

Real and imagined

BORDERING

Ilona Mettiäinen



“FOR ME BORDERS MEAN, first of all, the possibilities to explore what is behind them, to learn more, to understand ‘why?’ and to find ways for interesting ‘win-win’ cooperative work with my colleagues in the Barents Region. I also love to travel across the Barents borders with my family – for example to stay for a couple of quiet days in a cottage in Finnish Salla.

Thinking about borders as barriers, I have to admit that imaginary borders we construct in our heads are the highest ‘separating walls’. These walls are usually made of stereotypes, lack of knowledge and information, deficit of cultural sensitivity and things like that.”

Larissa Riabova

Luzin Institute for Economic Studies, Kola Science Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences

“MUCH MORE WORK needs to be done in order for the borders to be crossed more easily, and with less surveillance. This is particularly so with the Russian border region, which functions as a hard border that requires a visa and border control checks on both sides.

I agree with Larissa that, often, the borders that are hardest to cross are perceived borders reinforced by stereotypes and unfounded fears. Unfortunately, we are seeing an intense period of that kind of bordering now, both real and imagined. Events far away from the Barents geographical space are affecting our good relations with our Russian neighbours and they are having real economic consequences for Russia and the other Barents countries. We must confront these emerging issues by discussing them in order to promote understanding, further cooperation, and even find the points where we agree to disagree.”

Aileen A. Espiritu

Barents Institute, UiT The Arctic University of Norway