

# Lives on the Move: Long-distance Commute Workers in North-Western Siberian Oil and Gas Industries

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## Abstract

This talk presents a new research project at the Department for Geography and Regional Research at the University of Vienna, Austria (duration 2010-2013) that explores the itinerant lifestyles of so called *Vakhtoviki*, the long-distance commute workers (LDC), in the oil and gas industries of the Russian Far North. Labour force provision in remote and climatically harsh regions around the polar circle has been a major issue in the creation of a successful energy sector since the Soviet Union era onwards. Today, LDC have become an increasingly important work force due to the fact that Russia's hydrocarbon extraction sites are continuously shifting northwards beyond the polar circle. The lives of LDC are shaped by three meaningful spaces *Home – Journey – on Duty* which are the prime foci of this research. Understanding the coping strategies, motivation for and objection to LDC is a crucial basis for perspectives on labour potentials in a sector where demand for highly skilled workers is enormous. Furthermore, sending regions of LDC in central Russia benefit in socio-economic terms from this relatedness with the northern oil and gas regions. The core aim of this interdisciplinary endeavour by Social Geography and Social Anthropology is to explore from a micro-level and qualitative empirical perspective the social-spatial impacts of the LDC. We aim to a more in-depth understanding of the complexity of natural resources, sustainable labour force provision, social-spatial peculiarities, and related power structures in these remote resource-rich territories.