovchinnikov):**

1. Name of the informant and position in the organization.
2. Name and profile of the organization.
3. How long does the organization exist?
4. Why has the issue about Pomors status appeared recently? Why not in the USSR?
5. Tell about the current situation with the status of Pomors.
6. Why do you want to be given this status?
7. How will the status affect Pomors? Do you think the life of Pomors will be better having this status?
8. What is the seal hunting for Pomors?
9. In the case of the status, what will happen with seal hunting?
10. What do you think about the animal rights organizations and their actions against the seal hunting?
11. How will the ban of seal hunting affect Pomors?
12. What do you think about new Norwegian-Russian company Rieber Skinn Pomor'e?
13. What do you think about alternatives to seal hunting in region? For example, traditional practices or ecotourism? Do you think it is possible to set up these alternatives in the region?

C. Interview with the director of the tourist hotel “Letnyaya Zolotitsa” and the Club “Zhivaya Priroda” (Prodan):

1. Name of the informant and position in the organization.
2. Name and profile of the organization.
3. What is the concept of the Club “Zhivaya Priroda”?
4. How long has the tourist hotel been operating?
5. Who works on the tourist hotel? Local inhabitants?
6. How many visitors is the tourist hotel able to accommodate per year?
7. What kind of recreations does the tourist hotel offer to visitors?
8. How does seal-watching go?
9. Is this activity intended for upper-income tourists?
10. What do you think about problems of Pomors? Do you think that Pomors are indigenous people?
11. Do you think that it is important to save traditional methods of the seal hunting among Pomors? If yes, what is the traditional seal hunting by your opinion?
12. Do you think ecotourism is able to replace seal hunting?

#### D. Interviews with sealers (Ovchinnikov, Shirokiy):

1. Name of the informant.
2. Do you take part or did you take part in the seal hunting? How many years have you been taking part in seal hunting?
3. Who taught you how to hunt? How old were you?
4. Do you remember your first memory associated with seal hunting?
5. Is seal hunting your main occupation?
6. How do you prepare for the next season?
7. How does seal hunting go on?
8. What is the main object of hunting?
9. What happens with the catch after hunting?
10. Which parts of seal do you use — meat, fur, leather, blubber, — and how?
11. What is the seal hunting for you — the way to gain money or the tradition of your forefathers?
12. What is seal for you?
13. Do you teach your sons how to hunt? If yes, why do you think it is important? Do you think they are interested in it?
14. If seal hunting is forbidden, how will it affect you and your life?

### E. Interview with a hunter (Rassolov):

1. Name of the informant.
2. How many years have you been hunting?
3. Who taught you how to hunt? How old were you?
4. Do you remember your first memory associated with the hunting?
5. Was the hunting your main occupation?
6. Do you have a rifle or other tools for hunting or products from animals at home?
7. Do you teach your sons how to hunt? If yes, why do you think it is important? Do you think they are interested in it?
8. Are you Pomor?
9. If yes, do you want to be given the status of indigenous people of Russia?
10. How will your life change having this status? Do you think it will help you?



## Appendix III

### *Catches of the harp seals in the White Sea, 1875-2008*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Pups</b>	<b>1 year and Older</b>	<b>Total</b>
1875-1880 <sup>a</sup>	n/a	n/a	30700
1881-1885 <sup>a</sup>	n/a	n/a	26600
1886-1890 <sup>a</sup>	n/a	n/a	19100
1891-1895 <sup>a</sup>	n/a	n/a	23600
1896-1900 <sup>a</sup>	n/a	n/a	57100
1901-1905 <sup>a</sup>	n/a	n/a	33900
1906-1910 <sup>a</sup>	n/a	n/a	21800
1911-1915 <sup>a</sup>	n/a	n/a	46300
1916-1920 <sup>a</sup>	n/a	n/a	37800
1921-1925 <sup>a</sup>	n/a	n/a	70400
1926-1930 <sup>a</sup>	n/a	n/a	140500
1931-1935 <sup>a</sup>	n/a	n/a	141100
1936-1940 <sup>a</sup>	n/a	n/a	95300
1941-1945 <sup>a</sup>	n/a	n/a	55000
1946-1950 <sup>b</sup>	90031	55285	145316
1951-1955 <sup>b</sup>	59190	65463	124653
1956-1960 <sup>b</sup>	58824	34605	93429
1961-1965 <sup>b</sup>	46293	22875	69168
1966-1970 <sup>b</sup>	21186	410	21596
1971 <sup>b</sup>	26666	1002	27668
1972 <sup>b</sup>	30635	500	31135
1973 <sup>b</sup>	29950	813	30763
1974 <sup>b</sup>	29006	500	29506
1975 <sup>b</sup>	29000	500	29500
1976 <sup>b</sup>	29050	498	29548
1977 <sup>b</sup>	34007	1488	35495
1978 <sup>b</sup>	30548	994	31542
1979 <sup>b</sup>	34000	1000	35000
1980 <sup>b</sup>	34500	2000	36500
1981 <sup>b</sup>	39700	3866	43566

<b>Year</b>	<b>Pups</b>	<b>1 year and Older</b>	<b>Total</b>
1982 <sup>b</sup>	48504	10000	58504
1983 <sup>b</sup>	54000	10000	64000
1984 <sup>b</sup>	58153	6942	65095
1985 <sup>b</sup>	52000	9043	61043
1986 <sup>b</sup>	53000	8132	61132
1987 <sup>b</sup>	42400	3397	45797
1988 <sup>b</sup>	51990	2501	54491
1989 <sup>b</sup>	30989	2475	33464
1990 <sup>b</sup>	30500	1957	32457
1991 <sup>b</sup>	30500	1980	32480
1992 <sup>b</sup>	28351	2739	31090
1993 <sup>b</sup>	31000	500	31500
1994 <sup>b</sup>	30500	2000	32500
1995 <sup>b</sup>	29144	500	29644
1996 <sup>b</sup>	31000	528	31528
1997 <sup>b</sup>	31319	61	31380
1998 <sup>b</sup>	13350	20	13370
1999 <sup>b</sup>	34850	0	34850
2000 <sup>b</sup>	38302	111	38413
2001 <sup>b</sup>	39111	5	39116
2002 <sup>b</sup>	34187	0	34187
2003 <sup>b</sup>	37939	0	37939
2004 <sup>b</sup>	0	0	0
2005 <sup>b</sup>	14258	19	14277
2006 <sup>b</sup>	7005	102	7107
2007 <sup>b</sup>	5276	200	5476
2008 <sup>b</sup>	13331	0	13331

Sources: a - Potelov 1999, b - ICES 2008

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## Appendix IV

### *Sealing regulation for the Soviet Union/Russia, 1979-2008*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Quota-Allocation</b>
1979-1980	34000
1981	42500
1982	57500
1983	64000
1984	62000
1985-1986	61000
1987	61000
1988	53400
1989-1994	30500
1995	31250
1996	30500
1997-1998	35000
1999	16400
2000	22700
2001	48000
2002	48000
2003	43000
2004	35100
2005	35100
2006	68200
2007	63200
2008	45100

Source: ICES 2008