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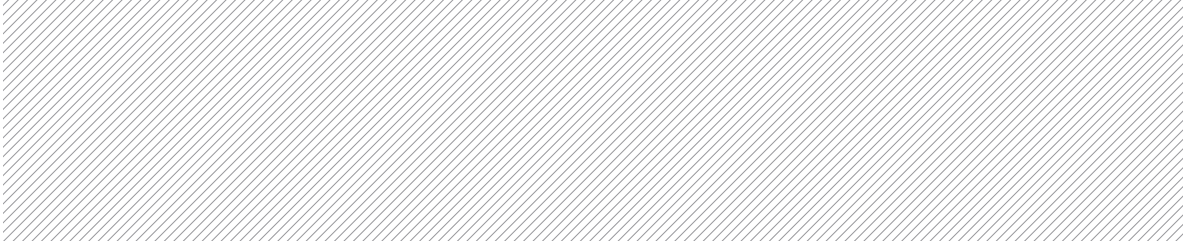

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I live in Tromsø and work as a researcher at the Barents Institute at UiT, the Arctic University of Norway. My current research focuses on international borders and borderlands in the Barents Region and beyond.

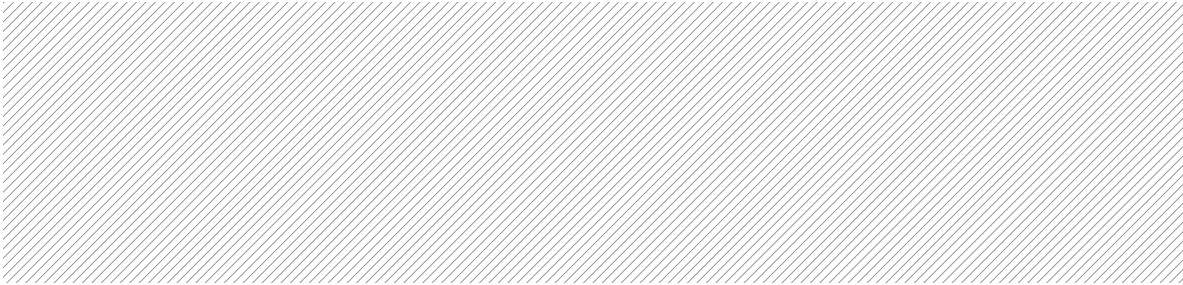


Kent C. Ryden, in “Mapping the Invisible Landscape”, notes that borders are particular places as they “imply a transition between realms of experience, states of being; they draw an ineffable line between life lived in place and life as lived in another”. Borders offer a maximum distinction on a minimum of space. This unique feature may explain why many people, including myself, find them so intriguing. Borders have fascinated me since I was very young. In my childhood I used to travel the world with my grandparents every summer. Border-crossings were always memorable highlights of these trips. As I grew older, I started to visit borders on my own, on purpose – seeking thrill and adventure.





“Border studies are outstandingly international and cross-disciplinary, bringing together researchers from many parts of the world with quite different scholarly backgrounds”



While working on my master's degree in social anthropology, I first began to approach borders in a more scholarly way. In my master's thesis I investigated the complex interplay between territorial, national, and religious borders in the autonomous republic of Ajaria, on Georgia's frontier with Turkey. Later, in my PhD project, I explored the symbolic significance of the Russian-Norwegian border within the fields of politics, art, and tourism.

As a PhD student I was lucky enough to get invited into the first ever Norwegian border research project "The Construction and Negotiation of Borders: Discourses related to the border between Norway and Russia". The project was financed by the Research Council of Norway and brought together several researchers from Finnmark University College and the Barents Institute. I also joined the UiT research group Border Culture/Border Poetics, which has explored the intersection between territorial borders and aesthetic works; art, literature, and film. I learnt a lot from participating in both these networks. A semester-long sojourn at the Karelian Institute in Joensuu, Finland, in 2010 was similarly valuable. This institute is well-known for its high level of expertise in border studies, and its researchers willingly shared their experiences with me while I was there.

For the last three years I have been working as a researcher at the Barents Institute, mainly within the FP7 research project EUBORDERREGIONS (2011–2015). The objective of this project, which involved fourteen research institutions from fourteen different countries, was to identify challenges to economic, social, and territorial cohesion as well as regional development potentials in various borderlands along the external borders of the EU. My task in the project was to carry out research on the borders between Norway and Russia, and Norway and Sweden together with colleagues from the Barents Institute and Nordregio in Sweden. The research was extensive. We conducted more than one hundred in-depth interviews with people who in some way or another relate to the borders privately or professionally; from border guards to artists involved in cross-border cooperation. The data provided us with substantive and up-to-date knowledge about the life and challenges of people living along the two borders.

In the future I would like to continue my research in border studies. Two reasons stand out: first, it is a relatively new research area marked by vigour and vitality. And second, the field is outstandingly international and cross-disciplinary, bringing together researchers from many parts of the world with quite different scholarly backgrounds.