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BORDERING PRACTICES ON THE NORWEGIAN-RUSSIAN BORDER: THE NORTHERN PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS RUSSIA

MASTER'S THESIS

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Summary:

This thesis inquires on the Norwegian Northern Perspective towards Russia within the Critical Border Studies theoretical approach. Results showed that Northern Perspective is defined through encounters, characterised by higher familiarity with Russia, and embodied through the *democratic borderscape.* In the domestic dimension, Northern Perspective is enacted through tensions over borderland *subsidiarity*, caused by differing centre-borderland perceptions on relations with Russia. Over 2012-2022, local actors aimed to maintain neighbourly relations, but increasing Russian authoritarianism and isolationism negatively affected cross-border practices.

Santrauka:

Šiame darbe tiriama Norvegijos „šiaurietiška perspektyva“ Rusijos atžvilgiu per kritinių sienų studijų prieigą. Rezultatai parodė, kad šiaurietiška perspektyva formuluojama per *susidūrimus*, ji pasižymi pozityvesniu požiūriu į Rusiją ir įkūnyta per *demokratišką pasienį*. Šiaurietiška perspektyva vidaus dimensijoje įgyvendinama per įtampą dėl pasienio subsidiarumo principo, kylančią dėl skirtingų centrinės valdžios ir pasienio regiono požiūrių į santykius su Rusija. Tyrimo periodu 2012–2022 m., pasienio veikėjai norėjo išlaikyti kaimynystės santykius, tačiau stiprėjantis Rusijos autoritarizmas ir izoliacionizmas neigiamai paveikė sienijimo praktikas.

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Introduction

Relations with Russia are central to Norway's security and foreign policy. For Norway as a small state, its Arctic border with Russia has been both a source of threat and opportunity. Norway's foreign policy towards Russia reflects this ambivalence. On the one hand, in the past couple of decades, it has been celebrated as exemplary cooperation, particularly in High North regional issues, such as coast guard, maritime affairs, fisheries, and search and rescue[1]. On the other hand, Russia remained a source of apprehension and uncertainty in Norway's threat conceptions[2]. The Russian threat is specifically related to the „Bastion" concept, which projects that in case of war with NATO, Russia would attempt to extend its defence perimeter to Northern Norway in order to secure a better strategic (defensive/offensive) position[3]. Whether the "Russian menace" in Norway is realistic or merely "alarmist"[4], the high level of power asymmetry forced Norway to attentively navigate this bilateral relationship[5]. Historically, Norway has taken a "balancing" policy towards Russia: fostering cooperation in the North while at the same time deterring the hypothetical threat.

It is now recognised on the highest political level that Norway has a unique way of "handling the relationship with Russia"[6]. In January of 2022, the Norwegian Prime Minister had an unannounced meeting with President Joe Biden while visiting Washington[7]. The talk centred on Norway's *deterrence and reassurance* policy towards Russia, implicitly relevant at the time, in the context of Western attempts to prevent Russia's invasion of Ukraine[8]. More recently, after the war

[1] Andreas Østhagen, "A Case of Bilateral Cooperation: Norway–Russia", *Coast Guards and Ocean Politics in the Arctic*, ed. Andreas Østhagen, (Singapore, 2020), 47–63; Anne-Kristin Jørgensen and Geir Hønneland. "In cod we trust: Konjunkturer i det norsk-russiske fiskerisamarbeidet", *Nordisk Østforum*, 27, (2013): 353–376.
[2] Lars Row and Geir Hønneland. „Norge og Russland: Tilbake til normaltilstanden." Nordisk Østforum 24, No. 2, (2010): 133-147.
[3] More on „Bastion Strategy" concept, stemming from the Cold War but recently revitalised in the context of Russian Arctic militarisation, see e.g. William K. Sullivan, "Soviet Strategy and NATO's Northern Flank," *Naval War College Review* (1979): 26-38; John Andreas Olsen, "Introduction: The Quest for Maritime Supremacy", *NATO and the North Atlantic: Revitalising Collective Defence*, Whitehall Papers, 87, No. 1, (2016): 3-7, DOI: 10.1080/02681307.2016.1291017; Kristian Atland, "The Introduction, Adoption and Implementation of Russia's "Northern Strategic Bastion" Concept, 1992–1999," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 20, No. 4, (2007): 499-528; Harri Mikkola. "The Geostrategic Arctic." *Hard Security in the High North, FIIA Briefing Paper* 2019; Mathieu Boulègue. "Perimeter control around the "Bastion"" in *Russia's military posture in the Arctic: Managing hard power in a 'low tension' environment,* (NATO Defense College, 2019) http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep19965.8
[4] More on the discussion whether Russian threat to Norway is "alarmism", see e.g. Hallvard Tjelmeland. „Norway and the High North: On Political Alarmism Since the Second World War ", in Stean Bones and Petia Mankova (eds) *Norway and Russia in the Arctic: Conference proceedings, Longyearbyen: 25–28 August, 2009*, (Tromsø: Speculum Boreale, 2010), 143-152; J. P. Nielsen, "The Russia of the Tsar and North Norway. 'The Russian Danger' Revisited," *Acta Borealia*, 19, No. 1, (2002): 75–94. https://doi.org/10.1080/08003830215545
[5] Markussen, 2016, 13.
[6] Nilsen, Thomas, "Top NATO commanders give Norway high marks for balancing ties on Arctic border to Russia" *The Barents Observer,* Published March 21, 2022. https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2022/03/top-nato-commanders-give-norway-high-marks-balancing-ties-arctic-border-russia
[7] Atle Staalesen, "Biden invited Støre to the Oval Office for a talk about Russia and the North," *The Barents Observer,* published January 28, 2022. https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/life-and-public/2022/01/biden-invited-store-oval-office-talk-russia-and-north .
[8] Ibid.

broke out, the Norway-Russia border was visited by NATO's top operational-level commanders[9] who also emphasised the need to "understand" Norway's balanced approach to Russia[10]. In order to do that, it is important to look at how the bilateral relationship is enacted on the shared border and in the adjacent Northern regions.

The dualism of Norwegian foreign policy

The duality of Norwegian foreign policy towards Russia is reflected in academic literature[11], conceptualised through different theoretical angles. Historically, it stems from the Second World War, through what was called the "bridge-building" policy[12]. In that context, it is recognised as Norway's role of an intermediator between the West and the East, which was not always fully realisable due to structural constraints of the Cold War divide[13]. According to Helga Pharo, although this policy implied fostering dialogue, it came to be largely negative and passive in essence, avoiding issues that required taking sides[14]. Although the actual bridge-building policy was short-lived (it essentially ended with the establishment of NATO), the dualistic framework remained influential.

Norwegian duality has been most prominently defined through the "deterrence and reassurance" doctrine, characteristic of the Cold War: the deterrence component referred to NATO membership and making available Norwegian bases for the allied forces in case of conflict, while reassurance was implemented primarily through Norway's self-imposed restrictions on NATO activities (restricting permanent stationing of foreign troops, Allied military aircraft/vessels' movement east of 24° East Meridian line, and prohibition of nuclear weapons)[15]. After the end of the Cold War and amid gradual distancing from the military discourse, the duality was reframed as a "culture of compromise"[16], stemming from the liberal institutionalist framework of multilateral peaceful cooperation in the North and balanced by the "realist" policies of state-centrism (largely related to energy resource policies) and renewed territorial defence (bringing NATO "back home")[17].

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Geir Hønneland, 'Norway and the High North: Foreign policy strategies since the Cold War", *Current Politics and Economics of Europe,* Vol 28, No 1, (2017), 18. https://fni.brage.unit.no/fni-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2567275/2017-GEH-CPEE-Norway-and-the-High-North.pdf?sequence=2 ; Rowe and Hønneland. 2010, 133; Rowe, 2018; Markussen, 2016; Andrea Sofie Nilssen, "Norske premisser. En diskursanalyse av regjeringens og mediers oppfatning av Russland", (Master's thesis, University of Oslo, 2015).

[12] Pharo Helge, "Bridge Building and Reconstruction: Norway Faces the Marshall Plan". *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 1, No. 1-2, (1976): 125-173.

[13] Pharo, 1976, 126.

[14] Ibid.,128.

[15] Johan Jørgen Holst, "Norwegian Security Policy for the 1980s." *Cooperation and Conflict* 17.4 (1982): 207-236, 217-218, 233.

[16] Wilhelmsen and Gjerde, 2018.

[17] Ibid., 383, 388.

Lars Rowe referred to this dualism in Government and media rhetoric as a division between "emotions" and "reason"[18]. According to him, stemming from the "traditional" Russian fear (*"russerfrykten*" in Norw.)[19], and intensified by the Crimea annexation, Norwegian discourses on Russia have been emotion-driven, thus often unsubstantiated and alarmist rather than reasonable. Reasonable, or "normal" policy is considered in this case the Norwegian dualism of deterring imaginary Russian threat, while at the same time maintaining an accommodating approach towards Russia[20]. The dualism has also been conceptualised as the "Western" and the "Cooperation in the North" discourses[21]. The "Western" discourse emphasises the importance for Norway to "stand behind NATO, the EU and the US", while the "Cooperation" discourse underlines maintaining mutually beneficial cooperation in the North[22]. According to Andrea Sofie Nilssen, these discourses are not conflicting or inconsistent, because they have a hierarchical relation: the Western discourse was hegemonic and the cooperation discourse became toned down in the context of the Russian annexation of Crimea[23].

However, even „after Crimea", although "biased" against Russia, the Norwegian government was simultaneously emphasising good neighbourly relations[24]. According to Wilhelmsen and Gjerde, though deterrence and reassurance policy was ultimately abandoned in 2017 (when US Marines were stationed in mid-Norway[25]), rhetorically, the "cooperation" discourse returned to public speeches in 2016, albeit largely limited to the areas of "common interests"[26]. It was argued that keywords of "dialogue", "cooperation", and "reassurance" were being used primarily "to create rhetorical continuity" and target "audiences in Northern Norway", rather than signify honest will for cooperation[27], however, it is clear that Norwegian official foreign policy remained to be dualistic, varying in a scale between cooperative and conflictual relations.

In other recent conceptualisations of Norwegian foreign policy, the Arctic dimension became more pronounced, prompted by the "Arctic Euphoria"[28]. According to Geir Hønneland, following the Crimea annexation, national foreign policy orientation started to shift towards the "Arctic" political region instead of the "High North", which had been associated with Norway-Russia cooperation[29].

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[18] Rowe, 2018.
[19] Rowe, 2018, 6.
[20] Ibid., 3.
[21] Nilssen, 2015.
[22] Ibid., 79.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Rowe, 2018.
[25] Wilhelmsen and Gjerde, 2018, 393.
[26] Ibid., 394.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Hønneland, Geir, *Arctic Euphoria and International High North Politics*, (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6032-8_5 .
[29] Ibid.

Thus the duality of Norwegian foreign policy has also permeated the Norwegian Northern domestic/foreign strategy and gained a clear spatial dimension.

Lars Rowe argued that the Norwegian duality on Russia is conditioned by the "framework of the asymmetrical relationship"[30]. It is thus dependent on developments in Russian politics and the prevailing mood of Moscow-NATO relations[31]. While that corresponds with the theoretical perspective of structural realism, the argument that Norway's policy towards Russia is defined solely by external factors dismisses important aspects of Norwegian domestic politics.

The specificity of Northern regions is especially relevant when making sense of the Norwegian "cooperation" perspective towards Russia. The domestic cleavage between Northern and Southern regions over foreign policy has strong historical-societal roots. At the beginning of the bridge-building policy (1946-1947), the Labour Party was "deeply split over East-West questions"[32]. The communist press in Norway was propagating "the Russian line" and the "bourgeois papers" were leaning westwards, identifying more with the British labour movement[33]. Labour Party's electorate was "very critical" of the United States, while the remaining society identified with its "Western foundation"[34], thus making it necessary for the central government to perform the "balancing act" domestically as well as on the international level[35]. Nowadays, foreign policy studies often recognise these divisions, e.g., Nilssen noted that northern newspapers are more critical of the "Western" policy, compared to those in Southern Norway[36]. Hønneland even discerns that there is a "certain cleavage between actors located close to the border with Russia and elsewhere in northern Norway"[37]. In public media, this assumption is sometimes referred to in more radical opinions, e.g., to the point of questioning Northerners' loyalty to Norway and presenting their relationship with Russia as a national threat[38]. On the other hand, there also exist opinions that foreign policy towards Russia is rarely put "in a northern perspective"[39].

Thus the notion that Northern populations have a specific attitude towards relations with Russia is often implied, although rarely investigated more closely in academic research. The Government's

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[30] Rowe, 2018, 3.
[31] Ibid., 18.
[32] Pharo, 1976, 129.
[33] Ibid., 129-130.
[34] Ibid., 128.
[35] Pharo, 1976.
[36] Out of three newspapers in Nilssen's analysis, the one based in Northern Norway (Tromsø) gave more emphasis to the "cooperation" perspective and voiced more critical positions towards the "Western" policy. See: Nilssen, 2015, 79-80.
[37] Geir Hønneland, „Norway and the High North: Foreign policy strategies since the Cold War", 2017, 18.
[38] I. K. Gullvik and A. Trellevik. "Sentrale folk i Finnmark ber PST ryke og reise", *NRK,* , published February 16, 2016. https://www.nrk.no/tromsogfinnmark/_-sentrale-folk-i-finnmark-ber-pst-ryke-og-reise-1.12805354; Torill Olsen, "Finnmark – under Solberg eller Putin?" *Ryggmargsrefleksjoner,* published December 31, 2018. https://open-eye-open-mind.com/tag/torill-olsen/.
[39] H. Langemyr, „Opinion: NATO, Russia and Norway - New Cold War and prospects for peace". *The High North News*, June 15, 2017. https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/opinion-nato-russia-and-norway-new-cold-war-and-prospects-peace.

motive for realising national interests in the North does not fully grasp the "cooperation" approach. The "Good neighbourhood" policy towards Russia not only is based on rational interests but also incorporates important identity and societal factors, particularly pronounced in Northern Norway. It is thus the assumption here that the "Northern Perspective" influences Norwegian national policy: politicians are required to cater for these attitudes both domestically and in their foreign relations[40]. Therefore, it is worth taking a closer look at **how the Northern Perspective originates** and **what elements/perceptions it contains**.

As Jonas Stein's demonstrated in his dissertation, Northern Norway has gone through a long "peripheral identity-building" process over 1950-2015[41]. This peripheral identity not only manifests itself as lower trust in central politicians[42]. It has proved to be an important mobilisation tool for regional actors, employed to rally around certain political issues, particularly by opposition against the central national identity. Northern regions are generally more left-leaning, they have famously been prone to EU-scepticism, leading the campaign "against" accession in both Norway's unsuccessful EU referendums (1972 and 1994)[43]. Therefore, Stein's research proves that Norway's domestic politics have a clear "spatial dimension"[44]. The current thesis thus inquires on the Northern Perspective towards Russia, which offers more insight into the Norwegian foreign policy dualism. Since the initial signs of deterioration in Norwegian-Russian relations in the Arctic were noticed around 2012 (in Government and media discourse)[45], I take the decade of 2012-2022 as the period of analysis.

Problem statement

Recognising that there exists a specific relation to Russia in Northern Norway, which stems from the Norwegian-Russian Arctic border, this thesis investigates how the Northern Perspective towards Russia is defined by proximity to the border and how it was enacted through bordering and cross-border practices over 2012-2022 on two dimensions: externally, with regard to increasingly authoritarian Russia, and domestically, within the centre-periphery relationship.

[40] Wilhelmsen and Gjerde, 2018, 394.
[41] Jonas Stein, "What Happened in Northern Norway? A comparative and quantitative analysis of political and demographic development in Northern Norway from 1950 to 2015." (dissertation for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor, The Arctic University of Norway, 2019), 48.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., 45.
[45] Wilhelmsen and Gjerde, 2018, 389.

The Norwegian-Russian border in academic research

The border between Norway and Russia has long served scholars as a "barometer" of "East" and "West" relations[46]. It has been a focal point for various interdisciplinary studies, examined through different approaches, including historical[47], anthropological, geographical, and philosophical[48]. The interest in Border Studies, combined with regional integration processes also brought up interesting Norwegian-Russian academic collaborations, centred on the common border[49]. Some of the most relevant case studies pertained to social and cultural processes at the border: discourses on cross-border prostitution (1990—2001)[50], local aesthetics and cultural distancing through art and literature[51]. Geir Hønneland's study on the Russian side of the border explored the identities of borderland Russians in the Kola Peninsula[52], while Brit Lynnebakke discerned six differing and overlapping non-elite local perceptions of Russia[53]. A relevant collection of interdisciplinary articles came in 2014[54], providing insight into how the border affects the everyday lives of ordinary people[55]. Through research on changing locals' perceptions, "russification" of Norwegian borderland, integration of Russian children and mothers into Norwegian society, and other lenses, authors made a joint conclusion that from being a *barrier* during the Cold War, the border had transformed into a *bridge*[56].

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[46] Trevor Lloyd, "The Norwegian-Soviet Boundary", *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 15, No. 5-6, (1956): 187-242, 189. DOI: 10.1080/00291955608542780.
[47] See e.g.: T. Jackson and J. P. Nielsen (eds.) *Russia and Norway. Physical and Symbolic Borders*, (Litres, 2005); Niemi, Einar, 1995; Schrader, Tatjana A. "Pomor trade with Norway". *Acta Borealia,* 1-2, (1988); K. Zaikov & Nielsen, J., "Norwegian-Russian Arctic frontier: From the whole districts to the Pomor region," *Arctic and North*, 5, (2018): 71–84; Konstantin Zaikov, "Russian-Norwegian Borderland in the Foreign Historical Literature in the 20th — Beginning of the 21st Centuries," *Arctic and North,* 30 (2018): 60–75; Konstantin Zaikov, "Between the Empire and the Nation State: The Problem of the Russian-Norwegian Frontier and Sami Occupation in the 19th – Early 20th Centuries," *The Polar Journal* 9, No. 1 (2019): 154–74.
[48] See e.g., Viggo Rossvaer and Andrei Sergeev (eds.) *Philosophy in the Border Zone*, (Orkana Akademisk, 2015).
[49] On academic cooperation between Norwegian and Russian academics, namely in the framework of Nord University's (formerly University of Nordland) "Borderology" Master's programme and Kant and Bakhtin seminar, see e.g. A. M. Sergeev, "Philosophy in the Border Zone (through the Eyes of Russian and Norwegian Participants)." *Philosophy in the Border Zone,* (Orkana Akademisk, 2015), 7-18; Jan Selmer Methi et al. (eds.) *Borderology: Cross-disciplinary Insights from the Border Zone,* (Springer Geography, 2019).
[50] D. Stenvoll, "From Russia with Love? Newspaper Coverage of Cross-Border Prostitution in Northern Norway, 1990—2001," *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 9, No. 2, (2002): 143–162.
[51] J. Schimanski, "Border Aesthetics and Cultural Distancing in the Norwegian-Russian Borderscape," *Geopolitics*, 20, No. 1, (2015): 35–55.
[52] Geir Hønneland, *Borderland Russians: Identity, narrative and international relations*, (Springer, 2010).
[53] Brit Lynnebakke. "Dealing with Borderland Complexity. The Multisided Views of Local Individuals in the Norwegian–Russian Borderland," *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 35, No. 3, (2020): 351-368. DOI: 10.1080/08865655.2018.1436002 .
[54] Arvid Viken and Bjarge Schwenke Fors, (eds.) *Grenseliv*, (Stamsund: Orkana Akademisk Forlag, 2014).
[55] Arvid Viken and Bjarge Schwenke Fors, "Forord", in *Grenseliv,* eds. Arvid Viken and Bjarge Schwenke Fors. (eds.) (Stamsund: Orkana Akademisk Forlag, 2014), 7-9, 7.
[56] Arvid Viken and Bjarge Schwenke Fors, "Innledning", in *Grenseliv,* eds. Arvid Viken and Bjarge Schwenke Fors. (Stamsund: Orkana Akademisk Forlag, 2014), 9-20, 9.

Within the Political Science and International Relations field, the border was extensively analysed in the context of regional integration[57], also particular attention was paid to the twin-cities initiative between two border towns in Norway and Russia[58]. Of relevant works within Border Studies is the dissertation by Bjarge Schwenke Fors[59] on performative bordering practices on political, artistic, and tourism domains in the Norwegian borderland, which unveiled Kirkenes transformation into a regional centre ("the Barents Capital")[60]. It demonstrated how cross-border cooperation has become an important element of both local and national performative practices, enacted largely through the Border as Bridge metaphor[61]. The most recent account on the border is perhaps by Andrey Makarychev and Anna Kuznetsova, who demonstrated how Norwegian-Russian transborder relations are not only characterised by "struggle for military domination", but "also of practical and cultural engagements which did not suffer much from the deterioration of the international climate since 2014"[62].

Albeit all these publications provide a good idea of complex borderland identity which is embedded in regional cooperation, most of the studies on low-level practices focus exclusively on domestic cultural and social dimensions. Furthermore, a lot of research has been conducted around the period of improving bilateral relations between Norway and Russia, thus conveying the optimism for further de-bordering[63] and opening for closer cooperation. Even more recent studies on low-level cross-border contacts often focus largely on cultural and artistic practices (performances). This methodological approach is problematic when applying to the International Relations field simply because they do not reveal much about the *actual state* of relations between Norway and Russia.

As Fors critically observed, local performances related to the Norwegian-Russian border largely invoke ideas of openness, connectedness, unity, and continuity[64]. However, they often remain „make-belief performances", which do not correspond to the "normality of the border"[65]. In reality,

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[57] See: H. Aalbu, "Cross-Border Co-operation in the Barents Region," in The Nebi Yearbook 1998, eds. Hedegaard, L., Lindström, B., Joenniemi, P., Östhol, A., Peschel, K., Stålvant, CE., (Berlin: Springer Heidelberg, 1998) https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-58886-0_22; Ola Tunanader, "Inventing the Barents region: Overcoming the East-West divide", in *The Barents region. Co-operation in Arctic Europe*, eds. Olav Schram Stokke & Ola Tunander, (London: SAGE, 1994), 31-44; Neumann, Iver B. "A region-building approach to Northern Europe." *Review of International Studies,* 20, No. 1, (1994): 53-74; G. Hønneland. "The Great Barents Awakening," in *Arctic Euphoria and International High North Politics,* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
[58] Arvid Viken and Torill Nyseth. "Kirkenes – A Town for Miners and Ministers," in *Place Reinvention*, eds. Arvid Viken, Torill Nyseth, (London: Routledge, 2009); Viken, Granås & Nyseth. "Kirkenes An Industrial Site Reinvented as a Border Town", 2008.
[59] Bjarge Schwenke Fors, "Border Performances: Politics, art and tourism where Norway meets Russia." (A dissertation for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor, The Arctic University of Norway, 2019).
[60] Ibid., 64.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Andrey Makarychev & Anna Kuznetsova, "Russian – Norwegian Borderlands: Three Facets of Geopolitics," *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 37, No. 2, (2022): 379-398, 393. DOI: 10.1080/08865655.2020.1777887.
[63] On *de-bordering* and related processes see more on Theoretical Approach (Chapter 1) .
[64] Fors, 2019, 199.
[65] Ibid., 104.

it remains under strict surveillance and control[66]. Thus in this thesis, I aim to fill this discrepancy between the local perceptions of the border and actual *bordering practices* that pertain to the embodiment and function of the border. Furthermore, with the hindsight of the turbulent past decade in bilateral Norway-Russia relations, this research has the advantage of overviewing long-term processes, thus capturing broader dynamics and changes in bilateral low-level cooperation over 2012-2022. Lastly, this thesis is positioned within the field of International Relations, aiming to explain processes in Norwegian foreign policy by analysing low- and micro-level practices, which have not been fully explored in the past.

Research design

This thesis is positioned within the broader "Practice Turn in International Relations"[67] or "Practice Theory", as a reference point taking the intuition that "international politics […] are constituted by human beings acting in and on the world"[68]. Studying practices in International Relations means taking practices as a category of analysis, while understanding them as actions that are embodied, shared, and patterned[69]. Importantly, within this approach, practices not only can be collective, but exercised individually, meaning that *individual*s are appropriate actors/units of analysis/data collection, as long as the *practices* that they enact are socially linked, i.e. "acquired through socialization, exposure, imitation, and symbolic power relationships"[70].

More narrowly, this thesis takes the approach of Critical Border Studies (hereinafter CBS), which conceptualises *bordering practices* as the category of analysis[71]. Thus this study explores how the Northern Perspective is embodied and enacted through various collective/individual practices in the borderland. In order to do that, I focus on two dimensions of the Northern Perspective: the external and the domestic. The external dimension is examined by analysing the cross-border practices with Russia and how they changed from 2012 to 2022. A special focus is devoted to the institution of the Border Commissioner as the basis of the border regime and the "controversial" issues in people-to-people cooperation (two cases: Barents Pride and Barents Observer). The main theoretical concept used on the external realm is *border as suture of sovereigns*[72].

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[66] Ibid.
[67] J. Cornut,"The practice turn in International Relations theory," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies,* Updated on November 2017, (Oxford University Press, 2015). https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.113 .
[68] Ibid., 1.
[69] Ibid., 5.
[70] Pouliot, V., "The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities," *International Organization*, 62, No. 2, (2008): 257-288, 273–274. cit. in: Cornut, 2015, 5.
[71] See more in Chapter 1.
[72] See more in Chapter 1.

Then, I turn to the domestic dimension of the Northern Perspective and inquire about how it relates to the official Norwegian foreign policy towards Russia. In this pursuit, I analyse how the Northern Perspective is formulated through the *encounter* with Russia, what are its main elements, and how it is mobilised through the centre-periphery (centre-borderland) tensions over subsidiarity. Here I mostly employ analytical concepts of *encounter* and *subsidiarity*[73]. The analysis is limited to people-to-people and other low-level bordering practices, excluding strictly military (defence) practices at the border[74], also limiting the research object to the land border between Norway and Russia[75].

Borders are understood here as a sub-category of **boundaries.** Boundaries, as per Parker and Nissen's conceptualisation, are *sites of difference* that can be "sustained or undermined from *either* side" while bordering implies "bounded entities on *both* sides"[76]. Thus, "all borders are boundaries, but not all boundaries are borders"[77]. Boundaries are made into borders mainly through embodiment and enforcement[78]. State borders in this sense are "particularly explicit and formalised boundaries"[79]. Therefore, in this thesis, while I use borders and boundaries interchangeably, boundaries are primarily used when referring to the borderline without implying its enforcement (or embodiment), and the term 'border' is used when emphasising its bordering function.

The **Northern Perspective** is defined here as a specific set of identities, perceptions, and attitudes about Russia that are characteristic of the Northern Counties of Norway (Nordland and Troms and Finnmark Counties). This approach is tightly related to Norwegian "Barents Cooperation" and "High North" strategies, as well as the so-called "cooperation", "region-building" or "good neighbourhood" discourses in official Norway's foreign policy towards Russia, juxtaposed against the "Western", "Russia as Other" discourses and "realist" policies. In conceptualising the Northern Perspective, this thesis builds on a premise that Norway as a small state is strongly affected by its geographical situatedness (bordering Russia), thus, Northern regions, which are in closer proximity to Russia, play an important role in broader Norwegian foreign and security considerations, thus influencing official foreign policy.

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[73] See more in Chapter 1.
[74] Only including those that relate to physical embodiment of the border, e.g., the Border Guard is responsible for placing temporary markers on the boundary.
[75] Excluding the maritime boundary in the Barents Sea and Svalbard (archipelago in the Arctic Ocean, under Norwegian sovereignty as per Svalbard Treaty (1920), where Norway and Russia have a specific relation due to Russian settlements of Barentsburg and Pyramiden, see more e.g. Øystein Jensen, "The Svalbard Treaty and Norwegian Sovereignty." *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*, 11 (2020): 82-107).
[76] Parker and Adler-Nissen, 2012, 775.
[77] Noel Parker and Rebecca Adler-Nissen, "Picking and Choosing the 'Sovereign' Border: A Theory of Changing State Bordering Practices," *Geopolitics*, 17, No. 4, (2012): 773-796, 775. DOI: 10.1080/14650045.2012.660582.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid., 776.

The concept of ***people-to-people*** is commonly associated with *cross-border cooperation*, including in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy. These projects are an "important and successful tool", "designed to initiate and promote grassroots contacts and interaction between people on different sides of the border"[80]. In Norway, these practices were introduced as an important basis for the "Barents Cooperation" framework in January 1992. In this thesis, people-to-people practices encompass various Norwegian-Russian low-level contacts, including a visa-free border regime, used by locals for everyday cross-border travel.

Concepts of the **Arctic** and the **High North** are used synonymously, although recognising that the Arctic is defined as a geographic region[81], and the High North ("*Nordområdene*", in Norw.) is more of a political definition[82]. Nonetheless, as shown by Hønneland, the Norwegian High North strategy is divergent in two geographical directions: the "Arctic" is associated with the (more recent) westwards direction (aka the "Arctic capital of Tromsø"[83]), while the High North has historically been associated with regional cooperation with Russia[84].

Data collection

I use data both from naturally occurring sources and generated through interventions of the research[85]. The basis is 13 semi-structured interviews with a wide range of low-level Norwegian actors, in one way or another involved in cross-border or bordering practices in Northern Norway. Most of the interviewees were directly involved in low-level people-to-people cooperation with Russia (two working in the Norwegian Barents Secretariat, two representing academic cooperation between Norwegian-Russian universities, two organisers of Barents Pride). Important participants were the Norwegian Commissioner for the Norwegian-Russian Border, the editor of the Independent Barents Observer Thomas Nilsen. Other interviewees included residents of Sør-Varanger municipality, who held border resident permits and used them to casually travel to Russia. One interviewee had been stationed in Kirkenes as a police officer. Some of the interviews were carried out in two parts. Other follow-up questions were addressed via email (or otherwise) correspondence. Five interviews were carried out live, seven – online[86] and one took place both online and live (in two

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[80] Pavel Branda, "Promoting people-to-people contacts through cross-border cooperation programmes in Eastern Partnership countries", *CORLEAP*, COR-2019-01002-00-02-TCD-TRA (EN) 1/8, 25 January 2018, 2. https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Documents/CORLEAP/Pavel_Branda_People_to_People_Contacts_final_EN.pdf#search=people%20to%20people.

[81] Here defined as region circumscribed by the Arctic Circle, a line of latitude 66°33'44"N.

[82] Anders Kjølberg, Tormod Heier (eds.) *Sikkerhetspolitiske utfordringer i nordområdene*, (Forlag: Universitetsforl, 2015), 22.

[83] Geir Hønneland, „Norway and the High North: Foreign policy strategies since the Cold War", 2017, 19.

[84] Kjølberg, Heier, 2015, 22.

[85] Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis (ed.) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*, (London: SAGE Publications, 2003), 34.

[86] Via Zoom, due to long distance or COVID-19 restrictions.

parts). Most live interviews were conducted during the field trip to the border town Kirkenes (Sør-Varanger municipality, Troms and Finnmark County) on February 6-10, 2022. During the field trip, I also had an opportunity to visit various border sites[87]. One live interview was carried out in Bodø.

Primary sources in public media were also used in carrying out research, primarily Barents Observer[88], the Independent Barents Observer[89], NRK[90], High North News[91], and Nordnorsk Debatt[92]. These sources were used in two stages. First, an extensive overview of the news on the border with Russia was carried out (keywords "border", "Russia") identifying key events at the border from 2012 to 2021. These events were used to research possible interviewees and reach out to them. Other interviewees were sampled in the snow-ball method. Second, the overview of the media coverage of relevant events/issues was used to support the analysis of border practices, also to collect additional public comments/statements from other relevant actors. Data on border crossings was provided by Finnmark Police Distrct (*Finnmark politidistrikt*).

Since this research is conducted in Norway, the data is processed in compliance with the "Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Law and Theology" provided by The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committee[93]. The interviewees were given an individualised Information Letter and signed a Consent Form in which they could choose two options: to be recognisable or de-identified. Six interviewees preferred to be de-identified and seven chose to be recognised. Most interviews were recorded and transcribed[94]. In order to better protect the identity of some interviewees, transcriptions are provided confidentially to the reviewer. Diagrams, pictures and other visual material is provided in Annex.

Limitations and self-reflection

The main limitation of my research is my position as a foreigner in Norway. First, there was a risk of encountering a language barrier. Additionally, it was more difficult to get access to some local actors. In order to prepare and minimise these limitations and risks, I came for an exchange semester to Nord University in Bodø and, along with courses related to Northern politics, I took an additional

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[87] I am grateful to Border Commissioner Jens-Arne Høilund for kindly taking me to the most significant border sites.
[88] Barents Observer, Owner: Norwegian Barents Secretariat, Kirkenes, 2002-2015 (no longer updated), https://barentsobserver.com/en .
[89] Editor: Thomas Nielsen, The Independent Barents Observer AS, Kirkenes, 2002-2022, https://thebarentsobserver.com/en .
[90] Editor: Vibeke Fürst Haugen, Owner: Norsk rikskringkasting AS, English: „Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation", Norwegian government-owned radio and television public broadcasting company, https://www.nrk.no/ .
[91] Editor: Arne O. Holm, published at High North Center, Nord university, Bodø, https://www.highnorthnews.com/en
[92] Editor: Helge Nitteberg, Nordnorsk debatt, Tromsø, https://www.nordnorskdebatt.no/ .
[93] The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees. "Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Law and Theology", June 8th, 2019. Retrieved November 18th, 2021 from https://www.forskningsetikk.no/en/guidelines/social-sciences-humanities-law-and-theology/guidelines-for-research-ethics-in-the-social-sciences-humanities-law-and-theology/ .
[94] Some interviews were not recorded/transcribed as per agreement with interviewees.

Norwegian language course. All of the interviewees spoke English, as was the language of all interviews. However, one possible interviewee whom I was suggested to reach out to was only speaking Norwegian, thus, it was decided to talk to their English-speaking colleagues. Second, my Lithuanian nationality might have had an effect on interviewees (more or less) as they may have modified their opinions to accommodate their perception of mine. Several interviewees explicitly noted my nationality and referred to it when expressing their attitudes on interview topics (mostly comparing their approach to the perceived Lithuanian approach). Although I had limited control over this risk, I attempted to be open with the interviewees and also provide them with sufficient information on the research. The third challenge was related to literature and media sources in Norwegian. As already mentioned, I took a Norwegian course at Nord University during my Erasmus+ Exchange, thus I was able to acquire a certain level of passive Norwegian knowledge (Bokmål) to be able to translate and understand the main concepts and ideas.

Structure

The first chapter presents the theoretical approach, namely, what it means to analyse borders as practices, presenting the concepts of *suture, subsidiarity, and encounter*. The second chapter discusses the historical context for the development of the Norwegian-Russian border, explains why people-to-people practices constitute an important component in the Norwegian bordering process, and analyses how these cross-border practices were affected by changes in the bilateral relationship between Norway and Russia over 2012-2022. The third chapter provides a processual and functional analysis of the border and bordering practices: the 3.1 section concentrates on Border Commissioner's "low-level diplomat" function and the 3.2 section provides two case studies of "controversial" cross-border practices (the Barents Pride and the Barents Observer). In the fourth chapter, I discuss the domestic dimension, particularly the centre-borderland relationship, explaining how the Northern Perspective towards Russia is formulated, what are its elements and what is its relationship to the Centre. Finally, conclusions are provided.

1. Theoretical approach

The fall of the Iron Curtain and shifting boundaries were the background behind the wave of Border Studies at the beginning of the 1990s. Seemingly disappearing borders and increasing globalisation in many forms of "flows" through national borders led to concepts of *de-bordering*, *deterritorialisation*, anticipations of a "new, borderless world", and even declarations of the „death of nation-state"[95]. Traditionally, Political Geography saw borders and borderlands as *lines* that shape and limit cross-border interaction. However, in the past two decades, there has been an important paradigmatic shift in how boundaries are understood, interpreted, and researched. Globalisation proved to bring not only *de-bordering* but emerging *re-bordering* practices[96]. A state of "post-globalisation" is now recognised, bringing new challenges and yet unexplored processes pertaining to state territoriality[97].

A group of academics in a special section of *Geopolitics* in 2012 formalised Critical Border Studies (CBS) and (re)defined some of the main theoretical premises of the field[98], offering alternatives to the static "line in the sand" metaphor which proved to be limiting in explaining complex processes of today's borders. In this thesis, this theoretical approach is not only relevant in how it understands borders, but it provides broad and important ground for understanding how bordering practices relate to state sovereignty and territoriality.

1.1. Borders as practices

This thesis is positioned within the broader "Practice Turn in International Relations"[99]. Practice theory in International Relations is "less a single theory than a broad set of approaches" stemming primarily from philosophy and social theory[100]. Practices are defined through three main elements: embodied ("what actors do in and on the world"[101]), both individual and shared, and patterned (regular and repetitive) [102]. Although the Practice theory is sometimes called New Constructivism, it is not situated strictly within the Constructivist thought. Contrarily, it is sometimes

[95] Anssi Paasi, "Boundary as Social Practice and Discourse: the Finnish-Russian Border as an Example" (University of Oulu, 1998), 3-4.
[96] Scott, James Wesley, "European politics of borders, border symbolism and cross-border cooperation." *A companion to border studies,* eds. Thomas M. Wilson, Hastings Donnan (Wiley Blackwell: 2012): 83-99, 83; Paasi, Anssi, et al. "Locating the territoriality of territory in border studies." *Political Geography* 95, 102584, (2022): 90.
[97] Victor Konrad, "New Directions at the Post-Globalization Border," *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 36, No. 5, (2021): 713-726, DOI: 10.1080/08865655.2021.1980733
[98] Parker, Noel, and Nick Vaughan-Williams. "Critical border studies: Broadening and deepening the 'lines in the sand'agenda." Geopolitics 17.4 (2012): 727-733.
[99] Cornut, 2015.
[100] David M. McCourt, "Practice theory and relationalism as the new constructivism," *International Studies Quarterly* 60, No. 3, (2016): 475-485, 478.
[101] Cornut, 2015.
[102] Ibid., 5.

identified as taking a position in-between rationalism and constructivism[103] because of its "dissatisfaction" with the structural approach to human behaviour, thus being unable to explain individual variations[104]. The CBS also draws largely from the "Practice Turn" as well as from a tradition of the interdisciplinary field of border studies.

In 2012, a collective of CBS authors suggested a more refined agenda for further research[105]. The main premise of this agenda is a critique of the "Line in the Sand" metaphor, the thinness of which "belies the thickness of the border in its contemporary multiform complexity"[106]. The classical understanding of the border as a razor line is thus reductive as it presumes an idealised model the nation-state[107]. CBS authors suggested broadening and deepening border studies by *decentring* the border. In this effort, they aimed to problematise borders as not taken-for-granted static lines, but rather as manifold entities, which are found in a "constant state of becoming"[108]. Thus instead of centring the border, one should centre the *bordering practice*s, which "constitute, sustain or modify borders between states"[109].

The border is not only enacted at the border site or through the static "line" as used to be understood in modernist thought[110]. CBS scholars employ a perspective of the border as a "field of action" of various non-state actors, including ordinary individuals, involved in the bordering processes[111] both voluntarily and involuntarily. It corresponds to the concept of a *borderscape,* which, according to D. Krichker, "blurs" international boundaries and extends the bordering process *"*spatially and/or temporally"[112]. Thus a borderscape is not a fixed geographical term, but rather "experienced and/or imagined" in a fluid, mobile space of encounters[113]. The main elements in producing *borderscapes* are space, imagination, and experience[114], which are enacted through practices.

[103] Ibid., 10.
[104] Ibid., 11.
[105] Parker and Vaughan-Williams, 2012, 727.
[106] Ibid., 728-729.
[107] Ibid., 728.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Noel Parker and Rebecca Adler-Nissen, "Picking and Choosing the 'Sovereign' Border: A Theory of Changing State Bordering Practices," *Geopolitics*, 17, No. 4, (2012): 773-796, 776. DOI: 10.1080/14650045.2012.660582
[110] Paasi, Anssi, "Boundaries as social practice and discourse: the Finnish-Russian border," *Regional Studies*, vol. 33, Nr. 7, (1999): 669-680, 670.
[111] Parker and Vaughan-Williams, 2012, 733
[112] Dina Krichker, "Making sense of borderscapes: Space, imagination and experience." *Geopolitics* 26.4 (2021): 15. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2019.1683542
[113] Ibid., 2.
[114] Ibid., 8.

Thus, bordering practices are not compressed to the border areas – they can be “spread” into the whole society, depending on where bordering practices occur[115]: analysing borders as practices is a spatially dispersed process.

1.2. Borders as suture of sovereigns

According to Mark Salter, the border should be understood as a “condition of possibility for sovereignty”, rather than only as a division[116]. By rejecting the traditional metaphor of a “line”, Salter suggests interpreting the border as an academic metaphor of *border as suture of sovereigns*. The scholar suggests analysing the “system in which that line can have a meaning”, rather than “two sides of the line”[117]. Importantly, in Salter’s perspective, the common mistake done by philosophers such as Agamben or Balibar in conceptualising borders is the “neglect of the international”: while focusing too much on the “inner” borders, they fail on identifying the exceptionality of the sovereign border. In addition, focusing on the division between the inside/outside does not allow for analysis of the “co-constitution” of the external and internal[118]. Salter, thus, rejects the notion of borders as either exclusively internal or external[119]: external becomes internal during the bordering process and vice versa.

Salter’s argument about border function thus starts with the individual, who becomes subject to the sovereign’s authority to decide on their “right to have rights”[120]. The border crossing is a special act which “naturalises the violence that was necessary to create it”[121]. At the border crossing, individuals find themselves at mercy of two mutually exclusive sovereigns[122]. The Crossing constitutes an *interpellation* [123], a moment of “examination and confession”, that is required for the individual to internalise sovereign authority[124]. Thus the border is a special site where sovereign authority to “include or to exile” and sovereign “responsibility to protect” come apart[125].

This moment of subjugating individuals under a sovereign’s authority (which is usually unnoticeable in everyday circumstances) is at the same time co-constituting the required “knitting together” of the two sovereigns into the unique system of sovereign borders. The concept of

[115] Paasi, 1998, 3
[116] Mark B. Salter, “Theory of the / : The Suture and Critical Border Studies,” *Geopolitics* 17, No. 4 (2012): 734–755, 751. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2012.660580
[117] Ibid., 737.
[118] Ibid., 738.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid., 735; Concept famously introduced by Hannah Arendt, see: Arendt, Hannah. "The origins of totalitarianism [1951]." (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1973).
[121] Salter, 2012, 735.
[122] Ibid., 743
[123] Ibid., 736.
[124] Ibid., 739.
[125] Ibid.

"*metacommunity of sovereigns*" refers to a metaphor of a fabric being knitted and stitched together. Ruptures can occur in various places (e.g., at the international airport), where the sovereign "exceptionality" renders this "raw power" visible[126]. For Salter, borders are evident as sutures in many manifestations of everyday practices, however, they are "never always or completely successful"[127]. As "stitches in a wound", they may heal, but "also leave a trace of their own through the scar"[128]. The concept of suture allows analysing borders on various levels of interaction. It explains how "the inside and the outside relate to each other"[129] in complex bordering practices. The border is constantly ruptured and sutured back together, in a "mix of de-bordering and re-bordering"[130]. In this process, non-state actors, including individuals crossing the border, become witnesses of the ruptured suture of sovereignty, as well as tools for knitting it back together. Thus in this thesis, *suture* is employed largely when analysing cross-border practices.

1.3. Subsidiarity and encounter

As discussed in the Introduction, it is evident from previous research that Northern Norway generally has a centre-periphery relationship to Southern Norway. However, a borderland is more than just a periphery. From the perspective of territoriality, border regions have a special function in enacting state sovereignty, thus invoking a centre-periphery or rather centre-borderland relationship (particularly when the border is in the distant periphery). The concept of *subsidiarity* is useful in explaining this relationship.

Subsidiarity is most widely referred to in the context of European Union (hereinafter EU) law[131]. Although the definition of subsidiarity is debated in academia, depending on the context of usage and field[132], it generally means "the principle that decisions should always be taken at the lowest possible level or closest to where they will have their effect, for example in a local area rather than for a whole country"[133]. In the context of Border Studies, the term subsidiarity was used by Agnew in explaining how modern state sovereignty is tied with its territoriality in the "territorial trap"

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[126] Ibid., 740
[127] Ibid., 735
[128] Ibid.
[129] Andrey Makarychev and Klaus Segbers, "Introduction: The Baltic Sea region—Scars, seams and stitches." in *Borders in the Baltic Sea Region*, eds. Andrey Makarychev, Alexandra Yatsyk, (London: Palgrave, 2017), 1-17, 8.
[130] Ibid.
[131] See e.g. Fabbrini, Federico, "The Principle of Subsidiarity," in *Oxford principles of European Union law*, eds. Takis Tridimas & Robert Schütze, Vol. 1, (Oxford University Press, 2018).
[132] See e.g., Pierpaolo Donati, "What does "subsidiarity" mean? The relational perspective," *The journal of markets & morality* 12, No. 2, (2009): 211-238; John Peterson, "Subsidiarity: a definition to suit any vision?" *Parliamentary Affairs* 47, No. 1, (1994): 116-133.
[133] Cambridge Dictionary, "Subsidiarity", viewed April 11, 2022. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/subsidiarity.

[134]. According to the scholar, there has been a tendency in modern European thought to *eradicate the subsidiary level* (i.e., the power of intermediate groups) from the state-individual relation in order to prevent the creation of "*imperium in imperio*"[135]. A dispute over jurisdiction is thought to hinder the interests of both the sovereign and the individual[136]. Strong and centralised sovereignty, through enacting state territoriality, has become closely associated with national security.

According to John Agnew, territoriality is context-specific, it "cannot be ontologically contained […] through the methodological assumption of 'timeless space'"[137]. In medieval Europe, for example, boundaries between states were much "fuzzier"[138]: sovereignty belonged to the monarch instead of being divided "equally" between national centres, while geographical space was organised according to political affiliations rather than by established territorial boundaries[139].

Alan K. Henrikson argued that the constitution of a shared border is an important aspect in determining the quality of a relationship between states[140]. For states to have a successful „transfrontier diplomacy", they must, among other things, have an efficient domestic system able to accommodate efficient relations between the centre and periphery[141]. Thus centre-borderland relationship and tensions over subsidiarity are embedded in the modern concept of sovereignty and national security, particularly in cases where regions bordering a securitised national boundary have strong local agency.

According to Henrikson, a state's *orientation* may affect border relations and foreign relations between two neighbours: for border relations to bring peace, two countries must *face* one another "front to front"[142]. The "facing" element in this case means a more general historical/cultural orientation of a country. Larger countries have "somewhat more freedom of orientation" while small countries usually "cannot so easily turn away from their immediate [...] neighbour [sic – I.Š.]"[143]. Moreover, Henrikson argues that the success of transborder relations depends on how well the border areas and their populations are represented at the national centre and how the government is practising

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[134] "Territorial trap" is defined as three geographical assumptions that, according to John Agnew, historically led to privileging the territorial state conception: first, states are seen as "fixed units of sovereign space"; second, multi-level cross-border interactions in IR theory are obscured due to domestic/foreign (or national/international) divide; and third, the territorial state is perceived as a "container of society". See: John Agnew, "The territorial trap: The geographical assumptions of international relations theory." *Review of international political economy* 1, No. 1, (1994): 53-80, 59, 54.
[135] Agnew, 1994, 63.
[136] Ibid., 62-63.
[137] Ibid., 77.
[138] Ibid., 60.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Alan K. Henrikson, "Facing Across Borders: The Diplomacy of *Bon Voisinage,*" *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 21, No. 2, (2000): 121–147, 121.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid., 132.
[143] Ibid., 133.

its presence in the border areas[144]. Although Henrikson's account of defining borders is rather narrow and state-centric from the CBS perspective, he aptly captures the significance of how domestic context may cause centre-periphery tensions in bordering processes and influence their outcomes. Moreover, he shows how bordering practices in peripheries can be an effective and important part of building good neighbourly relations.

Therefore, there exists a tension between a tendency of centralisation, i.e., eradicating subsidiarity to strengthen state sovereignty and territoriality, and de-centralisation, implementing the principle of subsidiarity of the border regions. Border practices can both be produced in the national centres[145] and stem from the local agency. They can both be conflictual as well as complementing. The tension over borderland subsidiarity is particularly relevant in the case of Norway, which, as a small country, in terms of Henrikson, cannot "turn away" from its neighbour Russia, even provided that Norway's strategic commitment has been directed westwards. In addition, the border between Norway and Russia is in a sparsely populated sub-Arctic zone, which makes it even more isolated from the centre. In this sense, the countries do not face "front-to-front" as required for effective transborder diplomacy by Henrikson, and rather are "tied to each other by the tail"[146]. Although this allegory might seem convincing in practice, Norway's relationship with Russia is more complicated, particularly because of the need to maintain good neighbourly relations with the asymmetrical power of Russia[147]. This contradiction fuels an inevitable centre-borderland tension within Norway specifically because of the need for the centre to ensure appropriate bordering and "presence" in its most distant and sparsely populated regions. Furthermore, the distance from the centre (both geographic and symbolic) and proximity to Russia fosters a specific agency of the Northern regions, here conceptualised as the Northern Perspective.

A concept that helps explain the *process of formulating* the Northern Perspective is *encounter*. Encounter is more than a general meeting in that it entails a necessary condition of difference[148]. Borders are essentially sites of encounter and interaction[149]; therefore, the concept has quite recently been introduced more widely into Border Studies. Encounter allows to frame borders as multiperspectival sites of interactions, incorporating, but not limited to the bottom-up perspective[150].

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[144] Ibid., 135.
[145] Paasi, 1998, 4.
[146] Jens Petter Nielsen, „Some Reflections on the Norwegian-Russian Border and the Evolution of State Borders in General," in *Russia and Norway. Physical and Symbolic Borders*, eds. T. Jackson and J. P. Nielsen (Litres, 2005), 7-16, 9-10.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Helen F. Wilson, "On geography and encounter: Bodies, borders, and difference." *Progress in Human Geography* 41, No. 4 (2017): 451-471, 464.
[149] Jussi Laine, Inocent Moyo, Christopher Nshimbi, "Borders as sites of encounter and contestation," *Borders, Sociocultural Encounters and Contestations: Southern African experiences in Global view*, eds. C. C. Nshimbi, I. Moyo & J. Laine, (London: Routledge, 2020): 7–14, 7, 9.
[150] Chris Rumford, "Towards a multiperspectival study of borders." *Geopolitics* 17, No. 4 (2012): 887-902, 894.

Examining borders through encounter reveal their complex functions (rather than just assuming their static dividing qualities) and differentiate how they are experienced by various non-state actors[151]. This theoretical lens can help inquire about complex interaction processes across borders, particularly processes of regional integration[152]. Looking at borders through *encounter* demonstrates how they can "mean different things to different people", including by varying scales and temporalities[153].

Moreover, borders as encounters not only presume and produce difference; in Wilson's words, they can *make a* difference in being transformative: encounters as events can "enact a shift in sensory perception"[154]. For example, Henrik Dorf Nielsen's study on perceptions of Russia concluded that through encounter, increased knowledge, experience, and proximity can translate into familiarity and influence more positive perceptions[155]. Finally, encounters can demonstrate how borders are "diffused throughout society and constructed/shifted by a whole range of actors"[156]. The reason why the concept of encounter has explanatory power in the case of Northern subsidiarity is that the Norwegian borderland with Russia entails a regional integration process involving various multi-level actors[157]. Moreover, encounters explain how borders, experienced by various actors, can strengthen local agency (i.e. subsidiarity) and formulate perceptions (i.e. the Northern Perspective).

Thus, in this thesis, the analytical lens of suture is primarily used in analysing the *external* dimension of the Northern Perspective (i.e. cross-border practices) and in revealing multiple border functions. Although it is similar to encounter in that it can be applied in the context of non-state actor interaction, suture allows analysing the interaction between various levels (i.e. the individual against the sovereign authority), particularly *at the border* and other sites where the sovereign power becomes visible. Furthermore, suture proves particularly instrumental in cases when actors employ various practices of *resisting* a sovereign's authority, through consciously performing tears and ruptures in attempts to escape or unveil its manifestation. When inquiring on the domestic dimension of the Northern Perspective, two main concepts are combined: *subsidiarity*, which explains centre-borderland dynamics over bordering practices, and *encounter*, which reveals *how* the Northern Perspective is formulated over time and spread into broader society, beyond the immediate borderland.

[151] Laine, Moyo, Nshimbi, 8-9.
[152] Laine, Moyo, Nshimbi, 8.
[153] Ibid., 9.
[154] Wilson, 2017, 458.
[155] Henrik Dorf Nielsen, "Encountering (Un)Familiar Russia: Thresholds and Perceptions When Crossing the Border," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 36, No. 4 (2021): 529–546. https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2019.1621765 .
[156] Rumford 2012, 889.
[157] See more on Barents Cooperation in Chapter 2.

2. People-to-people practices in Norwegian-Russian cooperation

Both within academic research and political rhetoric, the Norwegian-Russian cooperation in the High North is characterised as an example of the "arena for interstate cooperation"[158]. It is consistent with the broader understanding of the Arctic region as an "exceptional zone of peace", largely "encapsulated from global power politics"[159]. This account is often supported by the argument that Norwegian-Russian relations in the High North were virtually unaffected by sanctions related to Crimea annexation in 2014, specifically in the fields of common interest: people-to-people cooperation, fisheries, coast guard, environmental protection, and search and rescue[160]. However, the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022 demonstrated that even the people-to-people practices can be challenged. Thus it is worth taking the borderland as a "site of investigation"[161], as Critical Border Studies suggest, and having a closer look at low-level practices and their dynamics over the past decade.

In this chapter, first, I provide historical context for the development of the Norwegian-Russian border and explain how people-to-people practices constitute an important component in the Norwegian bordering process. The 2.2 section analyses how these practices were affected by changes in the bilateral relationship between Norway and Russia over 2012-2022.

2.1. Context: bordering practices before 2012

The border between Russia and Norway is said to be the oldest present Russian border[162], and historically – the most tranquil and stable one[163], delimited without major conflict. It is situated in Sør-Varanger municipality, Troms and Finnmark County[164]. The shared boundary is 197.7 km long

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[158] K. Åtland, "North European Security after the Ukraine Conflict," *Defense & Security Analysis*, 32, No. 2, (2016): 163–176, 170.

[159] Juha Käpylä and Harri Mikkola, "Contemporary Arctic meets world politics: Rethinking Arctic exceptionalism in the age of uncertainty." *The GlobalArctic Handbook*, (Cham: Springer, 2019), 153-169.

[160] See: Åtland, 2016; M. Byers, "Crises and international cooperation: An Arctic case study," *International Relations*, 31, No. 4, (2017): 375–402; Østhagen, 2020; G. Hønneland, "Norway and Russia: Bargaining Precautionary Fisheries Management in the Barents Sea," *Arctic Review*, 5, No. 1, (2014).

[161] Parker and Vaughan-Williams, 2012, 728.

[162] Nielsen, 2005, 14.

[163] If we discount Russo-Finnish war at the beginning of the Second World War, during which Russia annexed Petsamo region, which, during the inter-war period, had been the Finnish corridor to the Barents Sea. See e.g., Lars Rowe, "'Russia is interested in the Petsamo nickel' (Juho Kusti Paasikivi in telegram to Finland's MFA, 23 June 1940)", *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 33, No. 1, (2020): 113-135; Maria Lähteenmäki and Alfred Colpaert, "Memory politics in transition: Nostalgia tours and gilded memories of Petsamo." *Matkailututkimus* 16, No. 1 (2020): 8-34.

[164] Troms and Finnmark were separate counties until the merger reform in 2020, which was widely opposed by local actors. See Atle Staalesen, "Finnmark turns down regional reform, says it could hamper relations with Russia", *The Barents Observer*, published December 16, 2016. https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/life-and-public/2016/12/finnmark-turns-down-regional-reform-says-it-could-hamper-relations-russia; Torill Olsen, "Finnmark – under Solberg eller Putin?" *Ryggmargsrefleksjoner,* published December 31, 2018. https://open-eye-open-mind.com/tag/torill-olsen/; Atle Staalesen, "Overwhelming 'no' in referendum over North Norway merger," *The Barents Observer,* published May 16, 2018. https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/arctic/2018/05/overwhelming-no-referendum-over-north-norway-merger .

and the only crossing station, Storskog, is located approximately 14 km from the Norwegian border town Kirkenes (approx. 9 km as the crow flies).

Kirkenes lies on the Barents Sea, in the Arctic Circle at 69° North and 30° East, stretching approx. 1400 km from Oslo[165]. The area is the northernmost and easternmost part of Norway. The border town has been a symbolic centre of Norway-Russia relations since the end of the Cold War. Kirkenes Declaration (1993) established the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (hereinafter BEAC) between Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia, marking the beginning of Barents Cooperation[166]. Kirkenes thus became the "Barents Capital" [167], home for the International Barents Secretariat, Norwegian Barents Secretariat[168], and a Russian Consulate General[169]. The town also has an identity of a "Russian town", otherwise called "Little Russia" or "Little Murmansk" [170], which is famously enacted through bilingual (Norwegian-Russian) street signs (see Picture 9). The *Barents* and *border* concepts are also entrenched in the town's character, to the point of being commercialised into an important "commodity" and "trademark": numerous local enterprises and institutions use 'Barents' in their name[171]. These identities are so widely enacted that, according to Fors, Kirkenes "resembles a *theme town*", where the Norwegian–Russian border is the main theme, while Barents and Russian identity are sub-themes[172].

The border was delimited in the Treaty of St. Petersburg in 1826[173]. It follows the Pasvik River until the church of Boris and Gleb[174]. The church had great symbolic value to Russia, thus, it was agreed that the borderline will circle an enclave around it before turning south-eastward. Once reaching the small Jakobselv River, it continues up north until the mouth of the Barents Sea (see maps 1 and 2)[175]. The boundary has essentially remained unchanged since.

[165] Distance as the crow flies.
[166] Barents region is "somewhat artificial as a region", "created" by politicians through region-building process starting early 1990s. Historical myths of Pomor trade were widely used to support this process. See e.g., Lassi Heininen, "Circumpolar International Relations and Cooperation", in *Globalization and the Circumpolar North,* eds. Lassi Heininen and Chris Soutcott, (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2010) 265-296; John Mikal Kvistad, "The Barents spirit: a bridge-building project in the wake of the Cold War." *Forsvarsstudier* 2 (1995); Tunanader, 1994; Jens Petter Nielsen, "The Barents Euro-Arctic Region - The Return of History?" in *The Flexible Frontier - Change and Continuity in Finnish-Russian Relations,* Maria Lähteenmäki (ed.) (Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki, 2007), 231-244.
[167] Fors, 2019.
[168] International Barents Secretariat represents the regional institution BEAC (since 2008) and the Norwegian Barents Secretariat is a Norwegian institution, aimed at fostering Norwegian-Russian cross-border cooperation in the High North.
[169] Other two Russian consulates are located in Oslo and Barentsburg (Svalbard).
[170] Fors, 2019, 208.
[171] Fors, 2019, 107; Thomas Nilsen, "Trademark Barents", *Barents Observer*, published February 02, 2012 https://barentsobserver.com/en/society/trademark-barents.
[172] Ibid., 206.
[173] Lloyd, 1956.
[174] Built on the west bank of the river in 1524.
[175] Ibid., 202-203. The border was to encircle the church by one verst (approx. one kilometre) until reaching the river again, where the boundary line was to pass it southeastward to "a specified small lake" and later to follow a small river (Jakobselv) up north until reaching the mouth of the Barents Sea.

Without changing the delimitation, the beginning of the Cold War significantly altered its embodiment and enforcement. During the first decade after the Second World War, the border was completely sealed[176]. Over the second decade, limited contacts started to appear. A Norwegian company 'Norelektro' was hired by the Soviet Union to build a new power plant on the Pasvik River (1958-1963), using the road in the Boris Gleb area to reach the construction site as well as provide supplies (thus, 'Skafferhullet', 'the Supply Hole', in Norw.)[177]. Skafferhullet became particularly famous in 1965 when it was suddenly opened by the USSR, inviting Scandinavian citizens to visit a bar that had been built in Boris Gleb[178]. As recently revealed, this idea was pitched to Moscow by the local "Norwegian–Soviet Friendship Society" branch in 1960: the organisation had a particular influence in advocating border perforation[179]. Skafferhullet was open from 27th June to 1st October, 1965[180] until its abrupt closure by the Norwegian government due to fears of espionage[181], remaining sealed ever since. Therefore, Cold War transformed a formerly loose boundary into a strictly enforced border.

The only remaining border crossing point is Storskog-Borisoglebsk, established in the 1949 "Agreement between Norway and the Soviet Union concerning the regime of the Norwegian-Soviet frontier and procedure for the settlement of frontier disputes and incidents" (hereinafter Border Treaty)[182]. It was initially designated as the meeting point between the border commissioners[183], the institution of which, established in the Border Treaty, remains a central aspect of the border regime to this day (see more: sections 3.1 and 4.2).

During the decade of appeasement in the 1990s, the border became tied to the Barents Cooperation initiative. Locally, various "friendship" initiatives had started even earlier, which gave an additional stimulus for the region-building process[184]. The "invention" of the Barents Region also happened at the border, largely driven by the post-Cold War "euphoria"[185] and fueled by the general

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[176] Ibid., 222.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ida Karine Gullvik, "Den norske spionbaren i Sovjet" NRK, published September 11, 2016. https://www.nrk.no/tromsogfinnmark/xl/den-norske-spionbaren-i-sovjet-1.13127265 .
[179] Felix Frey, "A fluid iron curtain", *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 45, No. 4, (2020): 506-526, 518.
[180] Gullvik, 2016.
[181] Frey, 2020; the closure was also tied to a death of American Newcomb Mott, who was sentenced in Russia for illegally crossing the border and died within a year in obscure circumstances. See, e.g.: Sarah Laskow, "The Tragedy of Newcomb Mott, Who Thought He Could Walk Into Soviet Russia," *Atlas Obscura,* published March 1, 2017. https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/newcomb-mott-soviet-border-death-boris-gleb.
[182] Norway and the Soviet Union, „Overenskomst mellom Norge og Sovjetunionen om forskjellige forhold ved den norsk-sovjetiske grense og om fremgangsmåten ved ordning av konflikter og hendinger på grensen, med protokoller og vedlegg (Avtalen er videreført med Russland)", No. 1 Bilateral, Lovdata, Oslo, 29-12-1949. [Agreement between Norway and the Soviet Union concerning the regime of the Norwegian-Soviet frontier and procedure for the settlement of frontier disputes and incidents, with protocols and annex] https://lovdata.no/dokument/TRAKTAT/traktat/1949-12-29-1#KAPITTEL_1.
[183] Lloyd, 1956, 225.
[184] Peter Haugseth, "Tvillingbysamarbeid i den norsk-russiske grensesonen," in *Grenseliv,* eds. Arvid Viken and Bjarge Schwenke Fors. (Stamsund: Orkana Akademisk Forlag, 2014), 21-37.
[185] Aalbu, "Cross-Border Co-operation in the Barents Region", 1998; Tunanader, 1994; Nielsen, 2007, 237.

hope for the "disappearance of borders"[186]. Significant attention was paid to researching and publicising the previously forgotten Pomor Trade period in Northern Norwegian-Russian relations (18th-20th Centuries)[187], the myth of which provided the basis of common regional identity[188].

In the 2000s, the idea of Norwegian-Russian cooperation was brought back to the top political agenda. The High North Strategy of 2006, proposed by then Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg[189] and Minister of Foreign Affairs Jonas Gahr Støre[190], was "more than just foreign policy, and more than just domestic policy"[191]. The two terms of Stoltenberg's government and Støre's High North leadership coincided with the closure of the mine in Kirkenes, hence transforming the town from the "peripheral town for miners" to the „town for ministers"[192]. The constructs of 'Barents' and the border thus became economically tied to border-tourism and cross-border trade industries[193].

Jonas Gahr Støre's leadership as Minister of Foreign Affairs (hereinafter MFA) (2005-2013) brought the Norwegian-Russian relationship to its peak: Barents delimitation agreement was signed in 2010 after stalling for several decades[194] and cross-border traffic, encouraged by the liberation of the border regime, peaked in 2013 (See Diagrams 2 and 3)[195]. The new border regime included the Pomor visa (introduced in 2010) and border resident permit [*Grenseboerbevis* in Norw.] (signed in 2010, enforced in 2012). Pomor visa is meant for Russian residents of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk Oblasts, and the border resident permit is meant for people living within 30 kilometres from the Norwegian side of the border, and 30-50 kilometres on the Russian side[196]. Crucially, along with all

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[186] See Paasi, „Boundaries as social practice and discourse: The Finnish-Russian border", 1999; Anssi Paasi, „The Finnish-Russian border in a world of de-territorialisation" *The NEBI Yearbook 1999*, (Berlin: Springer, Heidelberg, 1999), 215-228; Gearoid Tuathail, „Political Geography III. Dealing with deterritorialization". *Progress in Human Geography* 22, (1998): 81-93.
[187] Einar Niemi, "The Pomor Trade from a Norwegian Perspective," in *The Barents Region*, (Tromsø: Tromsø Museum, 1995), 26-36; Schrader, "Pomor trade with Norway", 1988.
[188] Tunanader, 1994, 32.
[189] Jens Soltenberg, now NATO Secretary General, is the son of former Minister of Foreign Affairs Thorvald Stoltenberg, the "father of Barents region" and the initiator of Kirkenes Declaration. Thus by bringing forward the High North strategy, he continued his father's vision of an integrated Barents region. He even directly referred to his father's legacy in political speeches. See: Fors, 2019, 117-118.
[190] Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "The Government's High North strategy", Oslo/Tromsø, December 1, 2006. https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/ud/vedlegg/strategien.pdf.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Fors, 2019, 107. Viken, Arvid, and Torill Nyseth. "Kirkenes – A Town for Miners and Ministers," 2009; Viken, Granås & Nyseth. 2008.
[193] Fors, 2019, 167.
[194] See: A. Moe, Fjærtoft, D., & Øverland, I., "Space and timing: Why was the Barents Sea delimitation dispute resolved in 2010?" *Polar Geography*, 34, No. 3, (2011): 145–162. https://doi.org/10.1080/1088937X.2011.597887; A. H. Hoel, "The 2010 Norway-Russia Marine Boundary Agreement and Bilateral Cooperation on Integrated Oceans Management." *Nordlit*, 16, No. 1, (2012); Choi, Y. H., "The Barents Sea: Equal Division of the Disputed Sea between Russia and Norway" *The Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 2, (2014): 61–81.
[195] Data from Finnmark Police Distrct [*Finnmark politidistrikt*], acquired by author via email correspondence on March 23, 2022.
[196] Permit is valid for three years to travel of up to 15 days at a time. Heather Yundt, Catherine Benesch. "Visa-free agreement sign of strong border relationship", *Barents Observer*, published May 29, 2012. https://barentsobserver.com/en/borders/visa-free-agreement-sign-strong-border-relationship .

these rapid developments, the Barents identity became even more established in the borderland and closely tied to the concept of *people-to-people.* Next, I briefly explain why this concept is important for the local identity.

People-to-people practices were employed as an important basis for the framework of Barents Cooperation, the distinct Norwegian foreign policy strategy, launched by the MFA Thorvald Stoltenberg in January 1992[197]. The political campaign was a response to the end of the Cold War and aimed to re-establish Norway's position in Europe[198]; particularly through attention to the High North and revived cooperation with Russia "while Moscow was talkative and positive"[199]. Hence people-to-people cross-border cooperation became an important tool for that goal. Norwegian people-to-people projects are funded via the Norwegian Barents Secretariat (hereinafter – the Secretariat[200]), which is governed by two Northern counties (Nordland, Troms and Finnmark) and financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereinafter MFA)[201] (yearly approx. 30 million NOK, or around 3.5 million EUR)[202]. Additionally, some 6 million NOK (approx. 600 000 EUR) are contributed by Northern counties and the Ministry of Culture[203].

The concept of *people-to-people* [*folk-til-folk*] gradually came to be a fundamental part of Norwegian Northern identity, and a local colloquialism in the borderland area. One interviewee who came to Kirkenes from Oslo, recalled her early interactions: "I needed [an – I.Š.] explanation, the first times I came... I [would – I.Š.] go, "But what is this thing that they're talking about all the time, 'Folk-til-folk'?""[204]. Thus, people-to-people projects were set up as a tool to foster Barents cooperation between Norway and Russia, and became significant in their own right, closely tied to

[197] Tunander, 1994, 35.
[198] John Mikal Kvistad, "The Barents spirit: a bridge-building project in the wake of the Cold War." *Forsvarsstudier* 2, (1995): 5-7.
[199] Ibid., 11.
[200] Norwegian Barents Secretariat was separated from BEAC regional framework and owned by the Northern Counties since 1998. The International Barents Secretariat was established in 2008 to fulfil the function of administering the BEAC framework as it was recognised that the Norwegian Barents Secretariat was „primarily a Norwegian-Russian matter" and other BEAC countries did not have similar structures to maintain regional cooperation. See: Jørn Holm-Hansen, Aadne Aasland, and Elena Dybtsyna. "Building Neighbourhood: Evaluation of the Barents Secretariat's grant programme", *NIBR Report* No. 4, 2008, 19.
[201] The Norwegian Barents Secretariat. "Hva er Barentssekretariatet" published October 4, 2021. https://barents.no/en/node/3790 .
[202] The Barents Secretariat can cover up to 70% of the total costs of a project. Focus areas include Culture / Sports, Competence / Education, Industry / Entrepreneurship, Media / Information, Civil Society / Environment. The main criteria to be eligible for funding is for the applicant to be from the Northern Norway and have a Russian partner, which covers part of the funding (from the Barents region). See The Norwegian Barents Secretariat, "Våre retningslinjer og vilkår" updated April 2022. https://barents.no/nb/sok-stotte/prosjektfinanisering/vare-retningslinjer-og-vilkar ; The Norwegian Barents Secretariat, „Promoting Norwegian-Russian relations in the north" Viewed April 23, 2022, https://barents.no/en/promoting-norwegian-russian-relations-north .
[203] Jørn Holm-Hansen, Aadne Aasland, and Elena Dybtsyna. "Still building neighbourhood: Mid-term evaluation of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat's grant programme", *Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Researc OsloMet*, 2020, 12.
[204] Mina Skouen, interview with the author, online, 02/02/2022.

regional identity. Barents cooperation projects also became important in the bordering process, constituting the border through performative practices of the *barrier vs. bridge* metaphor. While "Border as Barrier" was almost exclusively used in the tourism industry, "Border as Bridge" was widely enacted by both state- and low-level actors in border performances[205]. However, these practices, although performing openness, sometimes do not correspond to the reality of a border, which remains „among the most closed and highly securitized in Europe"[206].

Although claimed to be successful in certain aspects, Norway has also been criticised for being "naïve" or "stuck" in the 1990s perspective of Russia's integration[207]. Even while the "sensitive" issues, among them military security, were left out of the BEAC framework, the patronising character of Norwegian "soft power" gradually became evident in Russia and resulted in rising scepticism towards the „aide" and „cooperation" agenda[208]. Furthermore, there occurred difficulties, e.g., within the business cooperation, which was initially a promising field of regional integration, and later proved to be challenging[209].

To conclude, the context of the border has been defined by Norway's orientation towards greater contact with Russia. Even during the Cold War, there existed local initiatives of cross-border contact. In the post-Cold War era, two main waves of cooperation with Russia can be discerned: the first initiative launched by MFA Thorvald Stoltenberg (1990-1993) and the second by MFA Jonas Gahr Støre (2005-2013). Thorvald Stoltenberg "invented" the Barents identity and built an institutional foundation to amplify cross-border contact. The second wave, on the other hand, consolidated this framework, which resulted in the peak Norwegian-Russian relations around 2010-2013. These initiatives were largely realised by the national government through engaging with local low-level actors and vice versa. Fostering people-to-people practices became a significant aspect of borderland identity and *(de-)*bordering process, emphasising "bridge-building", "overcoming barriers", and the peaceful neighbourhood with Russia.

2.2. Changes in bordering practices 2012-2022

The practices of people-to-people cooperation, as shown in the previous section, were reinforced by Støre's High North strategy which put cooperation with Russia at the centre of Norwegian foreign policy (once again). Thus the people-to-people practices, already entailing a stable institutional structure and continuous state funding[210], were strengthened even further and became an

[205] Fors, 2019.
[206] Fors, 2019, 7.
[207] Rowe and Hønneland, 2010.
[208] Rowe and Hønneland 2010, 142.
[209] Holm-Hansen, Aasland, and Dybtsyna, 2020, 33.
[210] Marit E. Jacobsen, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 07/02/2022.

important stabilising factor in cross-border contact. In the 2020 evaluation report, it was determined that the deteriorating state of relations did not affect the number of grant applications[211] and a large part of participants reported no negative impact (45 %) in the evaluation survey. However, 17 % of respondents did indicate a negative impact (while 10 % indicated that it was positive[212]). Thus albeit stable from the Norwegian side, cross-border cooperation was at least to a limited extent challenged during the past decade, particularly due to changes in the Russian domestic regime[213]. In this section, I analyse these changes in bordering and cross-border practices, largely based on the interviews and other data collected for this thesis. As a valuable resource, the results of the evaluation report of the Secretariat's grant programme will be referred to in the analysis[214].

To start with, it is important to determine *when* these changes started to be noticeable in the borderland. It is established that the turning point in Russia-Norway relations was the annexation of Crimea in 2014, after which it became impossible to "think of Russia without thinking of Crimea"[215]. However, in Kirkenes, certain signs of change appeared earlier[216]. For instance, locals noticed fewer Russian men on the streets of Kirkenes since approximately 2012, due to the new "exit ban"[217] in Russia, aimed at isolating the security apparatus employees from Western influence[218]. Thomas Nilsen recalled how the effects of these changes were noticed by locals:

> "We could see it quite easily on the streets of Kirkenes. All these shoppers used to fill up their car, where the driver was a man […]. But after 2012, the women came alone. […] So, we could see that many people are no longer allowed to cross the border."[219]

Another visible change was in the border infrastructure. In 2013, Russia built a barbed fence fortification on its side of the border. The construction started in the summer of 2013 and eventually

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[211] Holm-Hansen, Aasland, and Dybtsyna, 2020, 21.
[212] Ibid., 20.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Holm-Hansen, Aasland, and Dybtsyna, 2020.
[215] Markussen, 2016, 13.
[216] According to Wilhelmsen and Gjerde, the government's discourse on Russia started to shift during autumn 2012-spring 2013, recognising the authoritarian tendencies as a threat to "Western world order". At the same time, the government was still pursuing collaboration with Russia ("along with a low-key […] emphasis on the need to strengthen territorial defense"). Apprehensions of Russia as the Other became even more frequent, while the emphasis on Russia as a partner in the High North became less prominent once the new Conservative government was elected in September 2013 (*before* the annexation of Crimea). See: Wilhelmsen and Gjerde, 2018, 389-390.
[217] These provisions were initially released in 2010, restricting FSB officials from crossing the border without a formal permission. Later, the number of Russian citizens who, for various reasons, were prohibited from leaving the country was gradually raised: e.g., in 2013, the ban was extended to debtors. See more: Vladimir Ryzhkov, "Controlling Russians Through Travel Bans", published May 26, 2014, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/05/26/controlling-russians-through-travel-bans-a35830 ; Gorod48, "Сотрудников ФСБ РФ сделали невыездными", опубликовано 03/12/2010 https://gorod48.ru/news/30546/ ; BBC News, „Сотрудникам ФСБ приказано не иметь имущества за границей", опубликовано 24/02/2012 https://www.bbcrussian.com/russian/russia/2012/02/120224_fsb_property ; Президент России, „Внесены изменения в закон об исполнительном производстве", опубликовано 24 июля 2013. http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/news/18891 .
[218] Ryzhkov, "Controlling Russians Through Travel Bans", 2014.
[219] Thomas Nilsen, interview with the author, online, 15/12/2021.

covered the whole of the 197.7 km border[220]. Thus although the Russian barbed-wire fence existed since the Cold War, its fortification was doubled, now consisting of one smaller and one larger structure, with a one-and-a-half-meter zone in-between. The smaller fence, importantly, facing westwards[221], thus signifying the fence's inward-oriented functionality. The sudden fortification of the fence seemed unexpected for Norwegians and contradicted the high state of cross-border relations at the time. Although downplayed by officials of both countries ("everything that contributes to hinder people from illegal border crossings is good"[222]), it proved to be one of the first signals of the negative trend in the relationship.

Therefore, while the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 troubled the state-level relationship, its effect on the borderland was two-fold. On the one hand, the border traffic decreased (although the trend only became visible in 2015, see Diagram 2), and the fall of the rouble made cross-border shopping less viable for Russians[223]. On the other hand, Russia imposed counter-sanctions on some western products, including Norwegian salmon[224]. As residents of Kirkenes recall, these restrictions prompted Russians to come and fill their shopping carts "full of Norwegian salmon and cheese"[225], thus benefiting the local economy. Therefore, although it is fair to say that most of the cooperation areas in the High North were not *directly* impacted by Norwegian sanctions (as is widely established[226]), the overall effects of the crisis in the bilateral relationship *were* noticeable on the micro-level in the borderland.

Therefore, although 2014 became a turning point in Oslo, in Kirkenes, securitisation from the Russian side had started earlier, with the fortification of the border and limitations on local Russians' cross-border travel. Importantly, in the aftermath of the Crimea annexation, low-level diplomatic institutions in Norway were not willing to sacrifice their relationship with the Russian state actors. Secretariat treated grant applications for "politically sensitive" projects carefully, carrying out risk analyses and trying to navigate Russian pressures in consultation with offices in Russia[227] and the MFA[228]. However, over time, the leaders of the Secretariat have taken somewhat critical positions

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[220] Thomas Nilsen "Russia erects double barbed wire fence against the Norwegian bear" *Barents Observer*, published September 23, 2013. https://barentsobserver.com/en/borders/2013/09/russia-erects-double-barbed-wire-fence-against-norwegian-bear-23-09.
[221] Thomas Nilsen, "Russia erects double barbed wire fence….", 2013.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Thomas Nilsen, "Ruble fell sharply - will it influence cross-border shopping?" *The Barents Observer,* published April 11, 2018. https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/life-and-public/2018/04/ruble-fell-sharply .
[224] Ole Petter Skonnord, "UPDATE 1-Russia sanctions throw Norway's fish industry into turmoil" published August 8, 2014. https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-sanctions-salmon-idUSL6N0QE32E20140808 .
[225] Thomas Nilsen, interview with the author, online, 15/12/2021.
[226] Makarychev & Kuznetsova, 2022, 393.
[227] Norwegian Barents Secretariat has offices in Arkhangelsk, Murmansk and Nenets, which facilitate in engaging and maintaining contacts with Russian partners in cooperation projects.
[228] Holm-Hansen, Aasland, and Dybtsyna, 2020, 20.

towards Norwegian-Russian relations, e.g., by juxtaposing regional policies against the national centres, invoking a common identity of "Northerners on both sides of the border"[229].

In 2017, the people-to-people cooperation, which was not heavily hindered by the Crimea annexation, was coming back to its normal state. Between 2017 and 2019, statistics on Norwegian cross-border traffic were at an all-time high (see Diagrams 2 and 3). A much more damaging crisis for cross-border cooperation was therefore the COVID-19 pandemic, a fact emphasised by most interviewees. Even after most travel restrictions were lifted elsewhere, including Norway, COVID-19 risks became a justification for Russian isolationism[230]. Illustratively, in March of 2022, only three border crossings were registered from Norway to Russia by persons holding border resident permits[231]. Crucially, Russian restrictions were not only applied to Norwegians (e.g., selectively, see more in 3.2.2). After the Norwegian border was completely opened for Russians in 2022, it became clear that Russian COVID-19 related provisions were restricting its citizens to *leave* Russia[232]. Thus, COVID-19 provided an opportunity for the Russian authorities to utilise these restrictions as a political tool and further isolate an even larger part of the population, which in turn affected cross-border practices.

People-to-people cooperation was also particularly impacted by growing authoritarianism in Russia. This tendency was heightened because most of the cooperation partners in Russia were state or public organisations (six out of ten)[233]. Even cooperation in the High Education area (considered rather neutral) encountered difficulties. For instance, the joint Master's programme "Borderology" between Nord University[234] and Murmansk State Humanities University (MSHU)[235], first initiated around 2009, became increasingly challenged, until, after a change in MSHU leadership, the agreement was not extended. According to the programme coordinator Jan Selmer Methi, the Russian party did not even agree to sign a diploma of a student who completed his degree a year after the agreement had ended:

> "I tried to argue that this has nothing to do with the length of the agreement because they were put onto the programme long before […]. "No, we cannot sign it," [the Russians said – I.Š.].

[229] Holm-Hansen, Aasland, and Dybtsyna, 2020, 21.
[230] Norway lifted all travel restrictions from Russia in January 2022. At the time of writing this thesis, the land border with Norway was still strictly regulated from the Russian side, based on COVID-19 risks, Lars Fordal, follow-up conversation with author, online, 28/03/2022.
[231] Thomas Nilsen, "Tensions are high, but no plans to terminate visa-free travel", *The Barents Observer*, published April 7, 2022. https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/borders/2022/04/tensions-are-high-no-plans-terminate-visa-free-travel .
[232] Lars Fordal, follow-up conversation with author, online, 28/03/2022.
[233] Ibid., 25.
[234] Bodø, Nordland, previously University of Nordland
[235] Methi, Jan Selmer, et al. (eds.), *Borderology: Cross-disciplinary Insights from the Border Zone: Along the Green Belt*, 2019, v-vi.

And why do you think they were afraid? This is a [period – I.Š.] of really tightening up [the – I.Š.] law against foreign activities that are not signed and "stamped". So they refused."[236]

These difficulties grew most evident after the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24th, 2022 had started. The attack coincided with the Kirkenes Conference 2022, a yearly event held since 2008 as a "meeting venue" for actors from various levels in the High North region[237]. In 2022, the conference took place on 23rd-24th February[238] and became a microcosm of the invasion's impact on Norwegian-Russian relations as participants followed events in real-time.

On the first day, most discussions inevitably touched on the Russian military build-up, which led to tensions between Norwegian and Russian participants. They witnessed a dramatic speech by the Russian Ambassador Teimuraz O. Ramishvili, who condemned discussions about the situation in Ukraine ("it was a mistake!") and expressed his "sadness and regret" that the "negative geopolitics" had "infiltrated" bilateral relations as an „infection"[239]. The situation only escalated on the second day, the morning of which most attendees were woken up by the news of the break-out of war. The mood at the conference was largely shock and disbelief, some cried[240]. However, the focus was quickly shifted back to the importance of cross-border cooperation. Mayor of Sør-Varanger Lena Norum Bergeng in her speech on the morning of 24th February emphasised: "We condemn Russia's aggression towards a sovereign state, but we do not condemn the Russian people. The Russian people are our neighbors [sic – I.Š.], our family, our friends and colleagues"[241]. Thus, in order to process the difficult situation, compartmentalisation of Russia's actions was readily employed, differentiating between the Russian government (particularly President Putin) and the Russian people.

Norwegian condemnation of Russia was strong, even by some prominent cooperation actors, who were publicly denouncing their relationship with Russian authorities. For instance, former Mayor of Sør-Varanger Rune Rafaelsen returned the Order of Friendship he had received from President Vladimir Putin in May 2020[242]; The Arctic University of Norway retracted the title of honorary doctor from MFA Sergey Lavrov[243]. The local population were also at risk to be affected economically by

[236] Jan Selmer Methi, interview with the author, Bodø, 07/12/2021.
[237] Kirkenes konferansen, "ABOUT THE KIRKENES CONFERENCE", Viewed on March 27, 2022. https://www.kirkeneskonferansen.no/?lang=en .
[238] I have participated in the conference online.
[239] Speech by Russian Ambassador to Norway, Teimuraz O. Ramishvili, Kirkenes Conference 2022. Notes by author (online participation).
[240] Arne O. Holm, "Demanding Thoughts on a Quite Extraordinary Day on the Border to Russia," High North News, Published February 25, 2022. https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/demanding-thoughts-quite-extraordinary-day-border-russia.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Hilde-Gunn Bye, ""This was just Too Much", says Rune Rafaelsen", *The High North News,* Published March 1, 2022. https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/was-just-too-much-says-rune-rafaelsen.
[243] Thomas Nilsen, "University in Tromsø retracts Lavrov's honorary doctorate", February 28, 2022. https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2022/02/university-tromso-retract-lavrovs-honorary-doctorate.

the sanctions, namely the shipyard KIMEK in Kirkenes, which has a 70 % Russian clientele. These events had such a devastating effect on the local population that the idea of removing Cyrillic street signs was voiced: a "divorce" from the town's Russianness and a way to strengthen Norwegian sovereignty in the borderland[244]. Thus by 2022, the local identity, based on cross-border cooperation was shaken to the core, particularly because of the ideological antithesis evoked by the Russian regime.

In their reaction, the Secretariat announced in March 2022 that it will no longer cooperate with Russian authorities at the state, regional, and municipal levels[245]. Although the will for cooperation still exists (in consultation with MFA and the Counties), it has become obvious that projects will have to be halted[246]. Russian attack on Ukraine had an unprecedented direct effect on cross-border cooperation, to the point that even the traditional, most successful projects (e.g. sports cooperation) became unattainable (even sports clubs in Russia have regional/municipal affiliation)[247]. The solution was to try and engage with independent Russian actors and individuals, considering extending cooperation to those outside of the region or even those outside of Russia[248]. Therefore, people-to-people cooperation became virtually impossible when most of the regional actors in Russia declared public support for the war, thus rendering the ideological juxtaposition inescapable for Norwegians.

Although the Norwegian Barents Secretariat still tried to navigate these challenges, it required them to reframe their work in a completely „new way"[249]. Thus the year 2022 marked a significant change both in rhetoric and policy within the Northern Perspective towards Russia: full-scale war in Ukraine became an existential obstacle to people-to-people cooperation. The immediate strategy employed by local actors was to separate Russia's actions in Ukraine from Russian individuals. However, after a while, it became more and more difficult to realise due to Russian actors' public support for the war. It proved particularly problematic because most of the Russian partners involved in cooperation were government/public organisations, and independent actors still faced a constant threat of being cast as "foreign agents".

Therefore changes in bordering practices over 2012-2022 were three-fold. First, they started earlier than is often acknowledged by the threshold of "Crimea": although subtle, changes were already noticeable for the locals around 2012. It demonstrates how bilateral relations can be revealed in the microclimate between two bordered regions before "coming to the surface" at the state level.

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[244] Bjarge Schwenke Fors, "Skiltstriden i Kirkenes", *Nordnorsk Debatt,* published April 26, 2022. https://www.nordnorskdebatt.no/skiltstriden-i-kirkenes/o/5-124-177283.
[245] Lars Fordal, follow-up conversation with author, online, 28/03/2022.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid.

Second, the results showed that although the cross-border cooperation was not affected by post-Crimea sanctions on Russia, more influential were the Russian counter-sanctions, the effects of which locally were both negative and positive. Third, the most challenging to the relationship was Russia's increasing authoritarianism and isolationism, particularly the introduction of "foreign agents' law"[250], the "exit ban" on representatives of the security apparatus and beyond, and unfounded prolongations of COVID-19 entry restrictions. Ultimately, it was further complicated by Russian actors publicly supporting Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which made the cooperation even more difficult to navigate for Norwegians.

Therefore, although only recently perceived as an "improbable scenario", the Norwegian-Russian border, from a state of "ambivalence between openness and closedness"[251], became effectively closed in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic limited cross-border contacts, albeit leaving actors involved in cooperation hopeful for eventual opening. However, isolationist and authoritarian tendencies in Russia, intensified during the invasion of Ukraine, proved to have imposed yet unprecedented challenges to people-to-people practices.

[250]"Foreign agent law" in Russia is designed to regulate and limit activities of NGOs possibly funded by foreign sources and engage in political activity. See more e.g., Maria Tysiachniouk, Svetlana Tulaeva & Laura A. Henry, "Civil Society under the Law 'On Foreign Agents': NGO Strategies and Network Transformation," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 70, No. 4, (2018): 615-637. DOI: 10.1080/09668136.2018.1463512 .

[251] Fors, 2019, 213.

3. Border functions: suturing and rupturing

In the previous chapter, I discussed the historical context of the Norwegian-Russian border and the development of people-to-people practices, as well as how they were affected by changes over 2012-2022. As already mentioned, the local relationship with Russia has been defined through the dyad of the *barrier-bridge* metaphor[252]. The "Border as Bridge" metaphor is also prevalent in the discourse of the actors interviewed for the thesis. Nonetheless, it does not fully represent the border *function,* particularly how it was enacted over the last decade. Thus, I employ the concept of *suture*[253], which allows for a more processual and functional analysis of the bordering practices. First, I analyse the bordering practices of the Border Commissioner's institution and explain its stabilising function. Then, the 3.2 section of this chapter is devoted to the most challenging areas of people-to-people cooperation (the "controversial" issues). Two cases of such practices are examined: the case of Barents Pride and the case of Barents Observer.

3.1. Bordering through "friendship"

The institution of the Border Commissioner has two main functions: the low-level diplomat and the "caretaker" of the border. In this chapter, the former is discussed in more detail since it directly relates to the border regime and contact with Russia. The latter function is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

The diplomatic role of the Commissioner is realised mainly through maintaining constant contact with the Russian Border Commissioner. According to the 1949 agreement, the joint work of the commissioners is carried out during negotiation meetings and gatherings[254]. These meetings are strictly regulated and organised at the request of one of the commissioners[255]. By agreement, the meeting can be held between deputies or assistants, but only on behalf of the commissioners[256]. The commissioners meet every month, while border inspectors usually have weekly meetings[257]. The contact is also daily, maintained via phone and email. Although the important meetings are usually held physically, at the border crossing point[258], the COVID-19 pandemic largely limited the form of contact to telephone conferences. Nonetheless, face-to-face meetings remain crucial to the border regime, particularly in the ceremonial practices of border inspection. These practices not only have a practical purpose of maintaining appropriate border markings. They are also largely designed with a

[252] Fors, 2019, 199.
[253] Salter, 2012, 737.
[254] Norway and the Soviet Union, Art. 27, https://lovdata.no/traktat/1949-12-29-1/a27.
[255] Norway and the Soviet Union, Art. 28 https://lovdata.no/traktat/1949-12-29-1/a28.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Politiet, "Om Grensekommissariatet", Viewed on March 25, 2022. https://www.politiet.no/om/organisasjonen/sarorganene/grensekommissariatet/om-grensekommissariatet/.
[258] Ibid.

special focus on building personal relationships as grounds for the status quo of the border regime: "The dialogue between us and the Russians is quite good. We know them more or less personally, and they know us."[259]

There have not been any substantial amendments to the Border Treaty since its accession[260]. Consequently, some aspects of it are outdated in spirit. For example, Border Commissioner is allowed to hire an "Office Lady", which strongly contravenes principles of today's Norwegian egalitarian society, also, treaty provisions include one that allows the Border Commissioner to have personal weapons and tobacco when crossing the border with Russia[261]. However, it is "important to look at it in the right perspective", according to the commissioner: "It's old, but it is still functional"[262]. Thus although some of the regulations are now only symbolic remnants of the Cold War era, the agreement and its protocols enforce the continuity and stability of the border regime.

The most important tradition is the summer inspection of the border. It takes place every August and is the highlight event for the commissioners and their teams. The formal objective of the event is to inspect the whole length of the border. It is done over three days, in three groups of 2-3 persons from each state party, accompanied by an interpreter (in total 5-7 persons in each group)[263]. Since the inspection is done in August, when the summer temporary markings are already in place, the inspection is „more or less a formality"[264]. The purpose of this event is largely social:

> "[The group] walks together, eats together and even stay the nights together in tents or cabins. They cross the border back and forth walking along on the side most convenient. In the start of the inspection, there is a kind of tension and formal behaviour but after a few hours this loosens up and after three days the members of the parties are well integrated and acquainted."[265]

In the end, the official protocol signing ceremony is again followed by a social event (dinner or barbecue). The socialisation aspect of the whole event is significant as it builds a "solid fundament for the cooperation the rest of the year"[266].

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[259] Ibid.
[260] However, a new agreement on border control was signed in 2002, which, inter alia, addressed the Border Commissioners' cooperation. See Russian Federation and the Kingdom of Norway, "Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway on cooperation on border issues" [orig. "Соглашение между Правительством Российской Федерации и Правительством Королевства Норвегия о сотрудничестве по пограничным вопросам"], Oslo, November 12, 2002. http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/3543 .
[261] Norway and the Soviet Union, Art. 35 https://lovdata.no/dokument/TRAKTAT/traktat/1949-12-29-1#KAPITTEL_1
[262] Jens-Arne Høilund, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 08/02/2022.
[263] Jens-Arne Høilund, email correspondence with the author, 23/02/2022.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Ibid.
[266] Ibid.

The low-level diplomatic role is inherently meant for stabilisation and de-escalation: "tak[ing] the steam out of things that might escalate before it escalates"[267]. The personal relationship between the commissioners also becomes significant when mediation is needed. For instance, when there are disputes between various Norwegian-Russian actors, the commissioners are often asked to host such meetings:

> "[The last meeting – I.Š.] was arranged by the [Joint – I.Š.] Headquarters in Bodø. […] Because the Norwegian Coast Guard is part of the armed forces, but the Russian Coast Guard is part of FSB. And FSB is not in the Russian armed forces. [...] So that's why the border commissioners are always invited to these meetings."[268]

Thus the inclusion of the border commissioners is not only a matter of de-escalation but a way of evening structural differences between Norwegian and Russian institutions and facilitating more efficient dialogue.

The "friendship" of the commissioners is also embodied through border infrastructure. There are conference houses built around 1949 on both sides[269]. In the Norwegian house (see Pictures 1 and 2), there is a conference hall with Russian-Norwegian table-top flags (see Picture 1). On the right side of the hall, there is a small kitchen, which leads to a room containing a bunk-bed, sometimes used by soldiers. In the kitchen, there is a cupboard full of drinkware, used "all the time". Another room, which has a separate access from the hallway is smaller, furnished with a sofa, two armchairs, and a small table in the middle. It is used "when it gets serious", albeit this occurs rarely (see Picture 2). Thus the layout and furnishing of the house convey the significance of the practices of socialisation, as well as diplomatic work of de-escalation and negotiation.

The traditions of socialisation, entrenched in the protocols of the 1949 Border Treaty only reiterate how much the border regime depends on the friendship between the two commissioners to maintain stability. During the inspection, the border is freely transgressed by participants as they transgress the boundaries of their relationships. Joint walking, eating, and drinking only tighten this bond and make the so-called "red phone"[270] more available to use in times of crisis. However, through these practices, the institution simultaneously reproduces and "fortifies" the boundary. Although the commissioners and their teams *can* transgress the border, crossing is strictly prohibited for other people. Ultimately, the regime is set to function in the context of the Cold War – not in a boundless

[267] Ibid.
[268] Jens-Arne Høilund, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 08/02/2022
[269] Ibid.
[270] The border commissioners had the so-called "red phone" during the Cold War, and in 1966 he was "probably the only Western official who has a direct telephone connection with his Soviet counterpart", apart from head-of-state level officials. See: Johan Jörgen Holst, "Norwegian Security Policy: The Strategic Context," *Cooperation and Conflict* 1, No. 4, (1966): 64-79.

cross-border regime. This aspect is particularly evident in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: the institution was able to fully function[271] and maintain an almost unaffected border regime. Border crossing stations needed additional containers for testing and more human resources to facilitate the border regime did not require drastic changes to facilitate border closure. Thus the border is still largely equipped with practices of mutual isolation, which render it almost exempt from challenges in bilateral relations.

Therefore, "knowing" the counterpart and maintaining an informal relationship is as much a practical provision as it is symbolic. These bordering practices of "building friendship" are at the centre of the border regime, rendering crises at the border almost casual exchanges between two friends, relieving unnecessary tensions, and thus maintaining the *status quo.* That is also why the function of mediation between central actors proves so necessary: the tensions between the central actors can be effectively calmed down by two "friends" acting as intermediaries. Through the lens of *suture,* this is a process of "knitting together" the two sovereigns, separating and isolating their spheres of authority, simultaneously co-constituting them in the larger *metacommunity of sovereigns*. Particularly because of the need to separate the spheres of power over individuals and regulate their exclusion/inclusion, the crossing point is strictly limited to one location.

3.2. Rupturing and suturing in resistance: the "controversial issues"

As already mentioned in Chapter 2, there were some practices in people-to-people cooperation which encountered "specific problems", particularly those on LGBT[272], indigenous, and independent journalism issues[273]. The challenges primarily pertain to the risk for Russian actors participating in the cooperation to be regarded as "foreign agents"[274]. The risk was identified by the Secretariat immediately once the legislation came out in Russia, however, for some time, it did not have a direct effect on people-to-people projects:

> "I was a bit afraid when all these changes were happening, but we were really cautious and wise, I mean, the Barents Secretariat, in general. […] We didn't make any harsh steps, […] we were still doing our work, but really in a nice way […]. But I think it is still a very... because, in the beginning it was towards NGOs, this law. So anyway, it did not apply to our offices or most of our applicants. […] But then, of course, the law has been changing so now you can on an individual level also be a foreign agent, which is really hard. […] So, of course, a lot of the

[271] However, it would be fair to hypothesise whether rarer and more limited live meetings had long-term effects on the personal relationship and, hence, stability of the border regime.
[272] Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender.
[273] Holm-Hansen, Aasland, and Dybtsyna, 2020, 20.
[274] Ibid.

organisations that we work with are now considered "foreign agents" and I'm very worried about the media cooperation."[275]

The Secretariat is committed to "never do anything without asking [the Russians – I.Š.] what they want first," in order not to "put them in a difficult situation"[276]. Therefore in the years 2012-2022, cross-border cooperation was increasingly affected by the "foreign agent law", largely used as a "leverage"[277] by Russian authorities against Russian actors, limiting the scope of partners that the Norwegian side can interact with, including individuals. In the following sections, employing the concept of *suture,* I inquire about how these challenges were affecting bordering practices in two cases of "controversial" issues: the Barents Pride and the Barents Observer[278].

3.2.1. The case of Barents Pride

The Barents Pride is an event taking place in Kirkenes every year since 2017. It is organised by the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, Amnesty Nord[279], FRI[280], and some other smaller organisations, including organisations and activists in Russia[281] and funded, among other sources, by the Norwegian Barents Secretariat[282]. The idea was introduced by Russian activists in 2015, and initially projected a two-part conference in Kirkenes and Murmansk. Due to security concerns and the fact that Murmansk Pride was not given permission[283], it was limited to Kirkenes. Thus, the final form of Barents Pride in 2017 was already "very different" from the initial idea, i.e., the "dream" to have the Barents Pride in Russia[284]. Border-town Kirkenes was chosen as the closest possible solution, and the identity of the town as "Russian", sometimes called "little Murmansk", was particularly fitting.

The practices during Barents Pride events 2017-2021 revolve around the metaphor of the border. The usage of this metaphor is consistent with the practices discussed by Fors, evoking "ideas of openness, connectedness, unity, and continuity"[285]. The program usually contains a parade in town, discussions, cultural events (theatre, cinema, exhibitions), and parties or other social gatherings, including a "Rainbow Mass" in Kirkenes church and the slogan is "Love without borders"[286]. The

[275] Marit E. Jacobsen, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 07/02/2022.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Ibid.
[278] Persons directly involved in projects specific to indigenous cooperation were not interviewed.
[279] Amnesty International in Northern Norway.
[280] The Norwegian Organisation for Sexual and Gender Diversity, in Nor. "Foreningen for kjønns- og seksualitetsmangfold"; Ibid.
[281] Mina Skouen, interview with the author, online, 02/02/2022.
[282] Holm-Hansen, Aasland, and Dybtsyna, 2020, 20; Hildegunn Hodne, "Kjærlighet i grenseland" *Fri. Foreningen for kjønns- og seksualitetsmangfold,* 23 October, 2017. https://www.foreningenfri.no/kjaerlighet-i-grenseland/.
[283] Mina Skouen, interview with the author, online, 02/02/2022.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Fors, 2019, 197.
[286] FRI, "Velkommen til Barents Pride 2019 – Verdens eneste norsk-russiske Pride" *Fri. Foreningen for kjønns- og seksualitetsmangfold*, viewed 29/04/2022 https://www.foreningenfri.no/barentspride/ ; NHC, "Barents Pride 2018" NHC, viewed 29/04/2022 https://www.nhc.no/en/event/barents-pride-2018/ .

COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the events, depriving them of Russian participation, which had been the central aspect: "Barents Pride without Russia, it would just be Kirkenes Pride"[287]. Therefore the organisers came up with ways to include Russians via online resources.

In addition, COVID-19 restrictions attracted the event even more physically close to the border: in 2020 and 2021, gatherings at Storskog border station were included in the programme:

> "We have had this sort of pickets; we go there with flags and banners with solidarity statements. And have some statement like speeches and this is a, you know, it feels a little bit like shouting into... [chuckles] into a big empty forest"[288].

The "shouting at the border" is thus a performative act of connectedness and protest. It also reveals the border function as a suture: largely because Russian participants cannot access the other side of the border, the militarised buffer zone, and are only able to watch it online. Thus, the border is not *actually* the main obstacle in this separation – it is the domestic Russian regime that does not allow for even a limited (performative) contact across the border (e.g. a symbolic wave from the other side to Norwegian protesters). The Barents Pride not merely "builds bridges" between Norwegians and Russians but is an act of resistance against the Russian *domestic sovereign*. The event is "so close to the Russian border, yet so infinitely distant"[289]. The border in effect embodies this gap between "people who have access to fundamental human rights and people who don't"[290]. Norwegian role in this act of resistance is thus to support Russian individuals and low-level actors in their resistance against an oppressive sovereign authority.

Albeit taking place in Norway, organising Barents Pride still requires security provisions[291]. For instance, the 2017 event was deliberately kept secret until half a week before its date; the organisers were advised against using their phone and social media accounts to communicate in fear of FSB surveillance; all communications were carried out via encrypted e-mails; even the partners in Sør-Varanger municipality were not informed about the full programme ahead of time[292]. During the event, some Russians were wearing signs that said "no photos" on their upper body, and some were hiding their identity behind masks[293]. These practices, however, were later revoked to "accept the

[287] Mina Skouen, interview with the author, online, 02/02/2022.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Hodne, citation translated by author.
[290] Mina Skouen, interview with the author, online, 02/02/2022.
[291] Hodne.
[292] Ibid.
[293] Interviewee 5, interview with the author, online, 20/01/2022.

term that [the participants] might not be anonymous"[294]. It was realised that they give a "false sense of security"[295]: the Russian authorities could easily trace the participants via border-crossing records.

Although Russian participants described their experience as a "vacation"[296], they could not escape the looming presence of surveillance: FSB officers were "standing on the side and watch[ing]" public events, while possibly taking pictures[297], some were even openly staying at the same hotel:

> "[The Russians] can tell us what [the FSB agents] are talking about during the breakfast or something. It's not always the FSB […]. One year, the Minister of Internal Affairs or something [was] living at the same hotel. And they were eating breakfast with us and then the Russians told us what they were talking about during the breakfast and […] it wasn't a very good experience, I think."[298]

The surveillance was threatening "with good reason", according to the organisers: the participants feared losing their jobs and having other repercussions once back in Russia[299]. The most threatening, however, was the border crossing practice. On the way back after the first Barents Pride in 2017, participants were stopped at the border station by "non-uniformed FSB officers"[300], who interrogated them for personal details and information on the event[301]. In the upcoming years, the participants came more prepared, knowing how to behave in interrogations, for example, not signing "blank statements" at the request of officers[302]. Thus the "refuge" provided for Russians was in reality only limited and temporary.

Barents Pride can be interpreted as a rupture in the suture of Russian-Norwegian sovereigns. The suture is here revealed even in Kirkenes during the event, through the intimidation and threat of performed *supervision* by the Russian sovereign. In Salter's terms, Russian participation in the event, by temporarily escaping the overarching control of their domestic sovereign is revealing a *rupture* in the suture of sovereigns: not only the power of the *external sovereign* is extended (subtly) to Norwegian territory; Norwegian sovereign's ability to protect individuals is reduced (in a temporal sense). This rupture is quickly sutured afterwards, and the *act of crossing* the border is significant here. In Salter's terms, the border "naturalises the violence that was necessary to create it"[303] and

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[294] Mina Skouen, interview with the author, online, 02/02/2022.
[295] Ibid.
[296] Hodne, translated by author.
[297] Interviewee 5, interview with the author, online, 20/01/2022.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Mina Skouen, interview with the author, online, 02/02/2022.
[300] Thomas Nilsen, "Pride Parade participants stopped by FSB on return to Russia", *The Barents Observer*, published September 25, 2017. https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/life-and-public/2017/09/pride-parade-participants-stopped-fsb-return-russia.
[301] Ibid.
[302] Mina Skouen, interview with the author, online, 02/02/2022.
[303] Salter, 2012, 735.

unveils how the "sovereign authority to include or to exile and the sovereign responsibility to protect become disconnected"[304]. In this case, however "responsibility to protect" is exchanged between the two sovereigns: for Russians, a passport is no longer a "talisman that protects the bearer undergoing a right of passage" or "a shield against sovereign abandonment"[305] – it rather becomes a promise of the overwhelming sovereign power over the individual, an inescapable condition of coming back under its control.

Through the crossing act by the Russian participants, they are subjected to an interpellation[306]. A border becomes a "knitting point" of the rupture that the transgression to attend Barents Pride had torn: the FSB interrogation signifies the sovereign knitting the Russian citizens back under its authority, making apparent "the assumptions about belonging, identity, sovereignty, territory, law and force"[307]. At the same time, border as suture requires validation by the border-crossers – an act of both authorising domestic sovereignty through internalisation and allowing to suture the neighbouring sovereigns in Salter's "metacommunity of sovereigns"[308]. This overwhelming authority of the sovereign is internalised by the individual even when they are "prepared" and "know" how to react to certain tactics to protect themselves. Essentially, it is the *act of intimidation* that is effective and significant in extorting submission that is required. Thus after the event, the rupture of sovereignty is sutured, and citizens come back to "normal", left with a bittersweet feeling, as illustrated by one Norwegian organiser:

> "Yesterday, I went home from the pride in Kirkenes. Home to safety. For my colleagues and friends on the Russian side, the situation is completely different. Because while I could sit safely on the plane, lock myself in at home and throw my feet on the table, several of the Russians I participated with were stopped at the border."[309]

Importantly, the institutionalisation of people-to-people cooperation, via the involvement of the Secretariat, is a stabilising factor in organising the event. The way in which it is carefully organised through risk evaluation possibly limits opportunities for backlash and escalation by the Russian sovereign. Nonetheless, the act of crossing reminds of the border function, which is, first, to mutually exclusively "suture" two sovereigns' spheres of authority, and second, to authorise the sovereign's power over its citizens through the act of interpellation and internalisation of authority. Thus Barents pride unveils the differences between Norwegian and Russian domestic regimes by demonstrating

[304] Ibid.
[305] Ibid., 742.
[306] Ibid., 736.
[307] Ibid., 739.
[308] Ibid., 742.
[309] Ingvild Endestad, Statement on Facebook (orig. in Norwegian, translation by author), cit. in: Hodne .

how the principle of *the right to have rights* is conditional and relative[310]. Although performing an act of resistance against this inflicted division and subjugation, the participants of the event are reminded of the violence that the sovereign powers entail.

3.2.2. The case of Barents Observer

Journalist cooperation is another challenging field of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat's work[311]. Projects involving journalist cooperation and training funded by the Secretariat were particularly "vulnerable" to Russian pressures due to a higher risk of being cast as "foreign agents"[312]. The "Barents Press" project, e.g., tackled this challenge by focusing on practising "fact-based" journalism in cooperation with Russian colleagues, despite possible "political colouring"[313]. Thus, the Norwegian Secretariat's commitment to cooperation overruled ideological disagreements, particularly on the freedom of speech. The journalism-related projects attempted to avoid tensions by adapting to the conditions set by Russian authorities.

Projects that did not limit their scope or approach encountered more challenges. Barents Observer, a newspaper founded in 2002 had become a part of the Secretariat's framework but was effectively closed in 2015 over a disagreement between the editor and Secretariat's leadership. The team of journalists established "The Independent Barents Observer" across the street[314]. Importantly, the disagreement was ignited in the context of the Crimea annexation: the Russian side of the cooperation was dissatisfied with the Barents Observer's coverage of Norwegian-Russian relations:

> "In 2014, Russia's Consulate General here in Kirkenes […] at the public seminar was very angry at the Barents Observer, because I, as the editor, had written a kind of editorial about how the negative relations between Moscow, Oslo, and Brussels became more on the agenda also here in the High North after Russia's annexation of Crimea. I didn't write much about Crimea, but I mentioned it in my editorial and that triggered the Barents Secretariat, who […] made a decision that the Barents Observer would no longer be allowed to follow the basic principle of freedom of the press. It's called the editorial freedom. It's a declaration here in Norway that most media follow. And at that time, for me as an editor, I could not accept that. So, I stood up and said that I will not follow that order"[315].

[310] Salter, 2012, 735.
[311] Holm-Hansen, Aasland, and Dybtsyna, 2020, 21.
[312] Ibid., 25.
[313] Ibid., 31.
[314] Thomas Nilsen, interview with the author, online, 15/12/2021.
[315] Ibid.

Thus the crisis inflicted by the Russian dissatisfaction with the coverage was resolved by separating the principle of editorial freedom from the structure of the Secretariat, rendering them not directly associated. The Secretariat continued to partly fund the newspaper on a project basis[316].

The Independent Barents Observer continued to face challenges. The most significant measure by Russian authorities was declaring the editor Thomas Nilsen *persona non grata* a threat to Russia's national security, although the FSB officers declined to give the exact reason[317]. This provision was a serious impediment for him professionally – visiting Russia was important to be able to report on regional developments. Thus he appealed the decision to the court in Russia and, after exhausting domestic remedies in Russia, took the case to the European Court of Human Rights[318]. In addition, in 2019 the Barents Observer was blocked in Russia; and other journalists also started to face difficulties to visit Russia for superficial "Coronavirus reasons" (e.g., only imposed on the journalist in a joint delegation whom all had official invitations)[319]. Thus COVID-19 restrictions were further utilised by the Russian regime for political reasons, in addition to significantly reducing general cross-border traffic, further increasing Russian inward isolationism.

Therefore, in the examples discussed above pertaining to the case of journalist cooperation, the border again becomes a special site where the sovereign can exercise direct power over an individual, securitising him/her and holding complete discretion through the agency of FSB. Practices that challenge the domestic sovereign are recognised quite literally as a "national security threat" and one-sidedly neutralised. Similarly to the case of Barents Pride, measures against journalists often happens at the border crossing, where the sovereign's violence is "naturalised" and used to "repair" ruptures in the fabric of Russian domestic sovereignty that the "media freedom" might have inflicted. It is a performance of sovereign's power, an intimidation of the individual, reminding of its complete discretion over the inclusion/exclusion function of the border.

Since 2019, Barents Observer attempted to overcome the Russian censorship by various means, for instance, opening a Telegram news channel[320], an alternative domain, and creating audio content on platforms such as Apple Podcasts, Spotify and SoundCloud in Russian [321]. Nilsen compared his fight against the Russian regime to the practices of the late Cold War. Although the technology had changed, the Norwegian practices to permeate the Russian sovereign's control over the informational

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[316] Holm-Hansen, Aasland, and Dybtsyna, 2020, 21.
[317] Thomas Nilsen, interview with the author, online, 15/12/2021.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Thomas Nilsen, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 09/02/2022.
[320] Atle Staalesen, "Barents Observer fights Russian censorship, opens Telegram channel", *The Barents Observer,* published September 3, 2021. https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/democracy-and-media/2021/09/you-can-now-read-barents-observer-telegram .
[321] Ibid.

sphere have returned to those against the "Iron Curtain". Nilsen specifically compared the current situation to their practices on January 13th, 1991:

> "[…] On the 13th of January, 1991, I was working in the local radio station here. […] And then when the shooting started at the TV tower, we were listening to BBC in one ear and […]. I was sending it in Russian language to the Soviet side. And then, in the middle of the night, suddenly, this interference on the FM came up. The Soviet border guards sent signals directly to our transmitter on the Norwegian side and blocked all our radio. So that's a kind of censorship to us in 1991 because of Vilnius. And then everything was very, very good for 30 years, with the journalist cooperation and so on, but now the Barents Observer is also blocked in Russia […]. So, in many ways, we are back to the events in the late Soviet days."[322]

Therefore, although the Norwegian-Russian border has been widely interpreted within the dyad of the "barrier-bridge", developments of 2012-2022 demonstrated how difficult it has become to sustain the Norwegian "bridge-building" mission. Even before the annexation of Crimea, the metaphor of a bridge often functioned as "political propaganda" or "a commodity, an attraction, and a brand" for locals[323]. Increased Russian isolationism rendered this Norwegian commitment to this metaphor even more contradictive and further from the reality of the border function. Effectively, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, it became virtually impossible to continue the usual cooperation, forcing local actors to amend the practices even more (e.g. by renouncing cooperation with state actors).

However, it would not be accurate to say that the border has become more of a *barrier*. From the Norwegian side, at least, bordering practices almost have not changed. Rather, the Russian domestic regime became the obstacle, which during the period in question was increasingly isolationistic and authoritarian. Russian authorities extending domestic restrictions on cross-border practices had direct implications on their scope and feasibility. At the same time, the very border regime remained stable and low-tension through the institution of the Border Commissioner and (to a limited extent) through regular people-to-people cooperation structures.

The cases discussed in this chapter reveal several processes in Norway's relation to Russia. First, the Border Commissioner's and Secretariat's institutions proved to be stabilising factors in the bordering process. The border regime is enacted through practices that can be called bordering through "friendship" because the low-level diplomatic role of the institution is based on building the personal relationship of the two commissioners, enacted through various institutionalised rituals. People-to-people practices have also become a stabilising factor and were maintained even under

[322] Ibid.
[323] Fors, 2019, 198.

increasing pressure from the Russian side, even if significantly reduced in scope. Although for a long time argued “immune” to Norwegian-Russian state-level tensions, the cross-border cooperation in the High North was in fact increasingly challenged by Russian isolationism and authoritarian tendencies. As already shown in the 2.2 section, changes, although subtle, started to be noticeable in 2012 – earlier than the Crimea annexation, established as the turning point in state-level relations. Low-level actors in the borderland managed to navigate these difficulties, including *after* the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, by narrowing their scope of activity and range of cooperation partners. Even when the ideological juxtaposition between the Russian regional actors and Norwegians became inescapable, the cooperation framework and guidelines were altered to accommodate the new situation.

Second, as demonstrated in the 3.2 section, the changes were most challenging to the so-called “controversial” areas of cooperation. Analysis of the cases of Barents Pride and Barents Observer enact the bordering process of suture of sovereigns, particularly at the border-crossing site. Importantly, the two cases showed that besides performative acts of “bridge-building”, there is an element of *resistance to the external sovereign*. Actors involved in the practices on the “sensitive” issues were particularly prone to expressing their opposition to and hope for political change in the Russian domestic regime:

> “But the pandemic will one day come to an end and Vladimir Putin's regime will also one day come to an end. And then I will be able to travel to Murmansk again.”[324]

Looking at the border through the concept of *suture* allows for a more comprehensive processual/functional analysis. As demonstrated, border as a “suture of sovereigns” incorporates a dual function. First, it provides a site for inclusion/exclusion of the individual under the sovereign’s authority, through leveraging her *right to have rights* (or, more precisely, the *degree* to which the rights will be granted). Second, this act of “interpellation” is simultaneously co-constituting the suture of two mutually exclusive sovereigns, a border function of differentiating between the inside and the outside. At the same time, the border can have multiple other functions depending on the actor interacting with it at a specific moment.

Thus, at least several layers of border regime can be discerned. The first layer is the stable and low-tension border regime which is functioning even in circumstances of great isolation, through practices and rituals embedded since the beginning of the Cold War. The second layer, also stabilising (although to a lesser extent) is the long-term structures of people-to-people cooperation. These practices were affected to a larger degree, however, maintained through navigating pressures,

[324] Thomas Nilsen, interview with the author, online, 15/12/2021.

including by reducing the scope of activity or limiting the range of partners. On the third layer, the practices by individuals and other low-level actors within the areas of "controversial issues" have been affected the most by Russian pressures, however, these practices transcended the barrier-bridge function of the border: it became a tool of resistance against oppressive Russian regime.

The analysis also shows that local perspectives towards Russia are multifaceted: although maintaining contact with Russia is central to most actors included in this research, there is no *one* approach towards Russia in Northern Norway. Perceptions and objectives in cooperation differ at various levels and issue areas. Pursuing to understand the essence of the Northern Perspective, next I look at how it is enacted in the domestic realm.

4. The Northern Perspective

According to Torbjørn Pedersen, the High North Strategy, launched by MFA Støre in 2006, "took a life of its own"[325]. It has taken root, among other means, by stirring feelings and expectations in Northern Norway, and by creating a series of self-maintaining structures[326]. Bjarge Schwenke Fors also explored how, contrary to what was previously believed to be a "hegemonic project"[327], Government's "bridge-building" policy found ground and gained overwhelming support from local actors[328]. Fors demonstrated "how the social construction of borders may occur as much bottom-up as top-down"[329] and how the local and national levels in this process intersect in a symbiotic relationship[330].

However, centre-periphery, more specifically, centre-borderland relation is not always positive with regard to bordering Russia. In this section, I explore this relationship more in-depth. I start with the main elements of the Northern Perspective and demonstrate how it is defined through repeated *encounters*, and later dispersed through people-to-people practices past the immediate borderland. In section 4.2, I turn to bordering practices at the physical border, explaining how the local identity relates to the constitution of the border landscape and embodiment of the physical boundary. Finally, section 4.3 analyses centre-borderland tensions over subsidiarity, invoked in the bordering process.

4.1. Defining through encounter

The Northern Perspective towards Russia contains some key discursive elements. One cluster specifically relates to the historical narratives of the Second World War. Brit Lynnebakke in her 2020 article categorised these narratives as the "historical gratitude" perspective, centred on "Russians as liberators of the local population at the end of the Second World War"[331]. Here I will not discuss the historical circumstances extensively, only pointing out three most significant elements of this narrative which were repeatedly emphasised by the persons interviewed for this thesis:

- The most important historical memory place is the liberation of Kirkenes in October of 1944 by the Soviet Union. Interviewees often emphasised that Norwegians are grateful to Russians

[325] Torbjørn Pedersen, "Når nordområdene lever sitt eget liv," *Internasjonal Politikk*, 76, No. 3, (2018): 140–158. https://doi.org/10.23865/intpol.v76.1122 .
[326] Ibid.; Torbjørn Pedersen, "The High North Assumes A Life of Its Own," *High North News*, published September 11, 2018. https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/high-north-assumes-life-its-own .
[327] Viken, Granås & Nyseth, 2008, 36, cit. in Fors, 2019, 106.
[328] Fors, 2019.
[329] Fors, 2019, 196. See also: Viken, Granås & Nyseth, 2008; Viken and Nyseth, 2009; Haugseth, 2014; Makarychev & Kuznetsova, 2022, 393.
[330] Fors, 2019, 195-196.
[331] One of seven multisided perspectives of local residents, interviews conducted in 2013. See: Lynnebakke, "Dealing with Borderland Complexity….", 2020.

for "two things": that they liberated them, and "that they left"[332]. "Nobody forgets who liberated you during the war. You don't forget that", one interviewee underlined[333].

- North-eastern part of Norway was the first region liberated from Germany's control (by Soviet Union's soldiers). When Norwegian soldiers came north later on, they were met with more suspicion: "Often you hear [that – I.Š.] the stories about the Norwegian soldiers […] are much more negative [compared to those about the Russian soldiers – I.Š.]. Because they were often Southerners and looked down upon the local inhabitants here"[334].
- During the Cold War, Norwegian Government led an anti-communist policy, which was perceived oppressive by locals": "the Government forced [us – I.Š.] to look upon Soviet Union as an enemy, but [our – I.Š.] historical experience was completely different."[335]

The first element out of the three is the most prevalent in all of the interviews, while the second and the third are mentioned by some locals, namely those born in the area[336]. These narratives thus signify an *encounter* of a different *temporality*. Most locals invoking these narratives did not experience the events of the Second World War, while some did not even experience the Cold War. Nonetheless, this perspective towards Russia was acquired through socialisation. Furthermore, these narratives prove to be a readily available resource to illustrate how locals *differ* from Southern Norwegians:

> "[…] in Oslo they're shivering, because they're afraid of Russians. But we don't care here in Finnmark."[337]

Individual *first encounters* with Russia differ depending on residence, place of birth and other factors. First, there is a group of Norwegians who have their initial encounter with Russia (or rather "Russianness") still in Norway. Russian population in Sør-Varanger municipality is largest out of all immigrant communities, amounting to approx. 4 % of the population[338]. In addition, as mentioned in section 2.1, Kirkenes has a strong identity of being the "Russian town" in Norway. Finally, the mentioned narratives of Soviet Army's liberation strongly resonate in the borderland communities. Thus, most of the people living in the borderland already have a lower "threshold of familiarity"[339] towards Russia, which is often emphasised: "Everyone has a Russian neighbour"[340].

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[332] Marit E. Jacobsen, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 07/02/2022.
[333] Jan Selmer Methi, interview with the author, Bodø, 07/12/2021.
[334] Marit E. Jacobsen, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 07/02/2022.
[335] Jan Selmer Methi, interview with the author, Bodø, 07/12/2021.
[336] Particularly those personally identifying with oppressed groups or otherwise knowledgeable of the local perceptions through direct interaction.
[337] Interviewee 11, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 08/02/2022.
[338] Victoria V. Tevlina, "Russiske barn og mødre i Kirkenes – interaksjon i og utenfor skolen," in *Grenseliv,* eds. Arvid Viken and Bjarge Schwenke Fors, (Stamsund: Orkana Akademisk Forlag, 2014), 57-71, 59.
[339] As per Nielsen, 2021,
[340] Interviewee 11, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 08/02/2022.

The second group of interviewees started their direct interactions with Russians during the Cold War. The common factors in these experiences are: a) their place of birth, mainly in the borderland region and b) their political affiliation (particularly with the Communist movement in Norway). The involvement in the Communist Party or related movements usually facilitated visits to the Soviet Union even during the Cold War:

> "In Norway, in the beginning of '70s, there was a radical movement. […] So I became a member of the Communist Party at that time. […] I got to know the Russian culture both from trips when I was in Trondheim and also when I came back to Vadsø, we had trips to Murmansk. And there were always some kinds of party exchange."[341]

Thus although the border crossing was very limited during the Cold War period, as already mentioned in section 2.1, some contacts in Northern Norway were upheld, particularly in the later period.

Direct encounters during the Cold War were usually driven by ideological protest against the Centre: first, by countering imposed and "unnatural" cross-border isolation. Some interviewees emphasised that their early trips to Russia were inspired by the closed border ("Why is it like this?!"[342]). Experiences of crossing the border during the Cold War reflected this isolation and stark differences between the two societies: "everything was in bad shape", "people at the border were drunk", "it was not good"[343]. Therefore, the first encounter during the Cold War used to be particularly shocking for Norwegian visitors. Nonetheless, that did not necessarily have a negative impact on their attitudes. Curiosity and travel opportunities rendered the overall experiences positive. Murmansk was the closest *city*, appealing to young locals[344]. Some interviewees even had a chance to visit Cuba as a part of the Communist Youth exchange[345]. Second, the animosity against the Centre was further strengthened by what was perceived as oppression and even persecution:

> "At that time, it was a really hard to be a communist in Norway. There were a lot of anti-communism. And anti-Soviet Unionism […]. I could give you a lot of stories how I was... *avlyttet*, means that you are bugged by the telephone. People are watching you, the Communist Party, you know, everybody... We **knew** [vocal emphasis] who were sitting, taking notes in a car, just next to us. It's crazy [laughing]."[346]

The locals recall being casted "The Fifth Column". However, the most hurtful aspect was that the treatment of local communists was initiated by the Labour Prime Minister Einar Gerhardsen (in his

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[341] Jan Selmer Methi, interview with the author, Bodø, 07/12/2021.
[342] Interviewee 11, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 08/02/2022.
[343] Ibid.
[344] Ibid.
[345] Jan Selmer Methi, interview with the author, Bodø, 07/12/2021.
[346] Ibid.

famous “Kråkerøy speech”, 1948)[347]. Thus local encounters with the Soviet Union during the Cold War were also largely seen as an act of resistance against the Centre’s oppression.

Later, these early encounters not only became a driver for strengthening cross-border integration, but also facilitated more productive and constructive practices with Russian partners in the context of Barents Cooperation. Jan Selmer Methi explained how exchange projects during the Cold War helped him initiate the joint Master’s programme with MSHU around 2009-2013[348]:

> “So, I learned a lot about Russian way of thinking [through the interactions during the Cold War – I.Š.], especially when […] it comes to "How can you rely on their way of speaking? Can you rely when they say they're going to help you or going to do something?" […] I could use my experience to understand, when […] they are coming […] along with you. It's quite important because... or else you'd get false information. So, my main statement to my group was "Be patient. They will come and then when they come, they will come very strongly," and this is what happened. […] When I finally saw the light in their eyes, I knew: they are hooked.”[349]

Thus Støre’s High North policy was not founded in a vacuum; local communities already had a network of Norwegian-Russian relations’ activists, which was employed in building the Barents Cooperation. The reason why it happened smoothly was particularly that it was not their *first encounter* – Russia was “not too unfamiliar”.

The third group of encounters pertain to those borderland residents who were not born in the area (moved there largely as adults). Such interviewees emphasised the border resident permit regime as their main opportunity to familiarise with Russian culture. Notably, most locals use their border permits to buy cheaper petrol and visit restaurants: “for a long time Nikel was the closest place you could get a decent sushi”[350]. Similarly to the Cold War period, most of the initial encounters were quite negative (particularly the process of border-crossing). One of the locals in Kirkenes remembered crossing the border for the first time around 2010 as if s/he entered a “paranoid military regime”, after passing militarised border control, and noticing the barbed-wire fence with surveillance cameras[351]. Other interviewees remember check-ups at the border as “not allowed to smile” when interacting with officials, even as children[352]. Several informants referred to the particular *smell* that is felt in the area

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[347] Ibid.
[348] Methi, Jan Selmer, et al. (eds.), *Borderology: Cross-disciplinary Insights from the Border Zone: Along the Green Belt*, 2019, v-vi.
[349] Ibid.
[350] Marit E. Jacobsen, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 07/02/2022.
[351] Interviewee 9, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 07/02/2022.
[352] Interviewee 10, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 07/02/2022 ; Marit E. Jacobsen, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 07/02/2022.

near to the Russian border town Nikel (coming from the Nickel plant); and epithets "militarised", "ugly", "grey", "travelling back in time to the Cold War" stand out in the descriptions of the initial experiences. Nonetheless, locals usually counter these with the positive experiences of Russian culture. Interviewees praised Russian hospitality, "high culture", particularly theatre, music, literature, also underlined positive societal and economic changes they had noticed during the past decades, and a general fascination: "I think that's a cool perspective, living next to Russia"[353]. One interviewee acutely illustrated this ambivalence:

> "The whole Nikel is ugly, when you look at it as a picture. But then you will feel something different when you […] go to cafes, restaurants. Then you certainly don't see this ugliness. It disappears, because you get in contact with people, you get acquainted, you think it's alright, you can have a party and you will feel that you are a friend. A guest.[354]"

Thus cross-border encounters build familiarity which later fuels a more nuanced and positive attitude towards Russia, compared to that in the Southern Norway (largely based on the Cold War imagination). Importantly, these attitudes can be acquired over time. Even the current Border Commissioner, having had a long career in the armed forces, recognised changes in his perceptions:

> "When I started in this position, I... like [for] all people from the South of Norway, the border was kind of a mystic thing and I was very afraid to step close to it and so on. But after living here now for more or less one and a half year, I'm familiar with it. And it's just a border, and Russians are Russians." [355]

Also, the perceptions can change in the negative direction. Since the annexation of Crimea, some Kirkenes residents expressed their concerns on negative developments in Russia. For instance, a local who used to frequently use her/his border resident permit to visit Russia, saw a sign over a bar, saying "that Obama was not welcome to Russia". Also, they remembered noticing "more and more nationalistic symbols on [Russians'] T-shirts"[356]. After noticing these changes, s/he was "not sure" about visiting Russia as often in the future, provided that these developments persist[357]. Therefore, local perceptions on Russia are not independent from domestic processes in Russia. Although Northern Norwegians apparently often *do* have a more positive attitude due to increased familiarity, these perceptions are nuanced and can also be further altered by *negative encounters*.

[353] Interviewee 13, interview with the author, online, 09/02/2022.
[354] Jan Selmer Methi, interview with the author, Bodø, 07/12/2021.
[355] Jens-Arne Høilund, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 08/02/2022.
[356] Interviewee 13, interview with the author, online, 09/02/2022.
[357] N.B.: this was expressed before Russia started the full-scale invasion to Ukraine in February 24th, 2022.

Finally, the practices of repeated encounter, do not remain limited to the borderland. Although cross-border cooperation "naturally is at its most intensive in the border areas"[358], the geographical locations of where people-to-people practices take place are varying. In Eastern Finnmar (closest to the border), there is the highest concentration of projects; Troms (western side of the northernmost county) takes the second highest percentage, while and Nordland[359] (the southernmost county of Northern Norway) has a slightly lower percentage of participation:

Eastern Finnmark	57%
Troms	43%
Western Finnmark	40%
Nordland	40%
Other parts of Norway	9% [360]

Thus, people-to-people practices are not confined in the borderland area. For example, cooperation in Higher Education arena has been particularly active between universities in Northern Norway and North-western Russia: student exchange, joint programmes, and research cooperation have been fostered in various institutions, particularly Nord University and The Arctic University of Norway[361]. These dispersed encounter practices in a way *decentralise* the border[362] and spread the (*de-*)bordering practices "into the whole society"[363]. Thus the Northern Perspective towards Russia, originating at the physical border, also transcends the immediate borderland, becoming dispersed throughout Northern Norway.

Northern Perspective is thus centred on cross-border contacts with Russia and is formulated through repeated encounters with Russia on both collective and individual levels. The characteristics that discern the Northern Perspective towards Russia against the one of the Centre are higher familiarity with Russia and more nuanced, experience-based attitudes. They are reinforced by the

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358 Holm-Hansen, Aasland, and Dybtsyna, 2020, 35.
359 For map of Northern Counties, see Diagram 1.
360 Ibid.
361 Jannecke Wiers-Jenssen and Håkan T. Sandersen. "The Norwegian Framework for Educational Cooperation with Russia: Educational policy with a hint of foreign affairs," in *Higher education in the High North: Academic exchanges between Norway and Russia*, eds. Marit Sundet, Per-Anders Forstorp, and Anders Örtenblad, (Cham: Springer, 2017), 47-63, 57-60; Håkan T. Sandersen, "Success by Necessity? Educational Partnerships Between Individual Initiatives and Institutional Frameworks," in *Higher education in the High North: Academic exchanges between Norway and Russia*, eds. Marit Sundet, Per-Anders Forstorp, and Anders Örtenblad, (Cham: Springer, 2017), 105-126, 107, 110-118; See more: Marit Sundet, Per-Anders Forstorp, and Anders Örtenblad, eds., *Higher education in the High North: Academic exchanges between Norway and Russia*, (Cham: Springer, 2017).
362 Parker and Vaughan-Williams, 2012, 728.
363 Anssi Paasi, "Territory", in *A companion to political geography*, eds. John Agnew, Katharyne Mitchell, and Gerard Toal, (John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 113; Paasi, "Boundaries as social practice and discourse: the Finnish-Russian border," 1999.

collective memories, local identity, and individual/shared experiences of encounters. By invoking the centre-periphery tensions, they help mobilise and consolidate the Northern Perspective even more. Through people-to-people practices, institutionalised and funded by a governmental framework since 1993, the Northern Perspective towards Russia became dispersed throughout broader Northern Norway, transcending the immediate borderland and becoming part of regional political agenda. Although northern perceptions tend to be more positive compared to those in Southern Norway (as emphasised by locals), they are also adaptive: negative encounters (e.g., experiencing instances of Russian authoritarianism/nationalism) can and do alter locals' attitudes.

4.2. The democratic embodiment of the border

The border between Norway and Russia runs via a deforested line, called the "*border street"* ["*Grensegaten*" in Norw.][364]. There are 396 border markings, including concrete pedestals, cairns, posts, and leading marks[365]. Yellow-black posts mark the Norwegian, and green-red – the Russian side, stationed 4 meters apart unless facing across a river or a lake (then positioned on the banks). The deforested "border street" is 8 metres wide, where all the vegetation higher than 0.5 m is cleared[366]. Driving on the road, border markers are usually only visible through binoculars. The deforested "street" is the most obvious artefact visible from a distance, cutting a line through the hills of subarctic terrain. Approximately two-thirds of the boundary run through a watercourse (Pasvik River, Jakobselv River, and the connecting lakes): in the deepest channel of rivers and the middle of lakes' water course[367]. While the land markers are fixed, the watercourse boundary line requires constant maintenance.

Importantly, the Norwegian side of the border is manifested differently from that of Russia. On the Russian side, there is a militarised buffer zone (*Pogranichnaja zona*) of approximately 15 km from the borderline with limited access to civilians, controlled by mobile checkpoints (since 2012; before the checkpoints were stable)[368]. The Russian borderland includes a barbed wire fence (see Pictures 7 and 8) along the whole length of the border, built in the Cold War and reinforced in 2013[369]. On the Norwegian side, there is no fence (for the most part)[370] and private property can extend all the

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[364] Norway and the Soviet Union, Art. 6 https://lovdata.no/traktat/1949-12-29-1/a6 ; Kartverket, "Riksgrenser", kartverket.no, updated 2021-09-16 https://www.kartverket.no/til-lands/fakta-om-norge/riksgrenser .

[365] The Norwegian Border Commissioner for the Norwegian-Russian Border „Conduct and movement along the Norwegian-Russian border", informational brochure, acquired at the Border Commissioner's office on 08/02/2022.

[366] Kartverket.

[367] Jens-Arne Høilund, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 08/02/2022; Lloyd, 1956, 205.

[368] Arild Moe & Lars Rowe, "Asylstrømmen fra Russland til Norge i 2015: Bevisst russisk politikk?" *Nordisk Østforum* 30, 2, (2016): 80–97, 85-86.

[369] Thomas Nilsen, 'Russia erects double barbed wire fence…" .

[370] Except from those meant for reindeers (livestock) or the one built in 2016 at Storskog .

way to the border[371]: “stretch out your arm and you're in the other country”[372]. Different border regimes formulate a different functionality of the border infrastructure. Russians do not have a “civilian problem”, thus there is almost no risk of illegal crossings to Norway[373]. For Norway, the most important task is thus to prevent civilians from crossing the boundary line (accidentally or otherwise).

The Border Commissioner performs the function of a “caretaker” of the border, which entails, first of all, maintaining the border markings, i.e., clearing the borderline, painting the border posts, etc. S/he is responsible for marking the most popular areas on the water (with buoys in summer and with markers on ice in winter). Interestingly, the ice boundary is usually marked by birch twigs with a reflective ribbon on the upper end, made out of biodegradable material[374]. The twigs are slim and barely visible from the shore, except for when illumined in the dark (see Pictures 3 and 4). They are installed by the Border Guard and inspected by the Commissioner[375].

The temporary markers, however, are not the most reliable marking system, simply because they drift in water during summer and can be easily damaged/removed in winter. According to the Commissioner, locals thus need to be “very careful” when in proximity to the border[376]. There are provisions that prohibit certain activities apart from crossing: e.g., having any kind of contact or conversation across the border, committing offensive behaviour (e.g., publicly peeing towards Russia), throwing objects, photographing Russian personnel, etc.[377] Although the border is monitored (approx. half of the whole length is covered by camera surveillance from the Norwegian side), no less important are information boards (see Picture 5), located in the most accessible border areas, regularly inspected by the Commissioner to make sure they are up-to-date and in good condition[378]. Therefore, the Norwegian ecological and loose border embodiment corresponds to what Einar Niemi called the historically “open border landscape”[379] and significantly differs from the Russian barbed-wired, militarised border landscape.

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[371] Kartverket, “Riksgrenser”, kartverket.no, updated 2021-09-16 https://www.kartverket.no/til-lands/fakta-om-norge/riksgrenser; Interviewee 6, interview with the author, online, 26/01/2022.

[372] Interviewee 6, interview with the author, online, 26/01/2022.

[373] Jens-Arne Høilund, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 08/02/2022.

[374] Sør-Varanger kommune, Troms og Finnmark, “Forskrift om kommunalt løypenett for snøskuter, Sør-Varanger”, FOR-2019-12-09-2101, 2019. [Regulations on municipal trail network for snowmobiles, Sør-Varanger] https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2019-12-09-2101/§6.

[375] The practice coincides with other similar functions of the Border Guard, e.g. marking and regulating snowmobile traffic on fjords. Every winter season, the Border Guard is responsible for evaluating and declaring the opening of the fjord routes once the ice is thick enough (otherwise it is forbidden to use fjords for such transportation).

[376] Jens-Arne Høilund, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 08/02/2022.

[377] Ibid.; The Norwegian Border Commissioner for the Norwegian-Russian Border „Conduct and movement along the Norwegian-Russian border“, informational brochure, acquired at the Border Commissioner‘s office on 08/02/2022.

[378] Jens-Arne Høilund, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 08/02/2022.

[379] Niemi, Einar, "Grenseland og periferi: Møtested for stat, nasjon og etnisitet." in *Det hjemlige og det globale: Festskrift til Randi Rønning Balsvik* (Oslo: Akademisk publisering, 2009): 431-455, 446, cit. in: Schimanski, J., “Border Aesthetics and Cultural Distancing in the Norwegian-Russian Borderscape,” Geopolitics, 20, No. 1, (2015): 35–55, 39.

Locals are actively involved in border maintenance since they use the border markers for their everyday practices, e.g., fishing. Many own snowmobiles, thus every winter season they wait for the freeze of the fjords and lakes. Some of them often criticise the armed forces for delaying the opening of the snowmobile tracks due to insufficient ice thickness[380]. The Border Commissioner is also often criticised by "a handful" of locals regarding the marking of watercourse boundary, who even come to his office "angry" or choose not to abide by the (perceivably inaccurate) installed markings:

> "There we have some hard-core local fishermen that insist that they have learned from their father and [grandfather – I.Š.] and so on... that the border is there. We constantly argue with them. And sometimes we arrest them [chuckling]. It's... it's very difficult… [chuckling]"[381]

The border guards are there to inform and warn civilians about their responsibility not to cross the border. When citizens illegally transgress it, however, they are promptly penalised (even if they do not agree with the border markings). However, it is mostly the disoriented tourists that cause border incidents[382]. For the locals, however, the border is calm and easily accessible. When in close proximity to the boundary, locals (including the Commissioner's team) commonly use the highly accurate smartphone application "Hvor?" ["Where?"][383] to orient themselves[384]. Thus mobility along the border requires local knowledge and personal responsibility, reducing the interference of authorities to the minimum, until the very moment of border violation.

The looseness of the border often contradicts how it is imagined by people from Southern Norway[385]. This confusion was often expressed by non-resident interviewees who only come to the borderland to work with people-to-people cooperation projects: "it's still kind of strange because you don't **see** [vocal emphasis] the border"[386]. Interviewees describe *knowing about* or *feeling,* but not *seeing* its manifestation: "We don't see [that – I.Š.] there is the border, we see that *that* is Russia"[387]. The fact that the Russian side of the border is inaccessible to civilians further strengthens the impression of emptiness.

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[380] Jens-Arne Høilund, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 09/02/2022.
[381] Ibid.
[382] For example, a woman was fined 8000 NOK (approx. 800 EUR) in July 2021 for sticking her hand across the border. See: NRK. "Hadde hånden i Russland, fikk bot", published July 22, 2021. https://www.nrk.no/tromsogfinnmark/hadde-handen-i-russland_-fikk-bot-1.15584409.
[383] Application by the Norwegian Mapping Authority, see Statens kartverk, "Hvor? - Kartverkets offline turkart" Google Play, viewed 29/04/2022. https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.kartverket.hvor&hl=lt&gl=US .
[384] Jens-Arne Høilund, interview with the author, Kirkenes, 08/02/2022.
[385] Interviewee 5, interview with the author, online, 20/01/2022.
[386] Ibid.
[387] Mina Skouen, interview with the author, online, 02/02/2022.

These practices are better explained in the context of broader cultural and societal norms in Norway. Gro Ween and Simone Abram in their article[388] demonstrated how the Norwegian Trekking Association performs the "Norwegianness" of the landscape through hiking practices, invoking the concepts of the "*dugnad*", "*friluftsliv*", and "*fjellvett*"[389]. Authors argue that hiking practices are "performances of broader ideological concepts"[390] which accomplish a certain "democratisation of nature", based on Norwegian egalitarianism and principles of participatory democracy[391]. The bordering practices along the Norwegian side of the border embody similar performative *democratisation,* which thus could be conceptualised as a *democratic borderscape*. Norwegians are independent in navigating their borderland (contrary to Russians) and bear their own risks when in close proximity to the border. The exchanges between them and the border guards are mostly casual, even when at odds regarding the boundary demarcation. The tension between the border institutions and the fishers is almost comical, even in the context of their arrest. The border is performed by the *absence* of rigid and explicit bordering, embodying the principle of personal responsibility as well as individual and shared knowledge.

Nonetheless, the loose borderline is *performative* rather than *effective*. There *is* physical border enforcement along the boundary – the double-barbed-wire fence on the Russian territory – only that it is farther from the demarcation line and usually not *visible* from the Norwegian side (also, locals have no authority to change). The *democratic borderscape* ideology is also still a bordering practice: it embodies the drastic contrasts between Norway and Russia, effectively "suturing" them together and consolidating their mutual separation.

Furthermore, these bordering practices also enact the centre-borderland relationship. The ideology of *democratic borderscape* not only pertains to general "Norwegianness". It is also locally specific: the border is "inherited", demonstrating locals' strong identity link to it. Locals take pride in the Arctic landscape, often jokingly remarking that "the terrain and the weather is half the border guard"[392]. The authorities, according to locals, are hence mainly there to mark the border so that there are no *accidental* crossings. The Border Commissioner is part of this regime, however, in some instances (e.g., examples in section 3.1; arresting the violators) the institution takes the role of the

[388] Gro Ween & Simone Abram, "The Norwegian Trekking Association: Trekking as Constituting the Nation," *Landscape Research*, 37, 2, (2012): 155-171. DOI: 10.1080/01426397.2011.651112.

[389] The three concepts can be defined as followed: *dugnad* is voluntary work that is done in a community, which is an old custom in Norway (see Store norske leksikon, "Dugnad", updated 07/22/2021 https://snl.no/dugnad); *friluftsliv* is outdoor life culture that is an important part of Norwegian culture and identity (see Store norske leksikon, "Friluftsliv", updated 09/03/2021 https://snl.no/friluftsliv); *fjellvett* translates to "mountain wisdom"', related to *fjellvettreglene*, "the rules of mountain wisdom", which are "an element of the shared knowledge that constitutes being Norwegian" (See: Ween & Abram).

[390] Ween & Abram, 168.

[391] Ibid.

[392] Heather Yundt, Catherine Benesch, "Visa-free agreement sign of strong border relationship", *Barents Observer*, published May 29, 2012. https://barentsobserver.com/en/borders/visa-free-agreement-sign-strong-border-relationship.

central authority. Thus the principle of borderland subsidiarity is only partially implemented through this institution: the Commissioner is both a local actor (often acquiring local identity and perceptions) and a representative of the Centre. These two dimensions of the Commissioner's "in-between" position do not conflict while the border practices correspond to local perception of the border (only to a limited extent, e.g., when some locals dispute demarcation). However, when the central government imposes bordering practices that contravene local borderland ideology, there befall inevitable tensions over the principle of subsidiarity. These tensions are explored to a greater extent in the following section.

4.3. Tensions over subsidiarity

In 2015, the refugee crisis reached the Norwegian-Russian border through the so-called "Arctic migrant route"[393]. That year, Storskog border station registered around 5500 asylum applications by persons of 21 different nationalities, travelling via Russia to the (final/interim) destination of Norway[394]. Although relatively short-lived (the peak influx in Norway lasted from October 27 to November 14[395]), it was one of the most significant and publicised[396] crises at the border, bringing Sør-Varanger municipality to "the brink of a humanitarian crisis"[397]. In November 2015, the Norwegian government introduced the "safe third country" or policy[398], which instructed the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration to return asylum seekers who had legally resided in Russia[399].

The "safe third country" policy and harsh rhetoric by Prime Minister Erna Solberg[400] were not only later criticised by human rights organisations[401] but condemned in the borderland by local actors. The approach in Sør-Varanger municipality was quite the opposite. Local efforts to accommodate refugees were celebrated as an exemplary case of humanitarianism and compassion[402] and a "wave

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[393] E. Mikhailova, "Are refugees welcome to the Arctic? Perceptions of Arctic migrants at the Russian-Norwegian borderland", in *How to Deal with Refugees?* eds. G. Besier, K. Stoklosa, (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2018), 183-200, 183.

[394] Ida Karine Gullvik, "Mennesker fra 21 land har krysset grensen fra Russland til Norge" NRK, published October 25, 2015. https://www.nrk.no/tromsogfinnmark/mennesker-fra-21-land-har-krysset-grensen-fra-russland-til-norge-1.12616688 .

[395] Mikhailova, 189.

[396] Due to Russian border regulations that denied crossing on foot, refugees were forced to buy used bicycles to cross the border, which were later famously stacked in piles at Storskog, becoming a symbol of the crisis and prompting wide media coverage. See e.g., Arina Ulyanova, "Norway adopts stricter asylum regulations" *Barents Observer*, published November 27, 2015. https://barentsobserver.com/en/borders/2015/11/norway-adopts-stricter-asylum-regulations-27-11.

[397] Mikhailova.

[398] Marek Linha, „Norway's Asylum Freeze: A report on Norway's response to increased asylum arrivals at the Storskog border crossing with Russia in 2015 and subsequent legal developments", NOAS, 2019, 5. https://www.noas.no/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Storskog-rapport-februar-2019.pdf .

[399] Nora Evensmo Hvistendahl, "Regjeringen vil avvise flere ved russergrensa" *NRK*, published November 25, 2015. https://www.nrk.no/norge/regjeringen-vil-avvise-flere-ved-russergrensa-1.12671521 .

[400] Mikhailova, 191.

[401] Marek Linha, „Norway's Asylum Freeze: A report on Norway's response…", 2019; NHC, "Report: "Lost in Russia": A critical assessment of Norway referring to Russia as a safe third country and safe country of origin", Norwegian Helsinki Committee, 2019. https://www.nhc.no/content/uploads/2019/02/Report_LostInRussia_web_oppslag_skygge.pdf .

[402] Mikhailova 183.

of generosity and volunteering"[403]. Locals welcomed the refugees, protested for better conditions and their right to asylum, organised stress-relieving activities and legal counselling[404]. Therefore, locals disagreed with the approach of the national government.

A more specific critique of the Government was put forward by a border inspector Ulf Gøran Mathisen. According to him, the Government could have prevented the crisis, had it cooperated with Russia in bilateral diplomatic meetings. Mathisen claimed that back in 2012, Russia raised some "shortcomings in the legislation" and offered a "good solution"[405]. The solution was that Norway amends the wording of a letter which is issued to persons without a Schengen visa. According to Mathisen, this would give Russian officials "legal authority" to prohibit migrants to leave Russia[406] and thus stop flows to Norwegian border at earlier checkpoints (before they enter the border zone).

The case of Mathisen's public criticism is particularly interesting because he consciously risked losing his career for disclosing information pertaining to diplomatic communications. He claimed that he believed in the public's right to know that the authorities were "not doing their job"[407]. Notably, this act of opposition (even partisanship) specifically pertains to Norwegian-Russian cross-border relations as an area of local expertise. The relationship with Russia here is considered a special competence, and the Government's disregard to local insight was perceived as incompetence. The migrant crisis at Storskog is often blamed on the Conservative government's foreign policy towards Russia:

> "You know, this part could probably have been tackled much easier if you had not closed down the diplomacy between [Norway and – I.Š.] Russia. This might be looked upon as "Okay, thank you for last time.""[408]

Another case of borderland animosity towards the Centre was in the aftermath of the crisis, in 2016, when the Government decided to build a 200 meter long, 3.5-metre-high fence at Storskog border station (see Picture 6)[409]. The construction was announced on April 29th, 2016[410], and the fence was erected in September of the same year. Local criticism to this decision was immense. The most criticised element was its questionable functionality: it would not be difficult to simply walk around

[403] Ibid. 193.
[404] Ibid., 194-195.
[405] Tarjei Abelsen, "Believes Norway itself could stop the flow of asylum" *NRK*, published November 10, 2015. https://www.nrk.no/tromsogfinnmark/mener-norge-selv-kunne-stoppet-asylstrommen-1.12647229.
[406] Ibid.
[407] Ibid. "M*yndighetene ikke gjør jobben sin*" in Norwegian, translation by author.
[408] Jan Selmer Methi, interview with the author, Bodø, 07/12/2021.
[409] Thomas Nilsen, "Norway erects security fence on border to Russia", The Barents Observer, published April 29, 2016. https://thebarentsobserver.com/ru/node/741; Thomas Nilsen, "Storskog-fence built a few centimeters too close to Russia" *The Barents Observer*, published September 25, 2016. https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/borders/2016/09/storskog-fence-built-few-centimeters-too-close-russia.
[410] Ibid.

it. Also, the fence was initially built a few centimetres too close to Russia and had to be reconstructed in certain sections[411]. The most substantial criticism by local leadership, again, was directed at the Government's perception of Russia that the fence was embodying:

> "The fear of Russia in the central political environment deep in the Oslo Fjord does not promote cooperation with a complicated neighbour"[412].

Thus the fence segment at the Storskog crossing point was contradictive to preferred local bordering practices and largely rejected by local actors. It stood out from the rest of the bordering practices of the *democratic borderscape*, thus compromising the integrity of the border. The whole process was often mocked as another display of incompetence. The most insulting aspect for the locals, however, was the Government's attitude towards Russia that the fence embodied. The unfortunate construction process only fired up locals' reactions: irony, humour, and disappointment. They were often performative acts of protest against the Centre, and, specifically, its disregard over borderland subsidiarity in deciding on appropriate or preferred bordering practices.

Importantly, there is a difference in how the Labour government has been dealing with borderland subsidiarity, compared to the Conservative government. It pertains to how the leaders engage with locals and what solutions they propose with regard to national security challenges. A good illustration is the Prime Minister Støre, who built his political capital through his cooperation policy with Russia over 2005-2013. In his landmark speech in Tromsø on February 3rd, 2022[413], Støre publicly referred to Russia in a negative light, as "another partner, another country, in another situation."[414] However, even explaining why Russia is a threat, he did it carefully paying respect to the Northern Perspective. He explained why the security situation had changed[415] and suggested a new security policy in response to this threat. Namely, he announced the revocation of the 2020 county reform that merged two northernmost counties Troms and Finnmark. Also, he introduced measures to target the problem of depopulation in the region, which he also positioned as a national security issue. Thus although the Prime Minister acknowledged the Russian threat, the response

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[411] Thomas Nilsen, "Storskog-fence built a few centimeters too close to Russia", 2016.
[412] Rune Rafaelsen, "Kronikk: Når justisministeren overtar utenrikspolitikken", *High North News*, published September 2, 2016. https://www.highnorthnews.com/nb/kronikk-nar-justisministeren-overtar-utenrikspolitikken; Citation translated by author.
[413] Mirroring his famous Tromsø speech of 2005, where he had famously introduced a "historically new approach" towards Russia. See Atle Staalesen. „Norwegian PM: Russian attack on Ukraine will have consequences also in the North“ *The Barents Observer,* published February 4, 2022. https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/arctic/2022/02/norwegian-pm-russian-attack-ukraine-will-have-consequences-also-north.
[414] Staalesen. „Norwegian PM: Russian attack on Ukraine will have…“ 2022.
[415] Ibid.

towards strengthening national sovereignty that he suggested corresponded to the Northern interests. Crucially, he invited "the people in the North" to "develop the policy together"[416]:

> "We must think about Finnmark as the region that meets Russia, that meets the Arctic and it must have power, authority and skills on site."[417]

Another recent and illustrative example of how Støre acknowledges borderland subsidiarity is when he visited Kirkenes on May 9, 2022, and, along with the representatives of the Secretariat, met with Russian and Ukrainian residents of Sør-Varanger municipality and expressed support for cooperation projects that may continue after the invasion of Ukraine (those involving independent actors)[418]. Thus, even when having to acknowledge Russia as a threat, Støre tries to accommodate the Northern approach and demonstrates his attentiveness to the borderland actors.

Thus albeit the cross-border cooperation with Russia has come to live a "life of its own", the Labour government, and Støre personally, managed to implement it more successfully from the perspective of the local actors *because* of his demonstrative respect for borderland subsidiarity. Instead of erecting physical barriers against security threats from Russia, Støre suggested a way to strengthen Norwegian sovereignty in a way that aligns with Northern attitudes and interests. He engaged with the Northern population in persuading them that his proposal is necessary, rather than imposing central powers on bordering practices directly.

To conclude, the Northern Perspective is centred on good neighbourly relations with Russia, characterised by greater familiarity and more nuanced, experience-based attitudes. It is formulated through repeated encounters and reinforced by collective historical memories, local identity, and individual/shared experiences. The Northern Perspective is also embodied in bordering practices of the *democratic boderscape*. The Norwegian border regime is largely constructed through the ideology of individual freedom, collective knowledge, and responsibility. This embodiment not only enacts the "suturing" of Norwegian-Russian differing sovereign regimes, but it is also mobilised in the domestic realm, juxtaposed with the Centre imposing inappropriate bordering practices.

While in the collective memories of the Cold War, the implementation of Norwegian sovereignty and national security was highly centralised (and thus perceived as oppressive by locals), in the post-Cold War era, the different governments engaged with borderland subsidiarity, employing

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[416] Statsministerens kontor, „Statsministeren talte om nordområdepolitikken", *Regjeringen.no*, February 3, 2022, https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/statsministeren-holder-tale-om-nordomradepolitikken/id2899124/ .

[417] Staalesen. „Norwegian PM: Russian attack on Ukraine will have…" 2022.

[418] Barentssekretariatet (@barentssekretariatet), "Det er viktig å holde kanaler åpne for dialog", Facebook post, May 9, 2022, https://www.facebook.com/barents/posts/416984693760562 ; Trine Jonassen, "Statsministeren til Kirkenes 9. Mai" *The High North News*, Published on May 5, 2022. https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/node/54178?fbclid=IwAR0SHwrxPLYqhAbwsVG1Md_or1LEtdBbIhX97OxjzDDUaIWH8qtOf2EXMFw .

before antagonised cross-border interaction into their strategies of foreign policy and national security. Through the people-to-people practices, however, the Northern Perspective has transgressed the immediate borderland and spread throughout wider Northern Norway. The principle of subsidiarity mobilised the Northern population on the issue of foreign policy towards Russia; to the point that it became a bipartisan issue which all governments tend to abide by (to a greater or lesser extent). From the Northern Perspective, nonetheless, the Labour government has demonstrated more attentive respect to the local agency, thus implementing borderland subsidiarity more successfully.

Conclusions

This thesis inquired about the Norwegian "Northern Perspective" towards Russia. The perspective is conceptualised as an approach to Norwegian-Russian relations, employed largely, but not exclusively, by low-level actors in Northern Norway. It relates to the "cooperation" or "good neighbourhood" approaches within the dualistic Norwegian foreign policy towards Russia, which underline the importance of maintaining mutually beneficial cooperation with Russia in the High North. The "cooperation" approach is often juxtaposed against the "Western" discourse or "realist" policy, which emphasise unity with the Western allies and strengthening Norway's defence capabilities against Russia as a threat. Recognising that the "good neighbourhood" policy is specific to Northern Norway, this thesis took on the Norwegian-Russian border in the Arctic to explore how the Northern Perspective towards Russia is defined by the proximity to the border and enacted through bordering and cross-border practices over the period of 2012-2022. The Northern Perspective was examined on external and domestic dimensions: the external sphere focused on the cross-border interactions with Russia, while the domestic dimension focused on how the Northern Perspective is enacted in the domestic centre-periphery tensions.

Within the **external dimension** of the Northern Perspective, the bordering process is centred on low-level cooperation with Russia. It is realised through people-to-people practices, which have become a significant aspect of borderland identity, culture, and economy. People-to-people practices usually invoke the metaphor of *barrier-bridge*, emphasising "bridge-building", "overcoming barriers", and generally creating a peaceful neighbourhood with Russia. The Northern Perspective has more positive perceptions towards Russia, particularly characterised by higher familiarity with Russia and more nuanced, experience-based attitudes. Analysis of bordering and cross-border practices over 2012-2022 revealed two following tendencies.

First, increasing Russian authoritarianism and isolationism negatively affected people-to-people cooperation. Although Russia's annexation of Crimea is established as the "turning point" in state-level bilateral relations, on the border, subtle micro-level changes were already noticeable since around 2012, embodied through increasing Russian isolationist practices on the physical border and in cross-border interactions. While post-Crimea sanctions in 2014 did not cause significant damage to cross-border practices (the effects were rather balanced between positive and negative), it was the gradual changes in Russia over the last decade that inflicted significant challenges in cooperation. The Russian pressures were carefully navigated by Norwegian low-level regional actors, including by reducing the scope (or amending the type) of activity and limiting the range of the Russian partners. Finally, the most impactful challenges to cross-border cooperation were related to COVID-19 restrictions and, more recently, Russian state actors' public support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Therefore, micro-level changes in cross-border practices can be a good indicator of tendencies in the state-level relationship. Furthermore, these results demonstrate that the Arctic region is not isolated from geopolitical tensions, contrary to the "Arctic exceptionality" principle widely referenced in political and academic discourse.

Second, the analytical lens of *border as suture of sovereigns* was instrumental in discerning three layers of border function, which were unevenly affected by challenges imposed by Russian domestic changes, namely, increased authoritarianism and isolationism. The **first layer** is the border regime enacted by the institution of the Border Commissioners. It has been the most stable and resistant, providing a steady ground of a low-tension border regime (the basis of the *suture* between the two sovereigns) and facilitating exigencies of de-escalation. This border function was institutionalised in the context of the Cold War and remains in force, hence effectively functioning even in circumstances of cross-border isolation. The practices that enact and maintain this border regime are the practices of "friendship", i.e., institutionalised practices of developing the personal relationship between the two commissioners. **The second layer** of border functionality is the institutionalised structures of people-to-people cooperation, largely fulfilled by the Norwegian Barents Secretariat and border resident permit visa-free regime. These structures also act as a stabilising factor to cross-border practices, however, they were affected to a larger degree by changes in Russia. **The third layer** of border function is enacted by low-level actors in practices of *resistance* against the Russian *external sovereign* regime, largely within the areas of "controversial issues", which have been affected the most by Russian pressures. These practices transcended the barrier-bridge function of the border: it rather became a *tool of resistance* against the oppressive Russian regime.

Within the **domestic dimension**, the analysis showed how the Northern Perspective is formulated through repeated encounters with Russia and mobilised in the domestic domain through the centre-borderland relation. The Northern Perspective is specifically enacted through tensions over the principle of borderland *subsidiarity*. Examples of disagreements between the local actors and the national government demonstrated how important the implementation of the subsidiarity principle is for them, particularly when deciding on preferred/appropriate bordering practices. Cases of the Centre's apparent disregard over the border integrity (e.g., the fence erected at the border crossing station) particularly heightened centre-borderland tensions, which were expressed by locals' public disappointment and critique of the Government's "incompetent" policy towards Russia.

The Norwegian borderland is embodied through what can be characterised as the *democratic borderscape,* which emphasises drastic contrasts between the loose landscape of Norway and the militarised buffer-zone regime on the Russian side. The Norwegian border regime is largely

constituted through an ideology of land of individual freedom, collective knowledge, and responsibility. The Northern Perspective is reinforced by collective memories, local identity, and individual experiences of encounters. Through people-to-people practices, institutionalised and funded by a governmental framework, the Northern Perspective towards Russia transcends the immediate borderland, being spread into the broader Northern Norway, becoming an important focal point in Northern regions' political agenda.

In addition, although Northern cooperation with Russia became a bipartisan issue, Labour and Conservative governments acknowledged borderland subsidiarity differently in 2012-2022. The appropriateness of a policy towards Russia, in the perspective of local actors, largely depended on the implementation of the principle of borderland subsidiarity, and not that much on the *content* of a policy (e.g., whether Russia is securitised or de-securitised). While bordering practices are important for the central government in strengthening national sovereignty (thus usually treated as a national security matter), authorities have to negotiate with local actors over their implementation. Analysis showed that over the period of analysis, Labour governments, as opposed to the Conservative government, tended to engage with the Northern Perspective more successfully, particularly because of their demonstrated respect for the local agency and preferred border embodiment. Thus the success of a central policy towards Russia, in the Northern Perspective, pertains to a) how chosen bordering practices correspond to the ideology of the *democratic borderscape* and b) how local knowledge and expertise on Russia are recognised by the Centre. Thus despite what content a policy towards Russia entailed, the Labour government managed to accommodate the Northern Perspective more easily.

The Northern Perspective provides more insight into Norwegian dualistic foreign policy towards Russia. By catering for the Northern Perspective and identities/attitudes that it contains, the Norwegian government(s) must navigate between implementing national security/foreign policy in Northern Norway (according to external threats) and not imposing bordering practices which would conflict with the borderland subsidiarity. Norwegian policy towards Russia is thus formulated in a constant tension between the South and the North domestically, and between the East and the West within the international realm.

The Practical Theory of International Relations provides a framework to analyse such low- and micro-level processes that are otherwise overlooked when concentrating on state actors. The approach of Critical Border Studies is instrumental in questioning borders as taken-for-granted entities and, as shown in this thesis, can be useful in the field of International Relations. The concept of *border as suture* reveals how state sovereignty is enacted through its borders and what complex relations it projects between the sovereign and the individual. The suture, revealed through cross-border and rupturing practices, allows for a more comprehensive processual/functional analysis of borders.

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Sienijimo praktikos Norvegijos-Rusijos pasienyje: šiaurietiška perspektyva Rusijos atžvilgiu

Reziumė

Šiame darbe tiriama Norvegijos „šiaurietiška perspektyva“ Rusijos atžvilgiu. „Šiaurietiška perspektyva“ suprantama kaip požiūris į Norvegijos ir Rusijos santykius, būdingas Šiaurės Norvegijai, pabrėžiantis bendradarbiavimo su Rusija svarbą Tolimojoje Šiaurėje (*the High North*). Šiaurietiška perspektyva kildinama iš Norvegijos ir Rusijos sienos Arkties regione. Darbe tiriama, kaip ji įtvirtinama per įvairias sienijimo (*bordering*) praktikas 2012–2022 m. laikotarpiu. Išskiriamos dvi analizės dimensijos: išorinė ir vidaus. Tyrimas paremtas 13 pusiau struktūruotų interviu su įvairiais žemiausiojo lygmens (*low-level*) veikėjais Šiaurės Norvegijoje, taip pat empiriniais duomenimis apie sienijimo praktikas, surinktais iš viešai prieinamų šaltinių; medžiaga tyrimui taip pat rinkta lauko tyrimo išvykos į Kirkenes (Norvegija) metu. Analizė remiasi kritinių sienų studijų prieiga, sienijimo praktikas laikanti analizės kategorija. Sienijimo praktikų analizei pasitelkiamos sampratos: *siena kaip siūlė* (*border as suture*), *susidūrimas* (*encounter*) ir *subsidiarumas* (*subsidiarity*). Išorinėje analizės dimensijoje daugiausiai naudojama *siūlės* (*suture*) samprata, o vidinėje analizės dimensijoje naudojamos sąvokos *susidūrimas* (*encounter*) ir *subsidiarumas* (*subsidiarity*).

Tyrimo rezultatai parodė, kad išorinėje dimensijoje šiaurietiška perspektyva sutelkta į žemiausiojo lygmens praktikas (*people-to-people cooperation*) su Rusija, kurios yra svarbi pasienio tapatybės ir kultūros dalis. Šiaurietiška perspektyva pasižymi teigiamu požiūriu į Rusija, didesniu artumu (*familiarity*) ir patirtimi paremtomis nuostatomis. Analizė taip pat atskleidė, kad šie požiūriai taip pat gali būti įgyti ir/ar kisti priklausomai nuo susidūrimų su Rusija pobūdžio. Sienijimo praktikų analizė 2012-2022 m. periodu taip pat parodė dvi tendencijas: pirma, stiprėjantis Rusijos autoritarizmas ir izoliacionizmas neigiamai paveikė žemiausiojo lygmens pasienio bendradarbiavimo praktikas ir sukėlė reikšmingų iššūkių Norvegijos-Rusijos bendradarbiavime. Norvegijos žemiausiojo lygmens veikėjai stengėsi laviruoti iškilusius sunkumus, tačiau su laiku tai tapo vis sunkiau, kol po Rusijos invazijos į Ukrainą 2022 m., bendradarbiavimo praktikos turėjo būti iš esmės permąstytos bei sumažinta jų apimtis.

Antra, analizė atskleidė, kad Norvegijos-Rusijos siena atlieka tris pagrindines funkcijas, paskirstytas per tris sienos režimo lygius. Pirmasis lygmuo – tai pasienio režimas, įkūnijamas sienos komisarų institucijos, pasižymintis stabilumu ir atsparumu pokyčiams, atliekantis de-eskalavimo funkciją dar nuo Šaltojo karo laikų. Antrasis sienos funkcijos lygmuo – tai institucionalizuotos žemiausiojo lygmens bendradarbiavimo praktikos, įgyvendinamos Norvegijos Barenco Sekretoriato (*the Norwegian Barents Secretariat*) ir sienos gyventojų bevizio režimo (*border resident permit*), kurios taip pat suteikia stabilumą sienos režimui, nors ir buvo labiau paveikios pokyčiams Rusijoje.

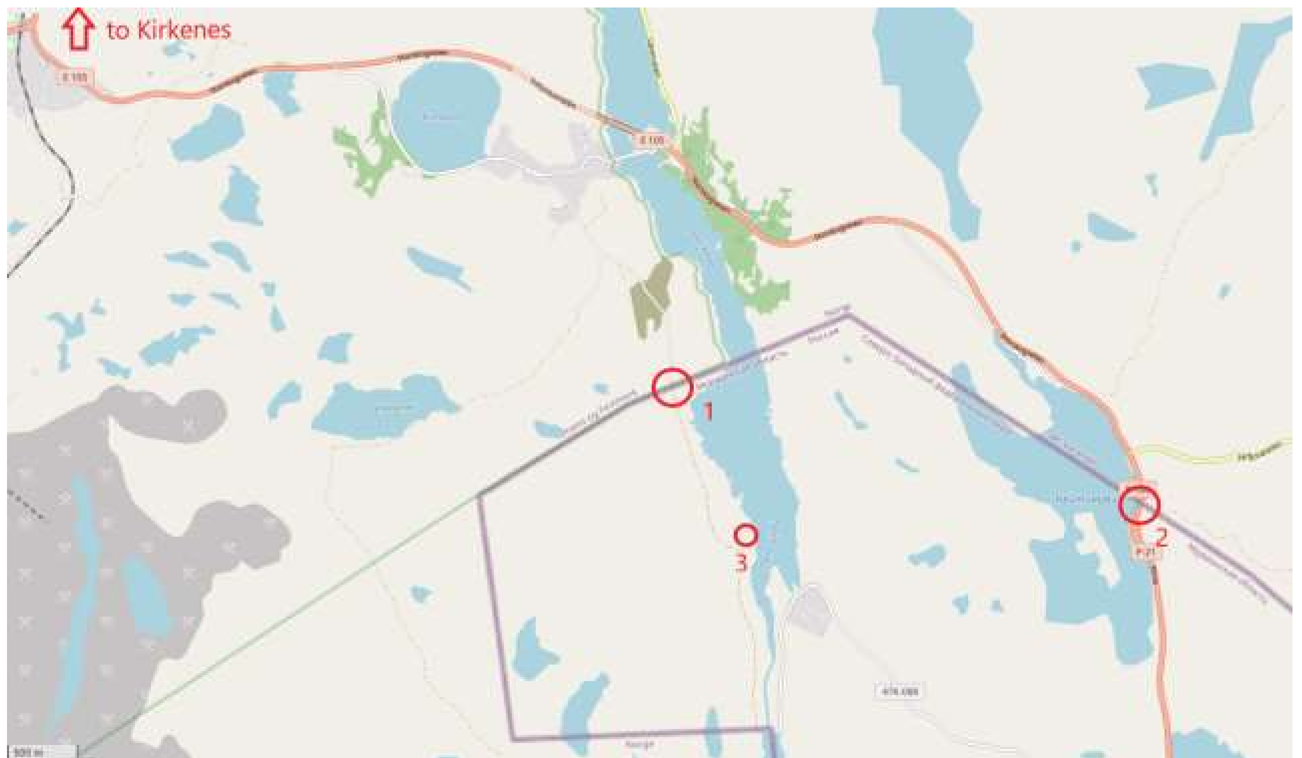
Trečiasis lygmuo įgyvendinamas per žemiausiojo lygmens pasipriešinimo (*resistance*) praktikas, nukreiptas per Rusijos režimą (analizuota „kontroversiškų“ projektų kontekste per dviejų atvejų analizę: *Barents Pride* ir *Barents Observer*). Šios praktikos labiausiai paveikios Rusijos spaudimui, tačiau įgyvendina unikalią sienos kaip įrankio pasipriešinti prieš Rusijos režimą funkciją.

Vidaus dimensijos analizė parodė, kad šiaurietiška perspektyva tampa ypač išreikšta centro-periferijos įtampų kontekste, konkrečiai dėl pasienio subsidiarumo principo įgyvendinimo. Norvegijos siena įkūnyta per atviras (*open*) ir laisvas (*loose*) sienijimo praktikas ir būdus (pvz., žymima beržų šakelėmis ir prieinama civiliams) ir ryškiai skiriasi nuo Rusijos pasienio (militarizuota zona, ribojama spygliuota tvora). Norvegijos pasienis paremtas *demokratiško pasienio* ideologija (individualios laisvės, kolektyvinio žinojimo ir atsakomybės principais). Atvejai, kai vyriausybė nepaisė sienos vientisumo ir *demokratiško* sienijimo praktikų, ypač sukėlė vietos veikėjų priešiškumą centrinei valdžiai. Labiausiai šie nesutarimai kildavo kai centrinė valdžia tiesiogiai įgyvendindavo Rusijos atžvilgiu neigiamas sienijimo praktikas (pvz., įrengė 200 m ilgio tvorą pasienio punkte), kurioms nepritardavo vietiniai veikėjai, akcentuojantys taikaus bendradarbiavimo su Rusija svarbą.

Šis darbas, tyręs Norvegijos-Rusijos santykius per šiaurietiškos perspektyvos sampratą ir sienijimo praktikų analizę, prisideda prie gilesnio supratimo apie dualistinę Norvegijos užsienio politiką Rusijos atžvilgiu. Norvegijos centrinė valdžia, atsižvelgdama į nuostatas, būdingas Šiaurės Norvegijos regionams, priversta laviruoti tarp nacionalinio saugumo politikos įgyvendinimo (reaguojant į išorines grėsmes) ir šiaurietiškai perspektyvai tinkamų pasienio praktikų, bei įgyvendinti pasienio subsidiarumo principą. Todėl Norvegijos politika Rusijos atžvilgiu formuluojama nuolatinėje įtampoje tarp Šiaurės ir Pietų (šalies viduje) bei tarp Rytų ir Vakarų (tarptautinėje erdvėje).

Annex

Map 1. The border between Norway and Russia. Ed. by author. Map source: OpenStreetMap, https://www.openstreetmap.org/



Map 2. The Russian side of the Boris Gleb area with marked locations. No. 1: Skafferhullet (former crossing point); No. 2: Storskog-Borisoglebsk (the current crossing point); No. 3: Church of Boris and Gleb (approx. location). Ed. by author. Map source: OpenStreetMap, https://www.openstreetmap.org/

Map 3. Satellite picture of the Storskog crossing point. Screenshot made by author 26/03/2022. Source: Google Maps

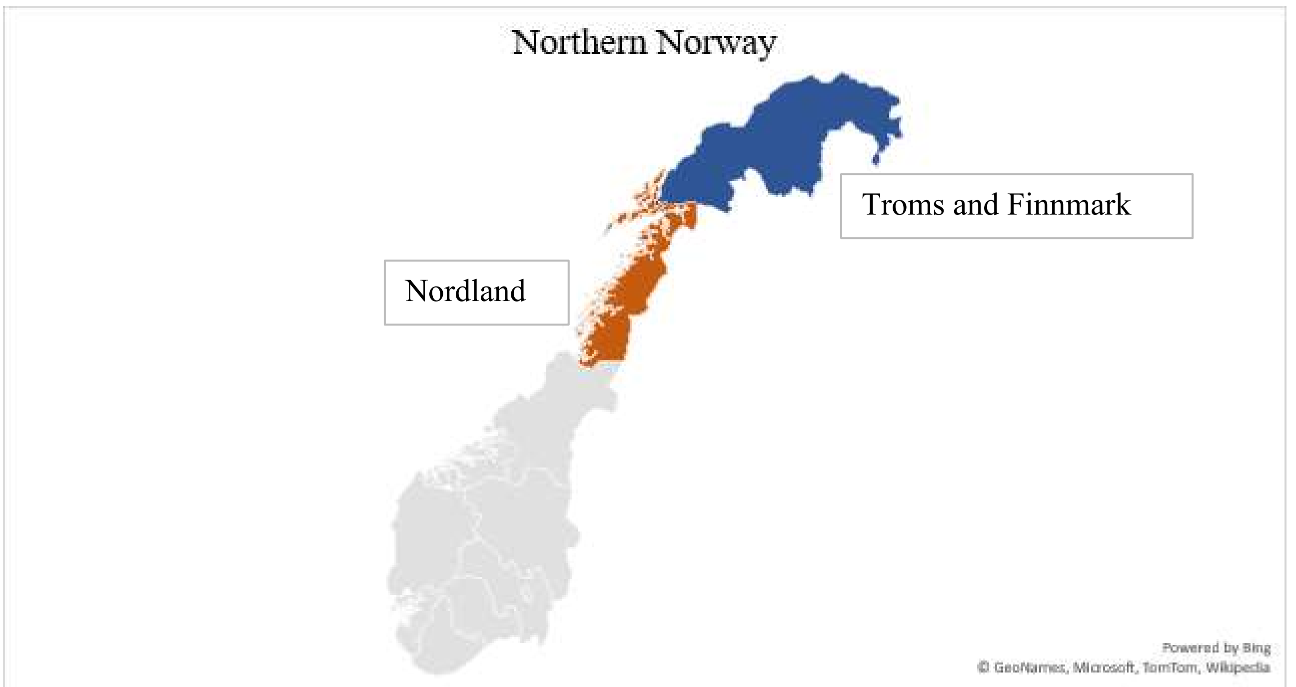


Diagram 1. Counties of Northern Norway. Chart made by author.

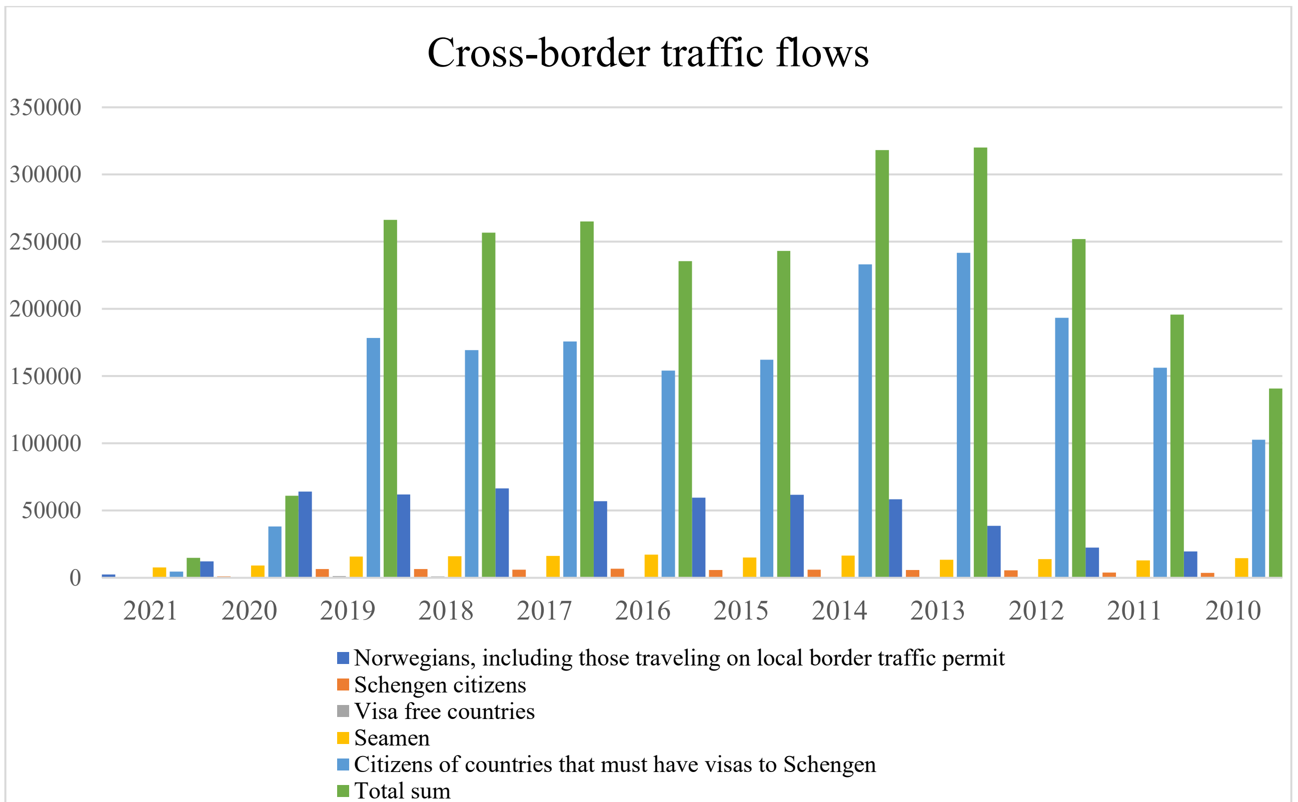


Diagram 2. Cross-border traffic flows. Data: Finnmark Police Distrct (*Finnmark politidistrikt*), acquired by author via email correspondence on March 23, 2022. Chart by author.

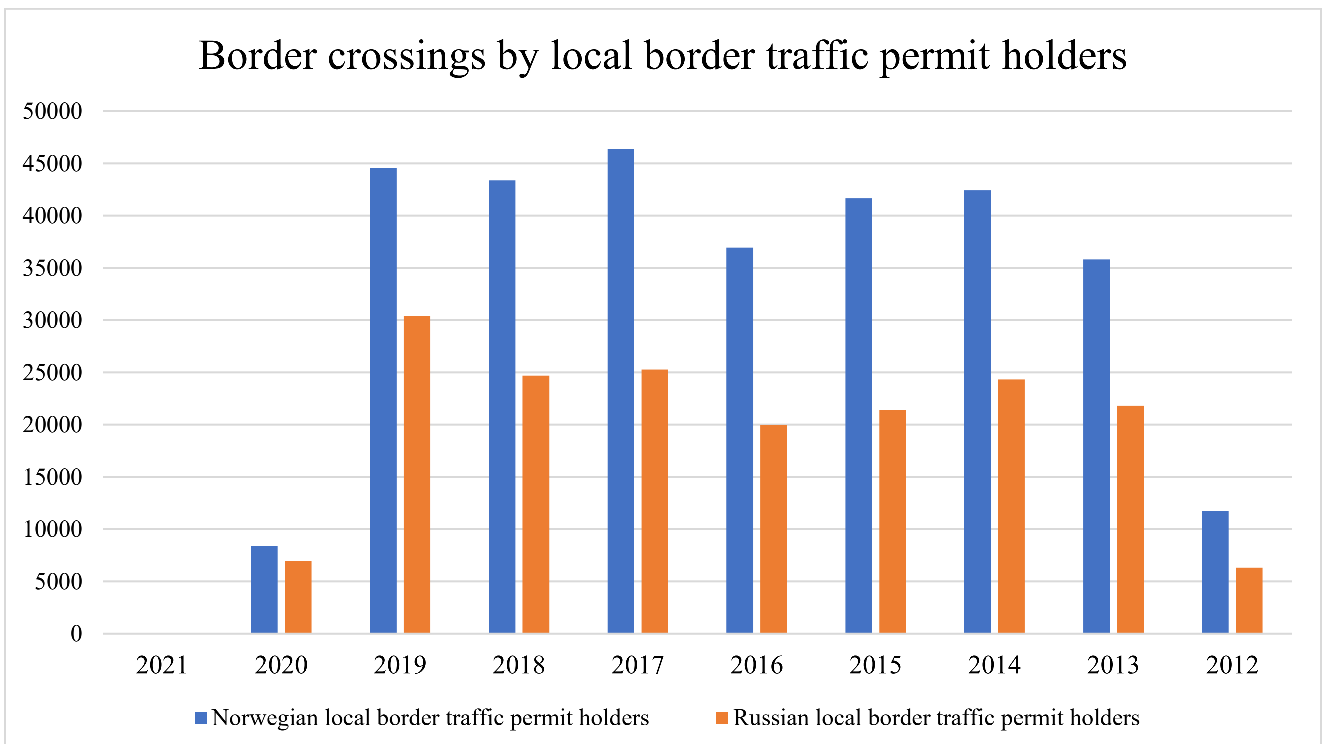


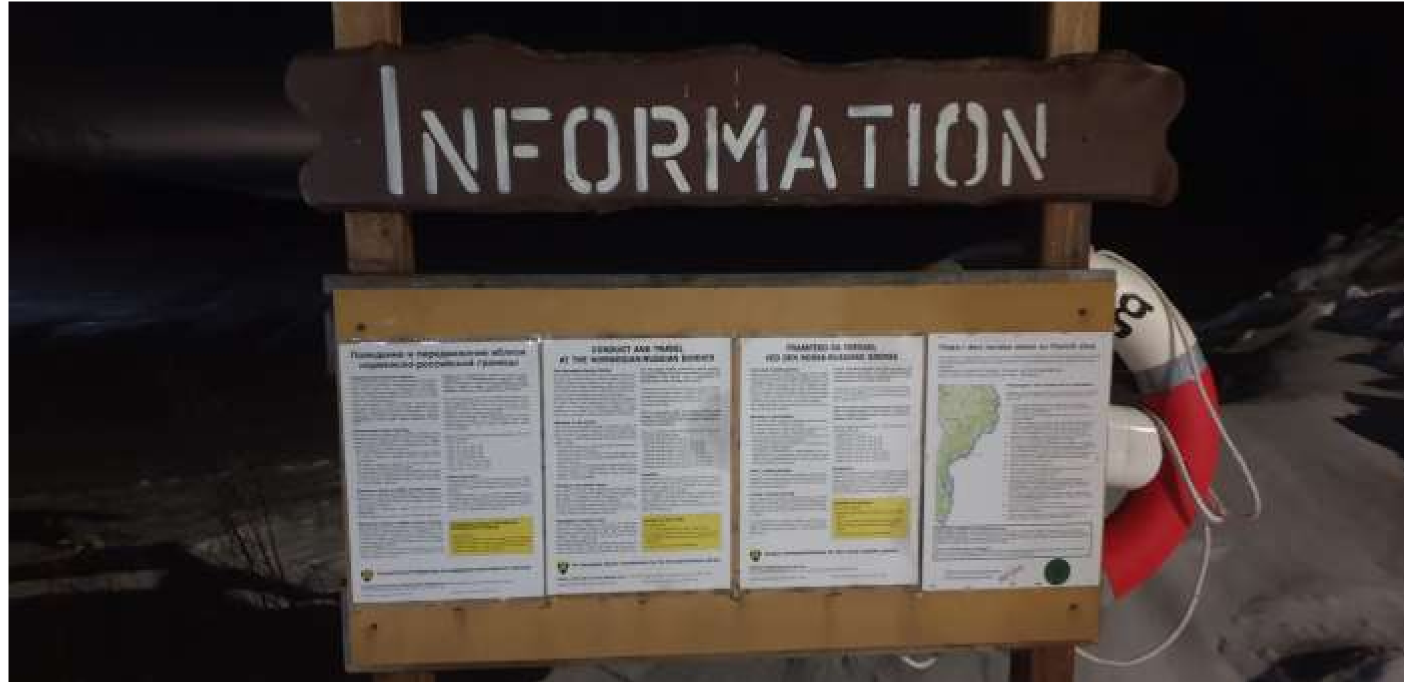
Diagram 3. Border crossings by local border traffic permit holders. Data: Finnmark Police Distrct (Finnmark politidistrikt), acquired by author via email correspondence on March 23, 2022. Chart by author.

Picture 1. The main meeting hall in the Norwegian conference house at Storskog. Taken by the author, 08/02/2022.

Picture 2. The small meeting room in the Norwegian conference house at Storskog. Taken by author, 08/02/2022.

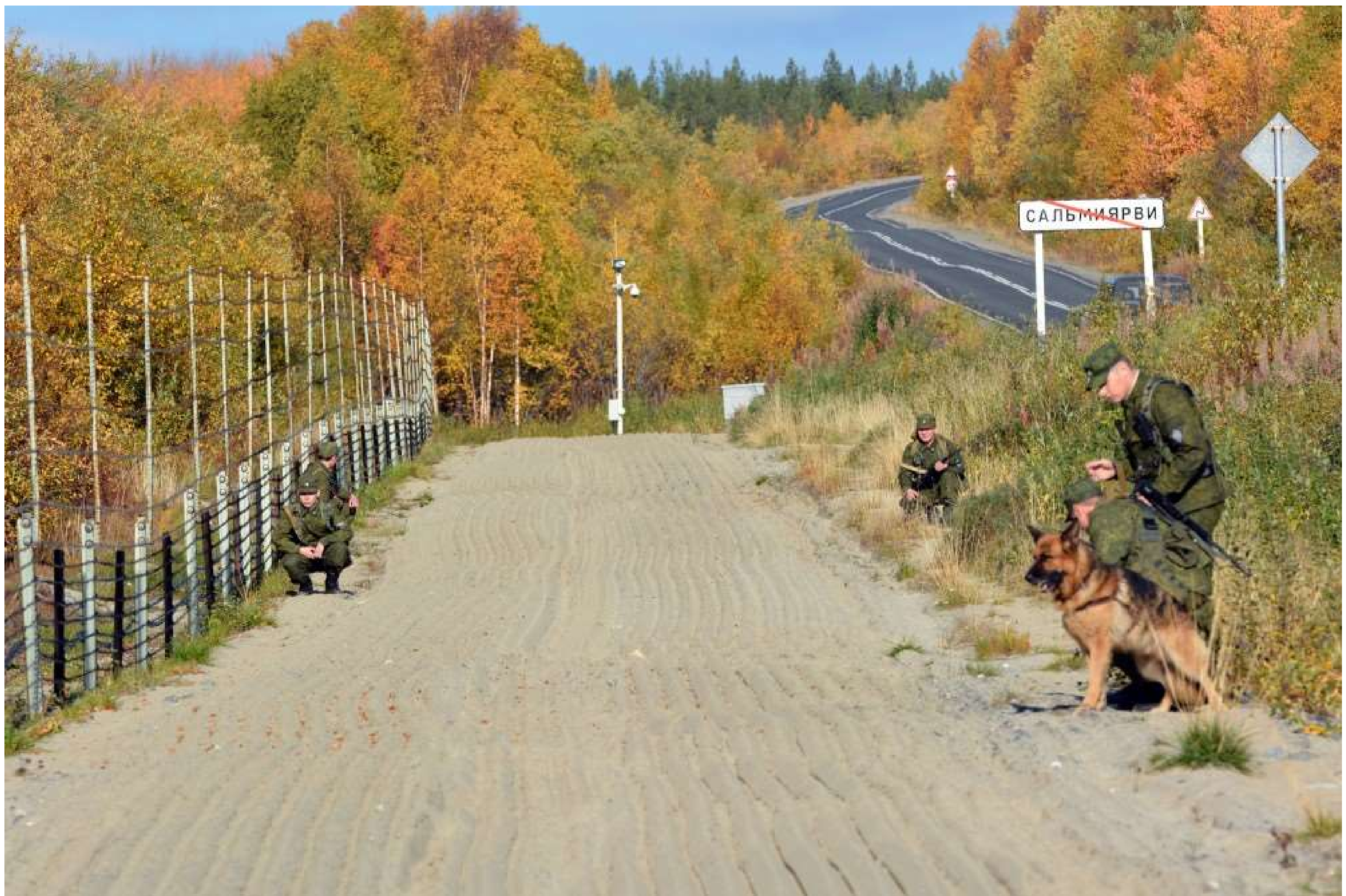
Picture 3. A pile of birch twigs prepared for marking the winter boundary line on a frozen lake (illuminated by car headlights). Taken by the author at lake Svanevatn, Svanvik, Sør-Varanger municipality, 09/02/2022.

Picture 4. Birch twigs marking a boundary line on the ice. Arrows point to reflective ribbons on twigs, visible when illuminated by car headlights. Taken by the author at lake Svanevatn, Svanvik, Sør-Varanger municipality, 09/02/2022.



Picture 5. Information boards by the road along Norwegian-Russian border. Pasvik area. Taken by the author at lake Svanevatn, Svanvik, Sør-Varanger municipality, 09/02/2022.

Picture 6. The fence at Storskog border station, erected in 2016. Taken by the author, Kirkenes, 08/02/2022.



Picture 7. “ FSB's Border Guard Service on patrol along the barbed wire fence that goes all along Russia's Arctic border to Norway” . Author: Thomas Nilsen. Source: Thomas Nilsen. “ FSB warns against terror in border area to Norway” , *The Barents Observer*, published November 2, 2015. [https://thebarentsobserver.com/ru/security/2015/11/fsb-warns-againts-terror-border-area-norway.](https://thebarentsobserver.com/ru/security/2015/11/fsb-warns-againts-terror-border-area-norway)

Picture 8. Russian barbed-wire border fence being reinforced in 2013. Author: Thomas Nilsen. Date taken: September 8, 2013. Source: provided by Thomas Nilsen in an email correspondence with the author on March 4, 2022.

Picture 9. Dual language street sign in Kirkenes. Taken by the author, Kirkenes, 09/02/2022.