

University of Helsinki
Social and Cultural Anthropology Visiting Seminars 2015-2016

Friday, March 11, 2016
14.15-15.45
Unioninkatu 35 Room 114

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"Nation within the nation: Cultural citizenship as a tool in struggle for land and against migration in the Republic of Sakha, Russian Far East"

Abstract:

In my talk I challenge the political studies approach of the Russian Federation as a monolithic entity with strict top down subordination structure. My research shows that after open struggle for sovereignty and autonomy in the 1990s Russian regions continue to struggle for more independence now but in a less confrontational form. In this process non-Russian regions of the Russian federation make use of a federal legislation that guarantees cultural and language rights for non-Russian ethnicities. In the first part of my talk I give a brief overview how federal reforms of centralisation have strengthened ethnocracy in the Republic of Sakha. In the second part of my talk I discuss how Sakha culture and language is instrumentalised in the Republic of Sakha to legitimize ethnic domination of the titular ethnic group in politics and economy. The attempts to dominate social, cultural, political and economic spheres in the republic are manifold. On the one hand, Sakha people have strengthened the position of the Sakha language and presence of ethnic Sakha in the political life of the republic against the Russian domination in the past. On the other hand, Sakha culture is used to fight the Central Asian and Caucasian migration. I will discuss several strategies that the government applies in order to emphasise the 'Sakhanisation' of physical and social space that are discretely dominated by migrants.