

Oral Presentation Session

## **A (Post)-Socialist Railroad: Experiences and Expectations of Infrastructural Modernization**

 Sunday, November 18  9:00 AM - 9:15 AM

 Location: Hilton, Lobby/Street Level, Winchester

### **Presenter(s)**

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The Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM) is a railway line built in northern parts of East Siberia and the Russian Far East during the 1970s and 1980s. The construction of the BAM, driven by resource extraction interests and communist propaganda, caused a mass population influx and engendered new groups and identities. The railroad constituted a very large technological and social engineering project, filled with promises of modernization, which were challenged by economic realities and the shocks of the post-socialist period. The recently launched state program “BAM-2” is aimed at the building a second railroad track and at renovating existing railway stations. The reconstruction project shapes networks of actors consisting of railroad organizations, construction companies, former builders of the BAM, local administrators and residents, as well as trains, tracks, stations, building machinery and financial flows. New expectations are being evoked through references to the glorified socialist BAM project, and the contested allocation of resources and visions of regional development make the railroad an affective infrastructure. The paper drawing on ethnographic data from the region seeks to contribute to the growing field of infrastructure and post-socialist studies. It addresses the role of infrastructures in the production and translation of memories, knowledge, and emotions at large-scale development projects in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia.