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"The purpose of social policy in the Northern and Arctic regions of Russia should be to improve the quality of human capital by investing in the well-being of the population"

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I was born in the town of Kirovsk, which is located in the Russian Far North. I have lived in the town of Apatity (just 22 km from Kirovsk) for more than 35 years. It's a small town with a population of slightly more than 58,000 people. The infrastructure of the town includes a railway station, a local airport, a large cinema, a swimming pool and many shops and offices. Apatity is a nice place for recreation and high mountain tourism despite the severe climatic conditions of the Far North. The Khibiny Mountains are beautiful, attracting alpine skiers and lovers of winter and summer tourism to Apatity. A unique research complex of the Kola Science Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences with nine institutes is located in Apatity. Altogether more than 1000 people are employed at these institutes. Our town is a science city with great potential for the development of applied scientific research and development, innovations, high-tech industries and education.

My father is a PhD (Econ.). In 1976 he began working as an intern researcher for the Department of Social Policy in the North at the Luzin Institute for Economic Studies of the Kola Science Centre (IES), where he worked until 2002. Today he works in the field of education as the Head of the Department of Management at the Kola Branch of Petrozavodsk State University in Apatity. My scientific career began in 2001 at the Department of Social Policy in the North at the IES KSC RAS, and I think I “inherited” my father’s interest in social sciences.

The welfare problems of the Northern and Arctic regions form the scope of my research interests. My dissertation (defended in 2007) focused on the developing theoretical and methodological foundations for poverty reduction in the Northern regions of Russia, as well as on working out policy recommendations to improve the institutional mechanisms to solve the problem of poverty in Murmansk Region. This work was appreciated at the Annual Contest of Young Scientists of Murmansk Region in 2007, and was awarded first place and the Governor’s Award. My supervisor was PhD (Econ.) Larissa Riabova, an Honoured Economist of the Russian Federation and Head of the Department of Social Policy in the North at the IES.

Today I am a Senior Researcher in the Department of Social Policy in the North at the IES. My everyday work is connected, first of all, with conducting fundamental scientific research and exploratory scientific studies within the research projects of the Russian Academy of Sciences funded by the federal budget. My research covers various aspects of living standards and welfare in the Russian North and in the Arctic at the regional and municipal levels, and international practices of social policy in the North and in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region.

Since the early 2000s our Department’s research has been devoted to the theme of social sustainability in the North and in the Arctic. Within this main direction several research projects of the Russian Academy of Sciences funded from the federal budget were initiated and completed by our team. I took part in such projects as “Social policy in the Northern regions as a key factor of sustainable regional development under conditions of globalization (the case of the Murmansk Region)” (2007–2009), “The theoretical basis of municipal social policy in the North and in the Arctic in the new model of the national development of the Russian Federation” (2010–2012), and “Scientific foundations of the state policy of socially sustainable development of the Russian North and the Arctic” (2013–2016).

Additionally, I took part in several national and international projects: "Scenarios of socio-economic development of the Northern regions of the Russian Federation" (2009–2010, funded by a grant from the President of the Russian Federation to support research by young Russian scientists), "The heterogeneity of economic space and zoning of the Russian North" (2012–2013, supported by the Russian Foundation of Fundamental Scientific Research), and "Monitoring of the economic situation and social wellbeing of the residents of mono-profile settlements in the Russian Far North", "Formation of the strategic priorities of the Russian Arctic", "The Russian Arctic: a modern development paradigm", and "Indigenous peoples and sustainable development of local communities of the North and the Arctic, Russia" (2011–2014, all funded by the Russian State Research Foundation).

As for international projects, I participated in "Neoliberal governance and sustainable development in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region from local communities' perspectives" (2012, in cooperation with the Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland) and the ENPI Kolarctic project "Sustainable mining, local communities and environmental regulation in the Kolarctic area (SUMILCERE)" (2013–2014). The main focus of these projects was to explore the current situation, identify problems and produce recommendations to improve the institutional environment of social development in the Northern and Arctic areas in Russia and in the Barents Region.

I believe that the purpose of modern social policy in the Russian North and in the Arctic should be to improve the quality of human capital by actively investing in the well-being of the Northern and Arctic populations. Social policy should be concerned with the creation of better and equal opportunities for the people of the Russian Northern and Arctic regions, balancing economic, environmental and social spheres of life in the North. This idea is a kind of compass that guides me in my research.

The results of my research are used extensively in my teaching. Since 2007 I have lectured to students studying social work and state and municipal management at the Kola Branch of Petrozavodsk State University in Apatity. It gives me a good feeling to see that my scientific results are useful for practical life – for people and for the future of my community.

I love my northern hometown of Apatity and my Murmansk Region, and want to see them prosper and thrive.