

SUMMARY

The book examines the practice of ethnological expertise conducted in the Russian North, Siberia, and the Far East in the post-Soviet period. The topic is viewed in a broad historical and social context through the prism of practical field experience. The author examines the sources, methods, scenarios, and actors of ethnological expertise from order to execution and from conception to realization. Thus, the book identifies and systematizes methods and technologies of rapid scientific response to complex situations that carry risks for ethnic communities. The focus is on developing a unified algorithm of ethno-expertise, which would facilitate the practice of its application.

The chapter “*History of Scientific and Practical Expertise*” surveys the historical development of ethno-expertise over time, from situational demands for ethnologists’ involvement to the formation of modern concepts and approaches.

The “*Backstory*” section shows that if we understand ethnological expertise as a study of an ethnic community on a particular assignment, its history should be traced back to the origins of Russian ethnography itself, which grew up as scientific knowledge for administrative needs, self-knowledge, and self-organization of the empire. The science of the peoples as an inventory of human resources, including ethnicities, underwent a significant update every time the political power changed. However, until the early twentieth century, the involvement of ethnographers in solving practical problems concerning ethnicities was situational.

The section “*Staff Reports: The Soviet Version of Ethno-Expertise*” draws on the analysis of internal staff reports from the mid-1950^s to the early 1990^s and analyzes the practice of Soviet ethno-expertise. Soviet scientists monitored the state of ethnic communities as planned long-term expertise under a unified program throughout the Soviet North. Ethnographers, generally following the ideological and political guidelines of the authorities, tried to adjust the policy of the Soviet state towards the peoples of the North. Relying on their expert surveys, they criticized the

conversion to sedentarization, the introduction of a southern-type agricultural production in the North, and the administrators' lack of ethnographic knowledge; they discussed and proposed innovations in economics, technology, material culture, etc.

The “*Modern Concepts and Approaches*” section systematizes theoretical and methodological principles of ethno-expertise developed during the post-Soviet period, resulting from the increased demand for ethnological knowledge in state institutions.

“*The Problem of Legislative Institutionalization of Ethno-Expertise*” section surveys the evolution of legal regulations of ethno-expertise in the country. All lawmaking initiatives began after the 1993 Russian Constitution introduced the status of indigenous small-numbered peoples of the Russian Federation. The legal definition of ethnological expertise appeared in the Federal Law of 1999. This legislation aimed to regulate the responsibilities of economic agents engaged in developing natural resources of the territories before the local communities. Since then, attempts to improve the existing laws on ethno-expertise by amending or creating a new document have been made repeatedly, but to no avail. The Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) is the only constituent entity of the Russian Federation where ethno-ethnographic expertise is funded by the state and is regulated at the regional level. The book distinguishes between two different concepts: “state ethnological expertise” and “ethnological environmental impact assessment.” The former is a tool used by the state; however, it employs the latter’s methods and materials.

The “*Social Impact Assessment: International Expert Experience*” section analyzes the comparable international practice. SIA is a methodology used to evaluate social problems associated with developmental projects and adequately respond to them. SIA originated in the 1970s in the USA, and it grew gradually into a unified system with its strategy. It is now applied in many countries in various spheres. The section discusses methods and tools and the significance and challenges of the SIA methodology. The focus is on the research of experts affiliated with the International Association for Impact Assessment, who see SIA as a practical tool to help meet today’s needs without compromising future generations.

The chapter “*Scenarios of Conducting Expertise*” analyzes particular research strategies based on eight selected cases of ethno-expertise observed from conception to implementation. The author focuses on actors and stakeholders, sources and methods, diagnostics, and recommendations. The chapter concludes with the “navigational scheme” of expertise.

The section “*Actors and Stakeholders*” discusses identifying stakeholders and how their interests, expectations, and needs are analyzed. The

experience of ethno-expertise generates several tools and principles, including the following:

1. to divide the territory into zones according to the level of impact to cover the maximum number of people, to present their interests more carefully, and make recommendations clearer;
2. to present the positions of the parties involved in separate sections;
3. to analyze all stakeholders according to a uniform methodology and program;
4. to highlight areas of mutual interest;
5. to combine the expectations of the parties constructively;
6. to operate accurate figures.

The section “*Sources and Methods*” describes how the expertise takes place, including field research, processing of the material, and the analysis of the source base and methods. Ethnological expertise is scientific research that draws on field studies exploring the current situation. In addition, archival, visual, legislative, and digital materials are used. The algorithm of expertise is similar in most cases. However, the choice of specific methods depends on the situation. Demographic analysis and qualitative field interviews are used universally in most examinations. The former provides a general view of the population affected, and the latter allows us to probe into individual and collective positions, motives, and attitudes.

The “*Diagnostics and Recommendations*” section explores the complexity of expertise, which lies in the correct diagnosis of the situation’s possible social consequences. It is necessary to forecast the situation several years ahead to calculate the changes that do not have quantifiable criteria, including people’s ways of life, work, their organization of daily lives, and changes associated with cultural impact manifested in the norms and values. Regardless of the impact type (proposed or implemented), an expert assesses the prospects for implementing a particular project, considering the existing traditions, customs, opinions, and preferences of the population whose interests are affected. Based on their research and experience in similar situations, they make recommendations.

The “*Navigational scheme of ethno-expertise*” section examines the structure of a full-fledged ethno-expertise, which should contain the study of five issues regardless of the impact factor, territory, and methodology used: (1) the state of a particular community; (2) impact; (3) deformation; (4) scenarios; (5) recommendations.

The chapter “*Ethno-cultural heritage and the mission of the expert*” is based on the author’s experience and provides a social-anthropological analysis of the interaction between the local groups of the indigenous population of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous okrug — Yugra and extractive companies.

The chapter's final section discusses the expert's role as a critical figure in the expert review process.

“*Ethnocultural heritage as a fundamental value of ethno-expertise*” considers the concept of ethnocultural heritage as a set of tangible and intangible objects of modern culture having significance for maintaining and developing people's identity. Ethnocultural heritage can function and grow in natural and social environments (the so-called “living culture”) and be part of museum collections, i.e., cultural artifacts that are no longer in use. Since ethnocultural heritage is closely linked to its bearers, the choice of preservation strategy may depend on the ethnic composition of the population and the degree of degradation of those cultural components that ensure the self-preservation and identity of ethnic communities.

Three cases are examined in “*Models of interaction between local indigenous groups and extractive companies (Yugra experience)*.” The first one reflects on the land conflict between the company ООО KanBaikal and the indigenous people of the Bolshoi Yugan River. Since ancient times, the Khanty people have considered this territory the land of the patron spirit of the river. The possible loss of the symbol of traditional beliefs, the destruction of the natural landscape, and social changes were at the center of the discussion. The resulting project of the landmark site made the territory as an integral system of nature management and life support of the ethnic group the object of protection.

The second example is a successful project of a landmark site — the Evut Rap in the Nizhnevartovsk district of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug — Yugra. The site is a complex of cult ethnographic and archaeological heritage objects compactly located in the middle reaches of the Agan River.

The third one is based on the data obtained during ethnological research conducted within the framework of historical and cultural expertise. It shows that the practice of creating landmarks, although successful in preserving a number of ethnological sites and organizing a dialogue between extractive industries and indigenous people, is limited in its possibilities and not applicable in some disputable situations concerning land conflicts.

“*The Expert and Expertness: Professional Competencies and Ethical Guidelines*” reveals the role of the expert as a key figure determining the content and quality of expertise. The ethical and moral foundations of their activity and professional competence ensure the objectivity of the expertise. The expert chooses and adapts research methods depending on the case, which guarantees flexibility of the work.

Any citizen whose interests and/or rights have been affected by external influences may need ethnological expertise. An advantage of Russian ethno-expertise is a comprehensive study of the problematic situation in the dimension of ethnicity by means of ethnography and related disciplines (history, sociology, human geography, ecology, etc.). Ethno-expertise emphasizes the importance of ethno-cultural heritage, resources and cultural diversity, which are the foundation of society's stable development.

Ethno-expertise should be applied in diverse areas, from planning and implementing economic, cultural, and other programs to resolving inter-ethnic conflicts and confrontations. In fact, ethno-expertise should accompany any administrative decision, thus protecting the interests of specific groups of people.

To make the results of various expertise compatible it is necessary to form a unified system of coordinates and scientific concepts. The materials of the conducted expert reviews should become available to scientists and to the communities affected. Today, experts lack a codified set of professional and ethical principles. However, such set of principles needs to be created to reduce the risk of bias and personal influences.

Ethno-expertise solves a particular practical problem employing fundamental scientific knowledge. Depending on the context and objectives of a particular situation, the form of the expertise itself or the form of the research on which it is based may change. Each specific case, whether it is a question of interethnic relations or the preservation of ethnocultural heritage, determines its own set of research procedures.

Ethnological expertise only solves some ethnocultural problems. However, it provides information about the possible consequences of certain administrative decisions in the ethnocultural sphere. It can demonstrate how these decisions meet specific requirements under which community members can expect protection of interests, guarantee of rights, and the realization of their ethnocultural potential.