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# “The changing Arctic: Impacts on elderly human rights”

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My principal research interest is multidisciplinary study of the elderly in the context of change in the Arctic, with a particular focus on gender and human rights. With a Master of Laws, Bachelor of Laws, and a Bachelor of Social Science, I have specialized in human ageing and elderly services. I worked for six years (2004 to 2010) for the City of Helsinki on the planning and implementation of elderly care and on issues relating to elderly well-being. Since 2012, I have been working as a researcher in the Unit for Gender Studies at the University of Lapland, in the Doctoral Programme on Northern Cultures and Sustainable Natural Resources Politics. Alongside my research, I have coordinated two projects funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The first, still in progress, deals with elderly exclusion in the context of Arctic change, highlighting gender in particular. The project will culminate in an edited volume, to be published by Routledge (UK) in 2016, to which I have contributed a chapter entitled “Gender positioning of older people in the changing Arctic”. The second project, successfully completed in January 2015, examined changes affecting livelihoods in the Nordic Arctic, also with a special focus on gender. The project included a number of network activities in 2014, which enabled me to write an article entitled “Livelihood transformation in the Nordic Arctic: Effects on older people from a gender-based perspective”. The article is being reviewed and is expected to be published (in *Polar Record*) in late 2015.

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My doctoral dissertation will be based on four scientific articles which have been or will be published in recognized international journals or chapters in edited volumes. The dissertation will also include an introductory chapter on the findings of the articles, which I plan to publish as an article in its own right at a later date. While the Arctic is the general focus of my doctoral studies, my research foregrounds the Barents region in particular.

My research to date indicates that the ageing population has already become a demographic challenge in many parts of the Nordic countries and the Arctic at large. The transformation of the Arctic by climate change affects the lives and livelihoods of the region's population. Crucially, the consequences of climate change pose numerous threats to elderly residents. For example, the increase of several viral diseases in the region has put elderly people's health at risk. To address such challenges and responses to them, my PhD research will highlight the importance of promoting the human rights and well-being of the region's elderly. In one facet of this focus, I plan to investigate how perspectives on old age are influenced by gender-based positioning. The main research questions of my PhD are the following: How does the elderly population in the Arctic generally, and in Lapland particularly, experience climate change and other associated changes? What consequences do these changes have? Do the currently applicable human rights instruments address the specific regional challenges that the elderly face? How is gender positioning (gender disparity) manifested among the elderly population and what implications does it have for the realization of elderly persons' human rights? How do the changes in livelihoods affect the well-being of the elderly? How do regional institutions, such as the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Nordic Council of Ministers and others, address the concerns facing the elderly and salient aspects of their human rights, including equality and well-being? In exploring these questions I have taken a two-pronged approach comprising an extensive literature review and field studies. The latter have been carried out in the city of Rovaniemi (2012) and rural areas in Inari, Angeli and Ivalo in Finland (2012 and 2013), and in Jokkmok in Sweden (2014). My informants are members of the local community, elderly persons, health professionals, social workers, and academics from Finland, Sweden, and Norway. It should also be noted that the body of research applying gender perspectives on the elderly in the Arctic is still very limited.

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