



# Studying the Barents Region: views and experiences from the Russian side

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# IES – 30 years of research cooperation across the Barents borders

- **Luzin Institute for Economic Studies (IES)** – part of the Kola Science Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Apatity, Murmansk region, 100 employees
- **Kola Science Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences (KSC RAS)** – 10 research institutes, 1300 employees, experimental areas on Spitsbergen and Franz Josef Land
- **KSC** – the only Federal Research Center in Russia located beyond the Arctic Circle
- **IES:**
  - in Barents research cooperation since the early 1990s
  - more than 50 international research projects on the Barents Region



**The Barents Euro-Arctic Region,**  
map by the Arctic Centre,  
University of Lapland



**Luzin Institute for Economic Studies,**  
**KSC RAS, Apatity, Murmansk region**

# Barents studies: retrospection from the IES' perspective

- The Barents Region was established in 1993 as a region for cooperation on security and sustainable development, and knowledge and research contributed in region-building (*Tunander 2008, Tennberg 2015*)
- Researchers participated in region-building through publications, networking, conferences and exchanges with decision-makers (*Larner and Walters 2002*)

## Institute for Economic Studies KSC RAS:

- IES – pioneer of Barents research cooperation
- Mid 1990s – boom in establishing ties between Western and Russian researchers
- Main themes of joint research:
  - > socio-economic developments in the Barents Region
  - > globalization and its local impacts in the Arctic
  - > sustainable development of resource based communities in the Arctic and the Barents Region
- Academic exchanges: 2-3 researchers in the early 1990s, by late 1990s altogether 20 researchers from IES studied abroad
- Since 2000 – IES takes part in 4-5 Barents projects yearly, research cooperation on regular basis
- After 2014 – political tension increased, but “*we will cooperate as we did before*”



**One of the first international conferences at the IES, Apatity, 1998**



**The Barents International Political Economy (BIPE) research network, Rovaniemi, 2012**

# Joint Barents studies

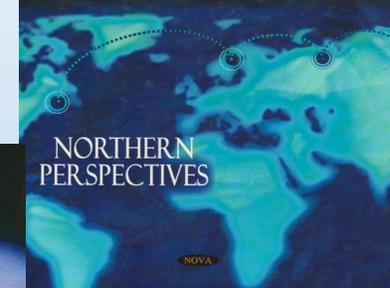
- **Globalization from Below. Localized Transformations in the Circumpolar North** (2004-2006), The Research Council of Norway, *project leader N. Aarsæther*
- **The Barents International Political Economy (BIPE) research network** (2012-2014), Nordic Council of Ministers, *project leader M. Tennberg*
- **Neoliberal governance and sustainable development in the Barents Euro-Arctic region from local communities perspectives – NEO-BEAR** (2012-2015), NordRegio, *project leader M. Tennberg*
- **Arctic Urban Sustainability in the High North – ARCSUS** (2013-2015), The Research Council of Norway, *project leader A. A. Espiritu*

## Main partners:

- > *The University of Tromsø, dep. of Sociology, Political Science and Community Planning*
- > *The Barents Institute, UiT*
- > *Arctic Centre, University of Lapland*
- > *Northern Research Institute – Norut*
- > *The Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional research – NIBR*

NILS AARSÆTHER  
ASBJØRN RØISELAND  
SYNNØVE JENSSEN  
EDITORS

## PRACTICING LOCAL GOVERNANCE



Politics of Development  
in the Barents Region

EDITED BY  
Mona Tennberg

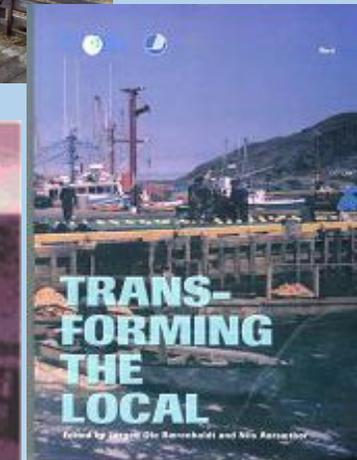
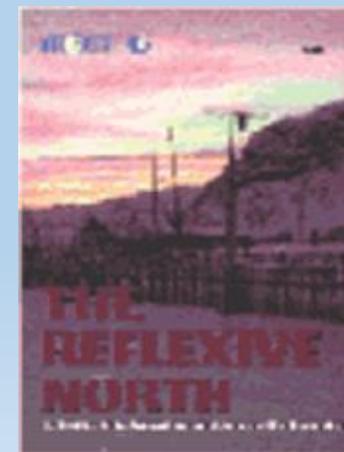


ARCTIC CENTRE

AT HOME  
IN THE BARENTS

# Longitudinal research in the Barents coastal communities

- For 20 years – studies of social and economic processes and impacts of Russian-Norwegian cooperation in fishing villages – **Teriberka** in Murmansk region and **Båtsfjord** in Troms og Finnmark county
- **Local coping processes and regional development. Social capital and economic co-operation in Russian and Norwegian coastal communities**, 1999-2001, funded by INTERREG Barents program, *project leader M. Aure*
- **A new decade: change and continuity in Russian-Norwegian cooperation and labor migration**, 2012-2015, funded by the Barents Secretariat, *project leader M. Aure*
- Partner – University of Tromsø, dep. of Sociology, Political Science and Community Planning
- Published: “Transforming the local” and “The reflexive North” (2001), “International labour migration to Europe’s rural regions” (2021)



# Findings of joint research on the Barents Region

There are two major discourses in the research on the Barents Region:  
the need to be governed and the need to have an identity (*Tennberg 2015*)

## The need to be governed

- Although the Barents Region has a strong educational and research basis, today knowledge about the region is fragmented, partial and limited (*Tennberg 2015*)
- In order to govern the region, we need more systematic knowledge on the Barents Region as a whole and especially on long-term impact of the Barents cooperation

## The need to have an identity

- The Barents Region is most often described as a resource region (*Tennberg 2015*)
- Also a region to be developed, a European region, peace-and-stability region
- Research cooperation – one of important practices of building Barents regional identity

# Findings of joint research on the Barents Region

How to continue the Barents cooperation in the face of geopolitical conflicts?

The answer is that we must go beyond questions of geopolitics and to focus on local-level actors and their everyday lives.

Another challenge that will mark the next decade of cooperation is the question of sustainable development (*Espiritu 2015*)

## Importance of local and community approaches to development and research in the Barents Region

- Neoliberal policies expose local natural resources in the Barents Region to broader exploitation
- The Barents Region is home to 5 mln people, most towns and villages are small. Income leaves especially remote small communities
- Locals are left to cope with increasing number of new responsibilities to ensure communities' well-being (*Suopajarvi 2015, Aure and Riabova 2021 and other*)
- A gap between researchers, business and politicians prevents from dealing with neoliberal challenges effectively

## Sustainable development and connections between Barents and Arctic sustainabilities

- Sustainability in the Barents Region, including highly important urban sustainability, is an integral part of sustainability in the Arctic (*Espiritu et al 2014*)
- Sustainable development of the Barents Region depends on Russian Arctic developments. Two main drivers affect the development of Russian Arctic cities: resource extraction and climate change
- Further Barents and Arctic research need:
  - to improve our understanding of the drivers and policy-making process
  - comparative analysis and focused case studies (*Espiritu 2015*)

# Current projects

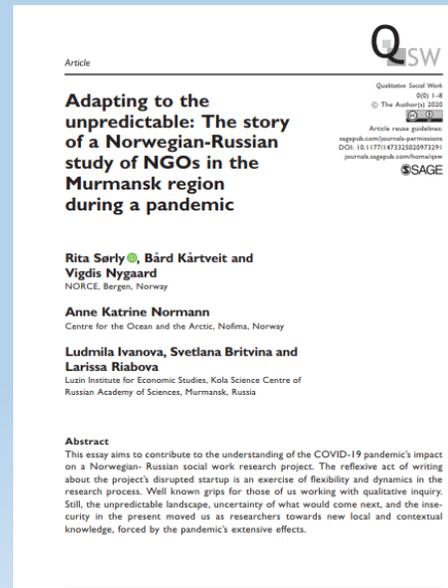
## ■ Adapting to a changing society. The case of civil society in the Murmansk region – VOLRUSS (2020-2022), The Research Council of Norway, *project leader V. Nygaard*

- Partner – NORCE (The Norwegian Research Centre)
- Aim:
  - to explore how voluntary organizations in the border region of Murmansk adapt to changing legal, political and social circumstances, and how they address socio-economic and public health needs in local communities
- Covid-19 – shift in research focus to the impacts of the pandemic, digital cooperation



## ■ Replay or renew? Learning from 20+ years of Norwegian-Russian collaboration on health and social welfare in the Barents region – RE:BARENTS (2021-2024), The Research Council of Norway, *project leader A. Aasland*

- Partners – OsloMet / NIBR (Oslo Metropolitan University / The Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research), NORCE, Association of Local and Regional Authorities (Norway), Barents Secretariat
- Aim:
  - to gain systematic knowledge on the long-term impacts of 20+ years of Norwegian–Russian collaboration on health and social welfare in the Barents Region



# Barents Studies journal – joint publishing project

- **Barents Studies: Peoples, Economies and Politics:**

- > peer-reviewed multidisciplinary academic journal discussing social, economic, and political aspects of development in the Barents Region
- > co-established in 2013 by
  - Arctic Centre, University of Lapland (*M. Tennberg*)
  - The Barents Institute, The University of Tromsø (*A. A. Espiritu*)
  - Institute for Economic Studies, Kola Science Centre RAS (*L. Riabova*)
- > funded until 2016 by Kolarctic Cross Border Cooperation program. Since 2016 – institutional and in-kind resources
- > aims:
  - to promote research co-operation and popularization of res. results on the Barents Region
  - to close the gap between researchers, business and politicians

Since 2019,  
the BSJ articles  
have been  
downloaded more  
than 16 000 times



**Editorial Board meeting 1.10.2013,  
The Barents Institute, Kirkenes, Norway**

*A. Viken, A. Espiritu, L. Riabova, T. Orjasniemi,  
A. Raja-Hanhela (board secretary),  
M. Tennberg and F. Larichkin*



# Future cooperation – to solve common challenges together

## Common challenges

- Climate change
- Increased volumes of natural resources extraction
- Covid-19
- Sustainable development of small communities and urban centers under neoliberalism
- Political tension
- Need for systematic knowledge on the Barents Region as a whole and on long-term impact of the Barents cooperation

## Recent developments in the Russian part of the Barents Region and the Arctic – themes for new joint research

- RUSNANO will create the first carbon-free territory in the Murmansk Region (agreements signed at SPIEF-2021, 3 June 2021). Pilot carbon-free zone: green waste disposal, renewable energy, electric vehicles and energy efficiency technologies
- Governor of the Murmansk region A. Chibis initiated regular online sessions **“Barents Euro-Arctic region versus Coronavirus”** with the Governors of the counties of the Barents Region (1<sup>st</sup> live Youtube stream 10.06. 2020)
- Murmansk regional government launched a project **”Live in the North!”** (August 2019). Priorities – comfortable cities and remote villages, improved living standards, resolved healthcare problems
- Scientific Arctic Council under the RF State Commission on Arctic Development established in September 2020
- **“The Russian Arctic”** – world-class research, educational and technological center established in February 2021 (partnership of Arkhangelsk region, Murmansk region and Nenets AO)

# What can we learn from Barents research cooperation?

- From the IES' perspective, Barents research cooperation is a part of our everyday scientific life and successful long-term practice
- Key successes of Barents research cooperation as viewed by the Russian researchers:
  - > greatly increased academic cooperation in the region and created sustainable model of international research cooperation
  - > created opportunities for active involvement in interesting, highly international and practically relevant science
  - > increased international scientific competence and expertise of both experienced and young scientists (capacity building)
  - > produced high-trust professional and personal relationships
- Success of research cooperation in the Barents Region can be explained by combination of political will, stable financing, active institutions of cooperation and sustainable collaborative programs
- **But most important factor is time and efforts invested in face-to-face relationships – in building relational capital**
- Barents cooperation practices have broad international relevance, lessons useful for other regions. Barents research cooperation is and should be inclusive
- There is a need to communicate Barents knowledge – we need strengthening information and popularization mechanisms, including academic journals on the Barents Region
- Important – predictable national, regional and institutional resources for sustainable Barents research cooperation



**Thank you for your attention!**

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