

Reflection Report on COINS Workshop and NIKT Conference (18–20 September 2018)

By Merve Baş Seyyar (PhD Candidate)

On September 17th, my journey started from Amsterdam to Svalbard (on 78° north latitude) for the COINS seminar and Norwegian Information Security Conference (NISK) for which I was waiting excitedly. It's the first time that I have ever attended the COINS seminar and it is the 30th anniversary of Norwegian Informatics Conference (NIK) that is a cause for a joyous celebration. Although I just became a COINS member in last June, I got the chance of attending the conference thanks to Urszula Nowostawska.

Svalbard welcomed me with the Northern lights that I saw from the plane by coincidence. It is the 1st time I have ever seen the Northern lights. Although it was not so visible, the view was definitely awesome. Since the rooms in Radisson Blu Polar Hotel were totally sold out, I stayed in the Coal Miner's Cabins and this gave me a chance to experience how daily life of a coal miner is.

Before the COINS workshop that was scheduled to take place on Tuesday afternoon, I had the chance to visit Svalbard's museum. It was fascinating to discover more about the life in Svalbard, coal mines and miners, the Northern lights, the animals specific to Arctic Ocean, history of Arctic exploration, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, glaciers and so on.

For me, the most beneficial part was the COINS seminar. **Lessons learned from doing a Ph.D.** and **Life after the Ph.D.** were two main topics. I really enjoyed the presentations. During the 1st session, the speakers shared their real life experiences while doing a Ph.D. I noticed that we have a lot in common and that we are facing with almost the same problems. I took the speaker's advices very seriously. The presentation of Bo Sun was the inspiring one. She talked about the difficulties of changing supervisor, changing research topic and being a mother during Ph.D. by showing us her own photographs in the slides. I will always remind her mottoes: "Good supervisor makes your life easier." & "There is always light at the end of the tunnel." As a Ph.D. candidate who plans to work in industry, 3rd session was also engaging for me. From Berglind Smaradottir, I learned how it may be difficult/easy to find a job in Norway. She shared her experiences as an employee at governmental agencies and research institutions in Norway.

On Tuesday evening, there was a city tour in a bus with a guide who was really entertaining. He told us about Svalbard's history, the visa/immigration policy and employment conditions for Svalbard. It was quite interesting.

1st day of NISK conference started with a very interesting presentation from Prof. Barbara Wasson about **Learning Analytics**. I am really pleased to learn about new methods and developments in education field and works done by The Society for Learning Analytics Research (SoLAR).

Since my research is related to privacy, I paid attention to the presentation named **The tension between anonymity and privacy** by **Staal Vinterbo**. His inspiring presentation was helpful for my research. I learned two new concepts: synthetic and checkable privacy. Additionally, talks not directly related to my research topic but that I found particularly interesting were: **Fake Chatroom Profile Detection** by Patrick Bours, Parisa Rezaee Borj and Guoqiang Li; **Debunking blockchain myths** by Roman Vitenberg and **Developing for the long term - Lessons learned through 20 years of Qt** by Lars Knoll.

In the evening of September 20th, we had a very unique dinner to celebrate the 30th anniversary of NIK at a very special location that is a little over 10 km from Longyearbyen, in Advent Valley: Camp Barentz. It was built as a copy of the cabin that Barentz and his crew built on Novaya Zemlia. I really enjoyed listening the stories of Camp Barentz's owner with polar bears. Lastly, I really admired the enthusiasm and energy of the funders, organisers of the conference. I am very pleasant to be a participant for this specific event.

Being in touch with with other Ph.D. students and being updated on latest developments in the field of ICT security and privacy are my main reasons for attending events like this. I am grateful to COINS who financially supported my presence there.

Final Remarks:

I really appreciated the efforts of the organisation committee. The conference saloons, the meals, the drinks and the treats served in break times etc. were all in good order and proper. Many thanks to them.

Co-locating with the NIKT conferences gave the participants the opportunity of attending a diverse range of talks.