



Photo by Maria Paldanius

Mirva Salminen

*Researcher, Northern Institute for Environmental and Minority Law,
Arctic Centre, University of Lapland*

I am currently working in the project “Enablement besides Constraints: Human Security and a Cyber Multi-disciplinary Framework in the European High North (ECoHuCy)”, in which we examine digitalisation and cybersecurity from a human security perspective in the northernmost areas of Norway, Sweden and Finland. This NordForsk funded project began in January 2017 and it lasts until the end of 2019. The Northern Institute for Environmental and Minority Law (NIEM) at the Arctic Centre has the project lead, while other consortium partners include UiT – The Arctic University of Norway, Swansea University (UK) and the Institute for Security and Development Policy (SE). After the project, I will defend my doctoral thesis on the same topic.

My disciplinary background is in political science, international relations, security studies, and art of war. The subject of my Master’s thesis was security commercialisation and the social construction of the state in the American discussion on private military and security corporations operating in Iraq. I became interested in cybersecurity six or seven years ago when I was co-editing a book on cyber defence for the National Defence University. The next step was working for a cybersecurity corporation – again on a book project, which then led to the next project and to the next project. In the summer of 2016, the preparations for ECoHuCy began and I started my job at the Arctic Centre. Simultaneously, the topic of my doctoral research changed from security commercialisation to cybersecurity.

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I knew little about the Arctic at the time, but I have found it very interesting and exciting to learn new things during the project. At NIEM, we have a team of three researchers and the project leader working on the topic. In addition, cooperation within the consortium, as well as with a wider pool of researchers affiliated with ECoHuCy, has brought forth many new perspectives in cybersecurity in people's everyday life.

We carry out three main theoretical and empirical interventions in mainstream cybersecurity research. First, we examine (national) digitalisation and cybersecurity policies together, instead of considering them as two separate policy- or issue-areas. By doing so, we aim to highlight that the positive sides of digitalisation, usually uttered in digitalisation programmes, and the negative sides, usually expressed in cybersecurity programmes, are interdependent. Second, we propose to bring the human being to the heart of digitalisation (instead of, for example, economic benefits and opportunities), both as the object to be secured (the referent object) and as the subject securing the smoothness of everyday life. In our view,

digitalisation should serve primarily the interests of the people whose lives it transforms. They should have a say in the decision-making about the direction which digitalisation is taking. Human wellbeing hence ought to be the desired end state of cybersecurity policies, programmes, frameworks and measures (alongside, for example, uninterrupted functioning of infrastructures deemed as critical). Furthermore, instead of highlighting solely the importance of technical security solutions or nationwide cybersecurity policies and their implementation, the security measures should also recognise the importance of human beings as security actors in their ever-digitalising environment. Finally, we scrutinise the ongoing societal digital transformations in the context of the European High North. The reason for making such interventions is our certitude that a wider, more inclusive cybersecurity framework, which also considers regional particularities, is required for understanding the societal transformations that ever-deepening digitalisation brings with it.

My role in the project is two-fold: to develop the theory of a human security perspective to digitalisation and cybersecurity, as well as to carry out empirical research in the region. By the time of writing, I have just returned from Enontekiö after having carried out two workshops there. The purpose of these workshops was to discuss with the local people about their interests, wishes, fears and concerns related to digitalisation. The conversations carried out over a cup of coffee produced an insightful picture of the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in people's everyday life. A colleague from UiT has carried out a similar workshop in Tromsø, and it will be interesting to see how different or similar findings these conversations produce.

After the ECoHuCy project, and having defended my dissertation, I hope to continue research on security- and digitalisation-related topics. Alongside the doctoral research, I have contributed to studies, for example, at Aalto University on the organisation of national cybersecurity in Finland (two VN TEAS studies) and at SaferGlobe (an independent peace and security think tank based in Helsinki) on the effectiveness of capabilities in European Union conflict prevention (IECEU project). I most enjoy examining complicated, security-related phenomena, for which understanding calls for strong theoretical basis, yet produces results grounded in empirically emergent problems or questions. In my view, the European High North, the Barents Region, and the Arctic provide an interesting case study on developments that take place globally.