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How did I find my way from Baku in Azerbaijan to Murmansk in the north of Russia to Tromsø in the Arctic University of Norway, where I am currently a PhD candidate in resource management?

Like many stories of Russian families, mine also starts with the phrase “After the collapse of the Soviet Union ...” Throughout the 1990s my parents kept moving from one city to another in pursuit of career opportunities until we ended up in Murmansk. This city became the place where I lived the longest, from 1999 to 2011. When I introduce myself, I say that I am from Murmansk, because I grew up there and consider myself a Northerner.

In 2010 I headed for Norway on a student exchange and have since travelled around the North, pursuing my own research career. Before settling in Tromsø I got a degree in International Relations from Murmansk State Technical University, graduated from the University of Akureyri in Iceland with an MA degree in Polar Law, after which I started working at the Arctic Centre in Rovaniemi in Finland.

The topic of my dissertation is New Patterns of Cross-Border Cooperation and Conflict between Norway and Russia in the Field of Oil and Gas. More specifically my work is devoted to Russian-Norwegian relations with regard to oil and gas activities in the Barents Region, including Barents, Pechora and Kara seas as well as onshore projects. I aim at mapping the collaboration projects in the field of oil and gas development at three levels: public sector (including federal and regional levels), business sector (cooperation models of Russian companies and the foreign partners/investors), and education and research. I want to study if and how these levels overlap and will later compare oil and gas cooperation with the Russian-Norwegian cooperation in fisheries, oil spill response, and search and rescue. The overall objective is to gain a better understanding of how a new petroleum province emerges and what can be done to promote an integrated petroleum province and to mitigate a fragmented province marked by increasing disparities.

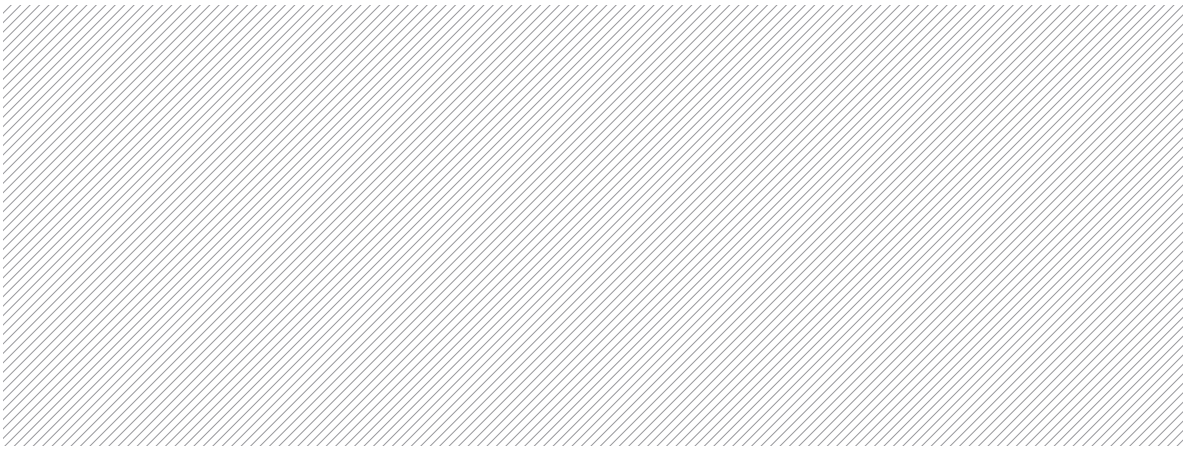


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As a researcher, I am very lucky to witness first-hand many critical events occurring in the Arctic oil and gas development: the euphoria over the Barents cooperation and the opening of the Russian market to international business; the birth and failure of the Shtokman project; the signing of the Russian-Norwegian Delimitation agreement and joint exploration agreements of Rosneft and Statoil in the Barents sea; Russian companies entering the Norwegian Continental shelf, and many more. The Arctic may be a very remote region, but over the last years the influence of globalization and pressure of international politics has grown here, too.

The current pivotal events that I focus my research on are the US/EU-led sanctions targeting international cooperation in Russian Arctic offshore projects and the dramatic collapse of global oil prices. I am analyzing which of these two factors is decisive in the future of the Arctic hydrocarbon development in the mid- and long-term perspective. I look at these events in the context of contemporary geopolitical shifts in global energy supply and demand.

The environmental perspective is also a part of my research. I study how global energy demand pushes the extraction further up North to the Arctic seabed, and how climate change makes accessible more distant and hard-to-recover fossil fuels. There is a temptation to assume almost unconditional oil and gas development in the Arctic. However, more and more scientists confirm that putting new hydrocarbon fields into operation is incompatible with international commitments to limit global warming below 2°C degrees.



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