


# Workshop Longyearbyen august 2022

## Cultural Heritage in Svalbard



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## Cultural heritage in Svalbard – what is that?

- All traces from human activity dating from before 1946.

These traces are automatically listed and shall be preserved according to the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act



A wide-angle photograph of a majestic glacier system flowing between rugged, snow-covered mountain peaks. The foreground is dominated by a dense field of dark, jagged rocks. A semi-transparent circular overlay on the left side of the image contains text.

But what are these  
traces?

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-and how are they  
protected?



# Anne-Cathrine Flyen

- Master of Architect/PhD-candidate, Researcher
- Specialisation: technical building preservation, natural and human induced wear, environmental monitoring, cultural heritage at Svalbard , CH managment
- Work experience within managment and research:
  - NIKU
  - The Governor of Svalbard
  - The Directorate for Cultural Heritage
  - The Municipal Heritage office in Oslo (Byantikvaren)
  - SINTEF Byggforsk







## Historic remains at Svalbard

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- Svalbard discovered in 1596
- No sign of indigenous people
- Raw-material supplier for European market for more than 400 years
- Different nationalities
- Several historic periods without interrelationship, however, overlap in time
- The Governor of Svalbard



# Automatically protected by law

All cultural remains prior to 1946 are automatically protected according to the Svalbard Environmental Law

Svalbard has young and somewhat unusual cultural monuments

Foto: The Governor of Svalbard





# Cultural Heritage at Svalbard: Historical periods

- Western European whaling  
aprox. 1600-1750
- Russian wintering/hunting  
aprox. 1700-1850
- Norwegian wintering/hunting  
from aprox. 1800 -
- Scientific/adventurous Expeditions  
from aprox. 1800 -
- Mineral seeking, mining Industry  
from aprox. 1900 -
- The 2. World War at Svalbard  
1941-45



# Smeerenburg: Dutch whaling station from the 17th century





# Gravneset: cemetery for whalers





# Russekeila: Russian hunting station from 19th century









# Norwegian hunting stations from the 20th century





## Scientific/adventurous Expeditions







# Mineral seeking, mining Industry





# Longyearbyen: American/Norwegian mining town from 1906/1916





# Ny-London: British marble mine from 1911





# Hiorthamn: abandoned mining town from 1917





# Ny-Ålesund: coal mining town from 1916



Today an international research station



# The 2. World War at Svalbard





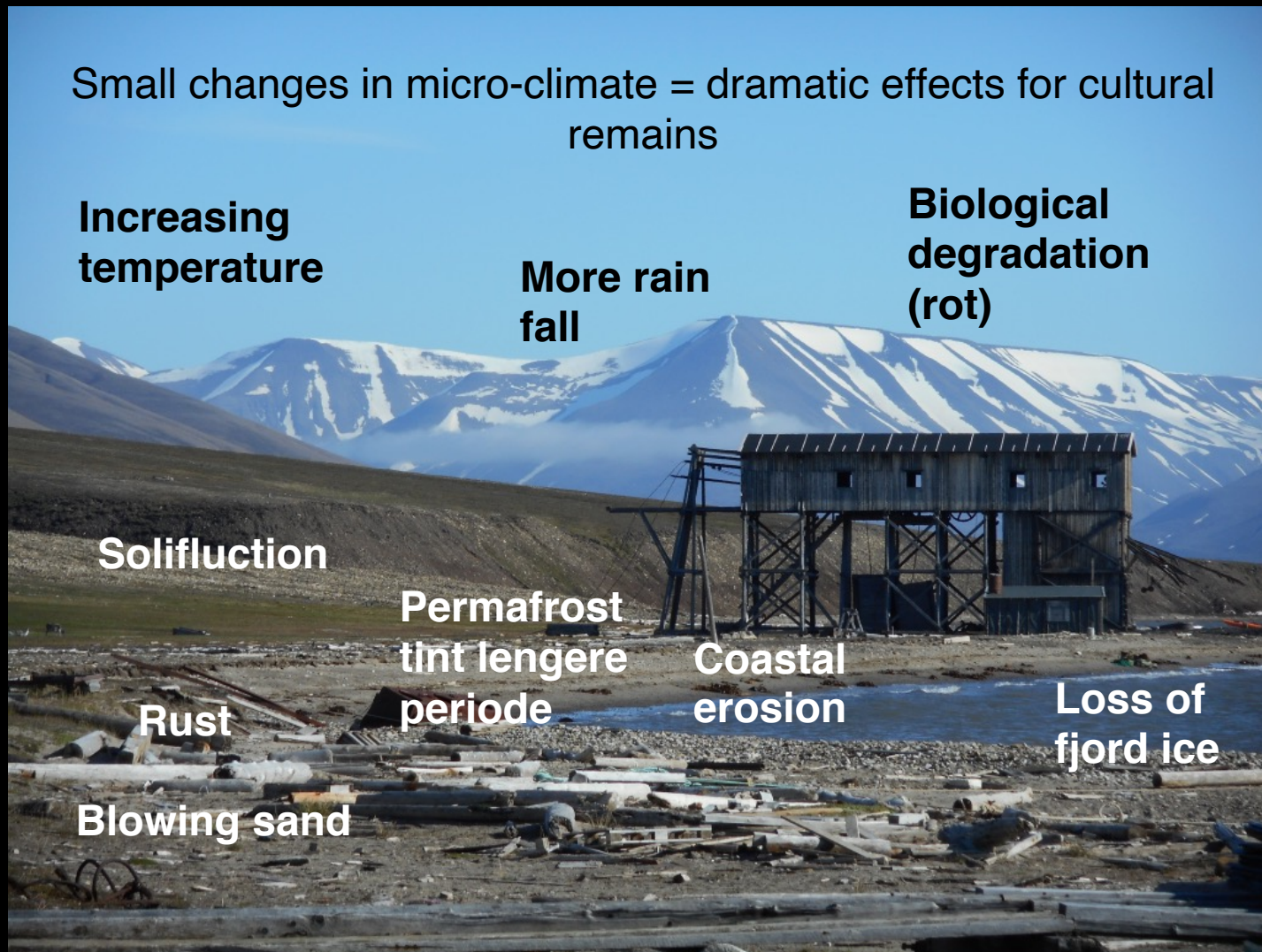
# Climate

Svalbard defined as «arctic desert»! - Not any more?





# Climatic changes – anticipated effects



# Main degradation parametres

Geo hazards

Biological decay

Tourism/human wear and tear





# Effects from climate changes are alarming





# Tourism at Svalbard is increasing.





# FINDINGS

- Degradation caused by natural hazards is increasing
- Human induced degradation is increasing
- Human and natural induced degradation reinforces each other
- Geohazards seems to speed up
- Fungal decay operates almost as fast as on mainland Norway
- Trampling tourists are hard on vegetation and historic remains



# Managing cultural heritage at Svalbard: Goals and contradictions





# High ambitions

- Nature and cultural heritage is to be amongst the best protected in the world
- Economic activity: tourism is a wanted industry
- Protection of nature and cultural heritage
- Important tool: knowledge based management founded on environmental monitoring
- Several monitoring programs running on nature and wildlife
- Nothing on cultural heritage



# Protection

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Svalbard's cultural heritage is to be protected and safeguarded as part of Svalbard's identity and be part of a comprehensive environmental management.





# Goals for the cultural heritage management

- 1) A representative selection of historic structures must be preserved as scientific source material and as a basis for future generations*
- 2) The annual loss of cultural heritage structures due to human degradation is not to exceed 0,1%*



What are the consequences of climate change and trampling tourists for the cultural heritage at Svalbard?

They disappear in an ever faster pace

*It is urgently needed to expand the work on documentation and preservation  
In only a few years there will be little left to tell the hunting and trapping stories if  
nothing is done.*





# Thanks!



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