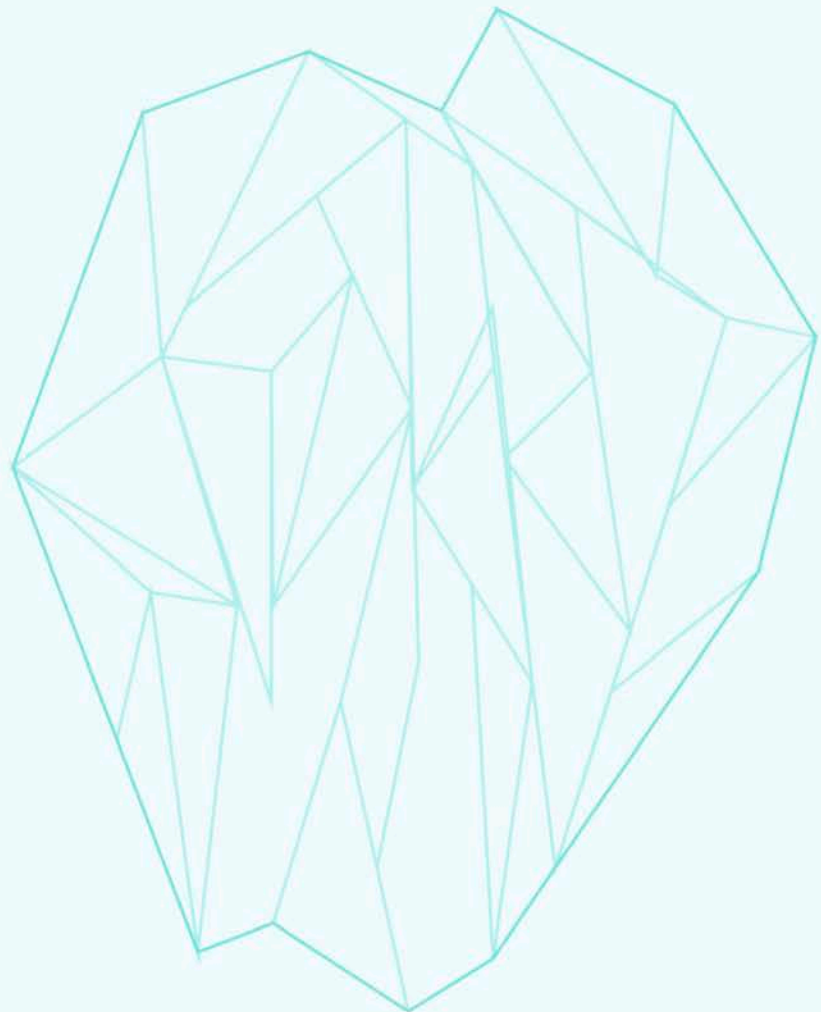




# SSSI

The Svalbard Social  
Science Initiative, SSSI

**- a side meeting to the  
Svalbard Science  
Conference 2019**



## Citation:

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## Content:

<b>Introduction</b>	4
<b>Session 1</b> «Living on Svalbard: Looking at the Past, Present and Future»	6
Thor Bjørn Arlov, NTNU	6
Thomas Hylland Eriksen, UiO	7
Peter Hemmersam, AHO	8
Annlaug Kjelstad, Longyearbyen Lokalstyre/ Local Council	12
<b>Session 2</b> «Current Research Projects»	15
<b>Session 3</b> «Community-based Research on Svalbard: Defining Needs and Strengthening» Cooperation	25
<b>Session 4</b> Community-based Research on Svalbard: Topics, Methodologies and Theories	30
SSSI Side Meeting Session 4 Workshop	31
Part 1: Group Discussion	31
Part 2: Breakout Groups	36
Wrap-Up and Action Points for the Future	39
<b>Session 5</b>	39
The SSSI-Open discussion for SSSI members and those who wish to stay: The organization and development of the network and future collaboration	

**Report from Svalbard Social Science Initiative, SSSI, side-meeting and workshop November 4, connected to the Svalbard Science Conference in Oslo, November 2019.**

**Background**

The Svalbard Social Science Initiative, SSSI, ([www.svalbardsocialscience.com](http://www.svalbardsocialscience.com)), has newly been founded as a grassroots initiative that brings a variety of social science researchers together in order to provide a platform for the exchange and discussion of research issues and results. While social science research on Svalbard has intensified over recent years, there has been little coordination and communication between individual projects that could equal the coordinated research efforts in Svalbard-related research in some of the natural sciences.



The Svalbard Social Science Initiative (SSSI) hosted a side-meeting and workshop about research that focuses on the human dimension of living in Svalbard, a meeting and workshop that took place at Scandic Fornebu, Oslo, on November 4 2019, as a side-meeting to the Svalbard Science Conference 2019. Through this initiative the members of SSSI wanted to give an introduction to the collaboration and work of the Svalbard Social Science Initiative and host a workshop about Social Science and Humanities Research on Svalbard. SSSI aims to fill a gap by connecting social science and humanities research about Svalbard. The aim of the network is to create linkages among social scientists working with issues related to Svalbard, establish a platform for coordinating research activities and to facilitate communication with local communities and other scientists.

In this side-meeting to the SCC, SSSI wanted to bring together people from the local communities in Svalbard with social science and humanities researchers focused on Svalbard, so that together we could look at the past, present and future of living on Svalbard and present current research projects that focus on the human dimensions of the dynamic changes underway there.

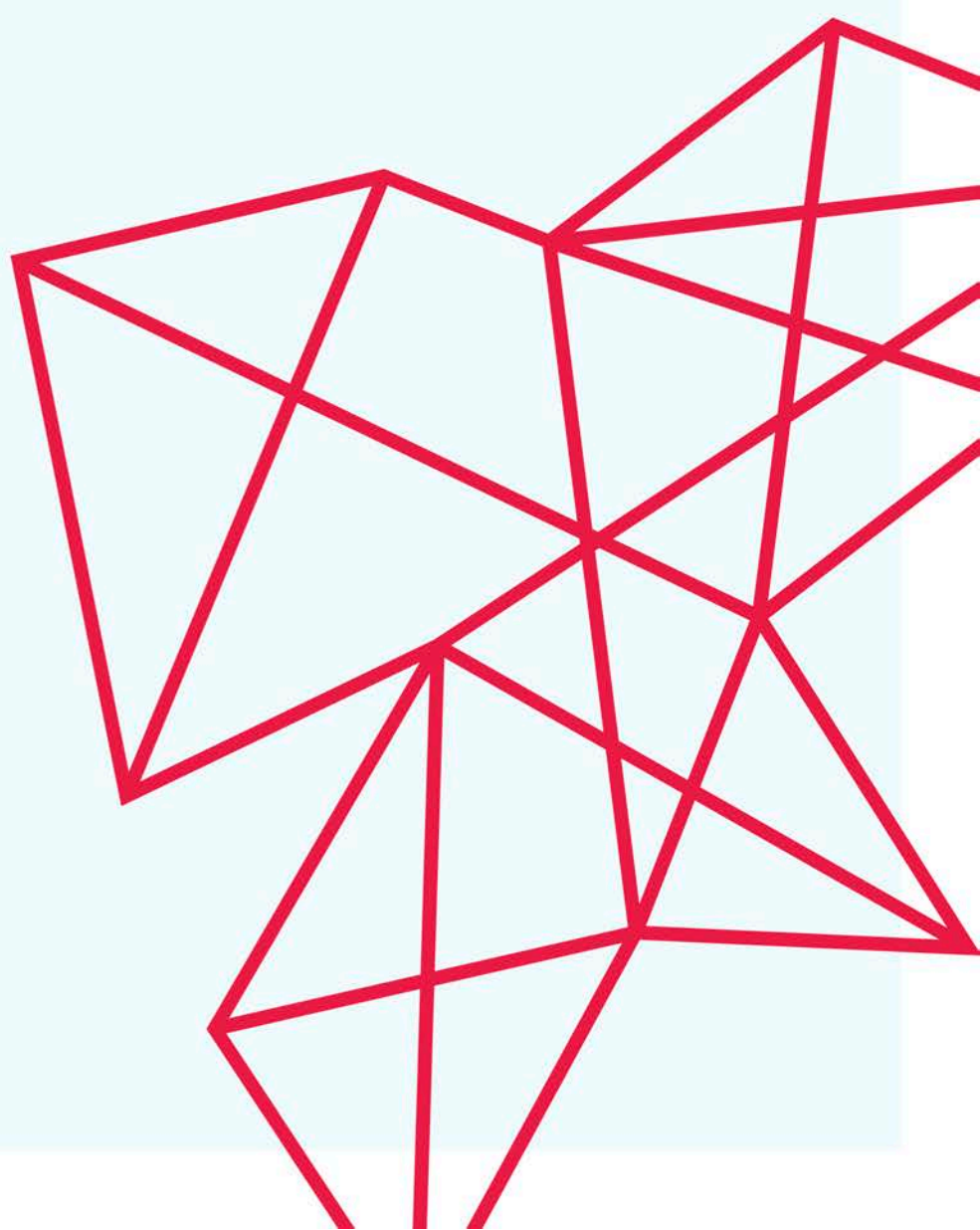
Through workshops and group discussions, we aimed to strengthen the ways in which social science and humanities research can work with and for the community, as well as to consolidate the research network and plan future activities. The SSSI workshop was supported by Nansen Environmental and Remote Sensing Center (NERSC), and funded by the Svalbard Science Forum.

**The side-meeting and workshop**

After arrival and coffee the SSSI members welcomed the participants, and introduced them to the main goal of the network and the topic of the side-meeting and workshop. The meeting was lead by Lisbeth Iversen, Nersc, and each session was lead by different members of the SSSI.

# SESSION 1

Living on Svalbard :  
Looking at the Past, Present and Future



## Side meeting

### Session 1 «Living on Svalbard: Looking at the Past, Present and Future»

This first session presented a series of invited speakers;

- Thor Bjørn Arlov, NTNU/UNIS
- Thomas Hylland Eriksen, UiO
- Peter Hemmersam, AHO
- Annlaug Kjelstad, Longyearbyen Local Council, (Longyearbyen Lokalstyre)

#### Thor Bjørn Arlov, NTNU/UNIS



Photo: Zdenka Sokolíčková & Lisbeth Iversen

Thor Bjørn Arlov is a historian, specialized on the history of Svalbard and author of “Svalbards historie“. He is senior advisor and Pro-Rector for Research at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim and adjunct professor at UNIS in Longyearbyen. Arlov gave a talk about Longyearbyen in a historical perspective. He described some central characteristics of Svalbard: it is a remote place, with no basis for organic growth of Svalbard’s communities. It is an extreme place, in terms of both location and climate. There is a limited resource base for human settlements on the archipelago, which requires an umbilical cord to the mainland. It has been an uninhabited no man’s land for most of its history. Among the central characteristics of Longyearbyen throughout its history, he mentioned that it is a local community, for a long time it was a mining community and a predominantly male community, and also a class community. The town was socially engineered to become a “normal community” (which implies that before, it was not considered normal). It has gradually become a family community but not yet a life-span community. Increasingly it is becoming an international community. Arlov then described some long lines and milestones in the history of Longyearbyen, from its establishment of a coal mining camp to the international, globalized, and modern community that is Longyearbyen today. He argued that even though the 1970s are often considered the time of Longyearbyen’s “modern breakthrough”, actually the 1990s, with the restructuring of Store Norske, diversification and privatization, the establishment of local democracy and increased internationalization, as well as economic growth and demographic changes, were more decisive in the development of “modern” Longyearbyen.

## Thomas Hylland Eriksen, UiO



**Photo:** Zdenka Sokolíčková & Lisbeth Iversen

Thomas Hylland Eriksen, professor in social anthropology from the University of Oslo, held a speech about Svalbard in the context of „overheating“. Eriksen mentioned the identity-in-change of the place that, after the decline in mining, is searching for a new economic backbone, finding it at the moment in tourism. He mentioned the boom and bust phases of overheated places and also the fact that isolated islands, even if they are different in many aspects, do have something in common. That is valid even for Svalbard where no native population ever lived, and one of the reasons is that indigenous peoples stopped being indigenous a long time ago because of the contact with other cultures and the impacts of globalization. Longyearbyen is an interesting site since it combines attributes of a village with characteristics of a big city. Another point raised was the one of scales. To which extent is Longyearbyen a small-scale community? To which extent do people develop multiplex relations rather than uniplex? Eriksen asked what kind of narrative will be chosen in today's situation and he suggested that it could be the story about how we got to the point in which we are now and about the relation to nature where there has always been some kind of extraction activity. He pointed out that narratives create a sense of belonging (attachment rather than identity) and continuity.

## Peter Hemmersam, AHO



**Photo:** Zdenka Sokolíčková & Lisbeth Iversen

Peter Hemmersam, a professor at AHO, addressed «The Past, Present and Future of Arctic Cities».

It is not easy to answer the question: What is the Arctic? The answer is a long story. And what is a city in the Arctic is also a long story. There are cities in the Arctic that emerged as colonial cities projected into the Arctic, based on colonial, economic and strategic interests, and there are cities caused by industrialisation and the conquest of the harsh environment by man. One examples of this is Greenland, a part of Denmark, where a huge modernisation programme took place over several decades.

Peter Hemmersam has been working on this topic over time, and together with his colleague Janike Kampevold Larsen, he has edited a book called "The Future North- The Changing Arctic Landscapes" Peter addressed what he called Generations of Arctic Urbanism, divided into periods of influence from various actors and interests:

1. 'Paradise' in the North
2. Technocratic urbanism
3. Softening the North
4. Climatic cities
5. Place-specific urbanism

There was a high modernist period in the 50s and 60s especially in Russia, when many people were housed in modernist buildings. This led to a 'softening of the north', in what Peter calls the third face in this development, linked to the idea that northern settlements should attract southerners and workers to come to the north to take part in economic development



During the fourth phase, *the creation of Arctic urbanism and climatic cities*, cities were supposed to become great and attractive places to live in, and winter should become an asset. There is a lot of literature from this period proposing ways for people to enjoy the outdoors, places for social life and activities in the north, and there were plans for festivals to celebrate winter. Peter claims that we are entering the fifth period, called *Place specific urbanism*, which is not yet design-specific.



'The Arctic Edge'. The unique site between city and subarctic nature provides opportunities for a new connecting urban space in the form of an Arctic experimental arboretum (Image: Femke Peters)

### History of Arctic Urbanism

**There are certain pervasive characteristics in the history of urban development across the Arctic:**

- Indigenous people were urbanised and 'modernised'
- Social and economic development peaked when decolonisation accelerated elsewhere
- Large government development programmes
- Central planning towards a permanent developed state.
- Urban planning models were imported from the South
- 'Softening the North' to attract southern skilled workers and
- Urban and technical development happened through practical experimentation
- First: developing national expertise and technical solutions; Later: international knowledge exchange

**Arctic Urban design also developed over time, and was influenced by various trends.**

- Copy of southern architecture and urban design
- Compact urban form for protection, identity and community
- Avoiding underground settlements
- Opening up towards nature
- Living with nature and outdoor recreation
- Enclosed central communal and commercial spaces ('climate-controlled shopping malls')
- Attracting southerners that contribute to the local and national economy
- Protecting outdoor micro-climate produced by clustering buildings
- Wind clearance of snow
- The use of colour instead of vegetation to improve the visual appearance of settlements
- Special energy supply and distribution systems (utilidors and district heating systems)

In the 1970s and 80s, the international Arctic as a region emerged with the establishment of knowledge-sharing institutions, and we could see an Arctic urban design emerging. Ideal models of modern cities were implemented in the territory, but there is a need to balance between being over-specific and over-general when learning from other locations – both within and outside the region..

Architects are often attracted to radical solutions that reflect the extreme climate, but they often ignore the situation of the ground and the desires of local populations.

One example is the design of UNIS in Svalbard.



UNIS, Svalbard, Architects: Jarmund & Vignæs

We can see the inspiration from the wind and snow in the building, but it is not so well situated in the local community. The exoticification of the Arctic landscape is a licence to ignore the complexities of urbanism and local communities. This can be seen as a tension in the Arctic urbanism.

## Today: Remaking the Arctic City

- Many settlements are misplaced in terms of economic activity, and closed industries have depopulated towns
- Smaller communities are shrinking, while larger towns and cities are growing (AHDR, 2014)
- Cities are becoming less Arctic: New centrality as 'Capital(s) of the Arctic'
- Learning from the past: Acknowledging the terrain, social conditions, informalities and futures of city building in a transforming region
- Dangers of neo-colonialism (considering the Arctic as being on the brink of a 'state change')
- Balancing 'over-specific' and 'over-general'

## Arctic Urban Spectacular

There are tensions in Arctic urbanism today

1. *Utopian: Between architectural visions and actual city-building*
2. *Postcolonial: Between state interests and local and indigenous rights, culture and politics*
3. *Ecological: Between pristine ecosystem and contemporary urbanism*
4. *Provisional: Between camps and permanent cities*
5. *Experimental: Between laboratory and everyday lived space*

We see an urbanism of challenges( Climate change etc) in the Arctic Region.

## Longyearbyen today: An 'Ordinary' Town in the Arctic

If we look at Longyearbyen, this is now an «ordinary» town in the Arctic, understood as a modern town managing the everyday life in an everyday environment.

Plans and design shift from climate to climate- but it may not be the climate that is the most determining factor of Arctic communities, but rather their remoteness. This also makes the cities of the Arctic less exotic.

## Annlaug Kjelstad, Longyearbyen Local Council (Longyearbyen Lokalstyre)



**Photo:** Lisbeth Iversen

Keynote Presentation: Living on Svalbard - past, present, and future  
by Annlaug Kjelstad  
Head of Department, Planning & Building Permits

### Introduction

Longyearbyen has a young democracy and the Lokalstyre, established in 2002, is still in its early days. This means that organisational issues are still evolving, much the way a teenager is still searching.

Svalbard has a very specific context and is framed by the Svalbard Treaty, the Svalbard Law, the Environmental Protection Act etc. Planning in Longyearbyen is therefore both the same and different from other places. The area covers 241 km<sup>2</sup> and includes the city, areas for cabins, areas for dog kennels, research, and cultural and recreational areas.

Planning in Longyearbyen is based on the 2013 Local Community Plan and the 2017 Land-use Plan. More information can be found at <https://www.lokalstyre.no/planportal.486268.no.html> .

The main issues that were identified in the Community Planning were:

- local democracy
- work and business
- nature and environment
- urban development (given Arctic setting, must not only be attractive but also safe)
- public services
- infrastructure and logistics, including energy production
- culture and leisure (access to nature, culture and sports)

Longyearbyen today is an urban village in an Arctic setting. Longyearbyen is how it is today because of the history it has. It is both a small place (population of about 2,300) and a place with international dimensions. There is a high degree of turnover in the population and certain issues are symptomatic of much larger cities.

It is also often seen as a 'climate place' and not a normal place, which brings with it a certain number of issues in terms of planning. Longyearbyen is growing slowly in terms of population (and is expected to maintain its current size).

Current tensions come from various factors including: a growing number of younger children; increasing non-Norwegian, short-term workers; lack of housing for people in the growing tourism sector and/or other small companies (Ed Note: companies without company-owned housing for their workers).

There are many cultural activities, restaurants and pubs in Longyearbyen, but there is also a need for outdoor spaces that are good for children in an Arctic setting.

Planning for the future is based on existing reports and theses. The demographics and living conditions of various members of the community must be monitored more regularly in order to understand what the impacts from changes in the community and new developments are. At the same time, it may not be necessary for the Lokalstyre to know all about cause of change if they know about the effects and impacts and can react accordingly. Given this, what are the ways that the Lokalstyre can work with the social scientists in order to be most effective? The Lokalstyre needs to be able to react to issues that exist, not to know the root cause. The challenge is to manage problems effectively in the immediate term.

At the same time, there is a need to know more about climate change and how that affects us as individuals and as a society. Perhaps here planners and researchers can help make scenarios that will give the politicians the information they need in order to make the policies that will treat the very real issues Longyearbyen is currently facing.

Looking toward the future, Longyearbyen will continue to be shaped by the frames it already has as well as by national interests. There are questions about more/new regulations and control over people and nature/environment. The ongoing changes in the demographic will impact how the community works, but in what ways? The recent election has also brought in new politicians and alliances and may very well bring in new directions and decisions.

Other future challenges that need to be addressed are: climate change impacts on the built community and town infrastructure; what kinds of public services Longyearbyen can offer. In order to do this, planning will have to be based on facts and research - both in the natural and social sciences.

# SESSION 2

Current Research Projects

## Session 2 «Current Research Projects»

In session 2, ongoing and recent projects and research were presented by active members of the SSSI and invited speakers.

### Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators , AECO.

**Edda Falk**, communication officer in AECO - Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators presented the ongoing work and engagement of AECO. AECO is an international association for expedition cruise operators operating in the Arctic and others who support their vision of responsible, environmentally friendly and safe tourism in the Arctic.

One of the latest activities of the organisation is the Optimal Balance project, a collaboration between AECO, Visit Svalbard and Norwegian Institute for Nature Research, NINA. The project was funded by Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund. The focus of the project was to understand the optimal balance between Impact and benefits of tourism at Svalbard, and considering environment, safety, economic, cultural and social aspects.

**Photo:** Lisbeth Iversen



The main objectives of the Optimal Balance Project are:

- The Svalbard Cruise Study( [en studie](#) )

A survey of cruise tourism and the economic value for Svalbard, Led by AECO and Visit Svalbard

- Mapping existing research

A desk study of available relevant research on tourism in polar areas, led by NINA

- Research Workshop

The objective of the workshop in Longyearbyen was to identify relevant research needs. The workshop was led by Visit Svalbard, AECO and NINA.

The goal of the Optimal Tourism Balance Workshop was also to discuss, define and pitch research Projects that can help Svalbard to find the optimal tourist balance.

The workshop with more than 50 participants took place in Longyearbyen on September 11-13, 2019, and was organised by AECO, Visit Svalbard and NINA. A workshop report will be issued.

The cruise study Svalbard; an examination of the economic impact of cruise tourism( expeditional and conventional cruise) in Svalbard, was published in August 2019 the collaboration between Visit Svalbard and AECO. Here they address passenger spending and operator spending, and the economic contribution of both Expedition Cruises and Conventional Cruises. The report reveals that Expedition Operators and passengers spent 5,2 times more in total per passenger than Conventional Cruises. The report also showed that the economic contribution of Cruise Tourism in Svalbard is 110 million NOK.

## Dina Brode-Roger, KU Leuven



**Photo:** Zdenka Sokolíčková & Lisbeth Iversen

Dina Brode-Roger presented her PhD project entitled 'Longyearbyen, Svalbard: Identity in Change' which looks at issues of Identity of Place within the context of a changing climate. The project is hosted in Cultural Studies at KU Leuven and as an external PhD in Arctic Technology at UNIS. Based in Longyearbyen, 'Identity in Change' uses multiple methodologies and frameworks (referred to in the project as 'lenses') to examine located subjectivities as expressed in the many partial perspectives that constitute the community of Longyearbyen and in the varied imaginaries projected onto it from outside the community. The project looks at issues of local identity, sustainability, policy, media representation and the geographical and geopolitical significance of the territory within the context of a changing climate. Each of the 7 lenses, identified through a bottom up approach during fieldwork, examines a different aspect of Place and Place-Making: Ethnography - place as a lived experience; Science - place as an object of study; Geopolitics - place as a space that can be controlled, contested, created; Media - representation of place and the role of the Imaginary; Tourism - place as a product, an experience to be consumed; Heritage - the materiality of place and space through time; and Art - place in process / processing place. By using multiple lenses, the project aims to uncover a few of the many entangled layers of Place.

## Lisbeth Iversen, NERSC

Lisbeth Iversen, connected to the Nansen Environmental and Remote Sensing Centers, NERSC presented her ongoing work. Important research topics are ; Sustainable development and democracy, Stakeholder engagement, co-creation, placemaking, place-leadership and place-management and participatory processes, as well as knowledge-based planning, combining top-down with bottom-up approaches. Through the Horizon 2020 funded project INTAROS (Integrated Arctic Observing Systems), and as a co-leader of INTAROS WP4; Community-based monitoring, she is responsible for the ongoing case study in Longyearbyen, Svalbard, since 2016.





Through community-based observing and participation, the project aims to enhance community based observing programs for participatory research and capacity-building in the Arctic.

The project Useful Arctic Knowledge - Partnership for Research and Education (UAK) funded by the INTPART program, is closely connected to the work in the INTAROS project, also with Svalbard as one of the cases. The overarching goal of UAK is to build and maintain strong partnership between educational and research institution in Norway, USA and Canada. A research school was arranged in December 2018 in Longyearbyen, and a workshop with local stakeholders was part of the program. The latest funded project connected to the work in Longyearbyen, is CAPARDUS, (Capacity-building in Arctic technology and data utilisation to support sustainable development), and will start in February 2020.

Lisbeth presented her ongoing PhD Project( 2017-2021.) which is addressing «A holistic & proximal approach to sustainable urban – and place led development», with a focus on mobilization of people and cultural resources, undertaking an analysis of methods and tools connected to civil society mobilization, participation and democracy in sustainable urban development. Public Sector PhD with Arendal municipality in collaboration with Oslo School of Architecture & Design (AHO) as the graduating institution, and NIBR/OsloMet co-supervising.

## Eva Kotašková, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

Eva Kotaskova is a doctoral student at the Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic. She presented her PhD project “Enacting Environment on Svalbard Archipelago”. The central aim of this project is to understand the character of relational practices that constitute the experiences in Svalbard’s environment within the guided tours. Attentive to both the socio-economical context of developing tourist industry and the materiality of human-environment relations, this project aims to contribute to the ongoing discussions within the anthropology of the Arctic, tourism, and environment, as well as the non-human agency. Guided tours provide the starting point of the analysis focused on the character of the human – environment relations on Svalbard. While these relations have been thoroughly discussed in the context of indigenous communities, the research will also relate to these discussions focusing on how the narratives and practices of relations are formed with and in the absence of indigenous presence.



Photo: Lisbeth Iversen

## Ilan Kelman, UCL, London



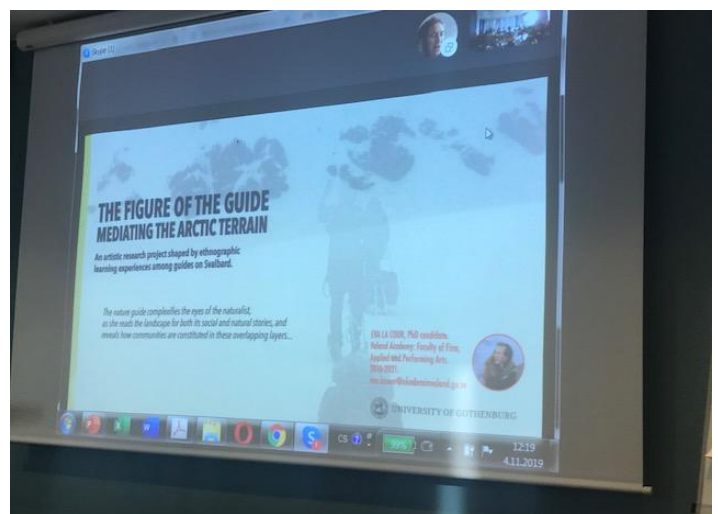
**Photo:** Zdenka Sokolíčková & Lisbeth Iversen

Ilan Kelman, PhD, presented the project Norway-Russia Disaster Diplomacy in the High North and Arctic funded by the Research Council of Norway's NORRUSS (Norway-Russia) programme 1 December 2018 – 30 November 2019. This project uses Norway-Russia relations on, for, and around Svalbard to examine how disaster-related activities might be used, or should not be used, more in the Arctic and the High North to foster peaceful links between Norway and Russia. Scenarios being explored include epidemics, oil spills, and nuclear material release. The new theoretical work will be (i) exploring informal connections, networks, and activities for disaster-related activities; (ii) determining which documented collaboration is real and which is for show; and (iii) considering connections between local and bilateral work. The new empirical work will be (i) the original case study of Arctic disaster diplomacy for Norway-Russia relations with respect to Svalbard and (ii) the three scenarios, as described above, although a strong baseline of work exists already for oil spills which will be built on.

## Eva la Cour, Gothenburg University

### Participated via SKYPE:

Eva la Cour PhD at Valand Academy of Art, Gothenburg University, SE, presented her practice-based artistic research project *The Figure of the Guide: Mediating the Arctic Terrain*. Designed as a time-space in which an audio-visual work-in-progress is repeated and refined, the project challenges continuous portrayals of the Arctic terrain as wild, natural spaces outside society, while attending especially to the region's neo-colonial location in the context of environmental crisis. The project's focus is the guide as pathfinder and mentor in landscapes of both social and natural stories, and how temporary Svalbard communities are constituted in the mix of these overlapping stories.



**Photo:** Lisbeth Iversen

Bridging anthropological debates on practice and the construction of knowledge – allowing for questions about skill, position, environment and infrastructure to emerge – with the use of collaborative live-editing, the research more precisely explores the figure of the guide in relation to different functions of authorship, and tool to analyze and produce a shift in focus from representation to mediation. The work is not classical ethnography, but deeply ethnographic in the sense of drawing from learning experiences on Svalbard since 2011.

## Alexandra Meyer, University of Vienna



Photo: Lisbeth Iversen

Alexandra Meyer is a doctoral student at the University of Vienna and a project collaborator in the EU project Nunataryuk: Permafrost thaw and the changing Arctic coast, science for socioeconomic adaptation. She presented her PhD project "The Societal Impacts of a Changing Environment in Longyearbyen, Svalbard: An Ethnography of Arctic Change". The project is guided by the question: what are the impacts of environmental change on Longyearbyen, and how does the community perceive and respond to these changes in the context of economic restructuring? The overarching topic is thus the combined effects of economic restructuring and environmental changes. In relation to this, Alexandra explores how the high transience of Longyearbyen's population influences people's attachment to place and perceptions and responses to environmental changes. The built environment is the interface between environmental changes and local communities, and urban planning and development are important tools for community responses to current and projected climatic changes. As one entry point for examining impacts, perceptions of and responses to change, the project focuses on the built environment, urban planning and development. Alexandra is a social anthropologist and the project is based on in total one year of ethnographic fieldwork in Longyearbyen, using qualitative methods such as interviews, participant observation, in addition to a quantitative survey.

## Cecilie Vindal Ødegaard, University of Bergen

Cecilie Vindal Ødegaard presented her research in the project “Place-making, ownership, and enactments of sovereignty in times of climate change”, initiated in May 2019. She presented her interest in the making of place in Longyearbyen in the transition from coal mining to tourism and a changing climate, where she seeks to explore four different, but interconnected, dimensions of place-making: 1) Work and housing, with a focus on the challenges and dilemmas of housing and house ownership in a context of economic and climatic change; 2) Ownership structures and the re-structuring of state ownership; 3) Enactments of “Norwegian presence” through explorations of the changing role of Store Norske and the management of mining infrastructures; and 4) Post-mining imaginaries exemplified by ongoing experiments with a circular economy and the dismantling of the Svea and Lunckefjell mines. Cecilie will conduct several periods of short-term fieldwork in Longyearbyen until 2023, relying primarily on expert interviews conducted both in Longyearbyen and on the mainland.



Photo: Zdenka Sokolíčková

## Andrian Vlahov, Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia

### Post-industrial development of Russian mining towns at Svalbard: a community study

Andrian Vlahov is Senior Lecturer with the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, Russia. His research project carried out since 2013 aims to bridge the social science gap by systematically describing the Russian community (or, to be more accurate, communities) in Svalbard. He has been using participant observation, in-depth interviews, social networks monitoring and media analysis to trace and capture the process of post-industrial transition taking place in Barentsburg and Pyramiden during the last few years.

He analyzes the structure of the local community, its take on the town development, and the strategies of industrial and non-industrial futures used by actors at different levels.



Photo: Lisbeth Iversen

What futures do these actors envision for the town of Barentsburg and why? How do they use and produce narratives relating to the past, in their efforts to build new futures and why? How do they use the built environment of Barentsburg in their strategies and why? What values do the legacies of a century of Russian mining operations represent to these actors and why – economic, cultural, geopolitical? My research builds on written documents, interviews,

continuous participant observation and the documentation of built environments from the period (2001–2019).

## Zdenka Sokolickova, UiO



**Photo:** Lisbeth Iversen

Zdenka Sokolickova PhD presented her two year long project entitled boREALIFE: Overheating in the high Arctic, started in February 2019, funded by the EU and hosted at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo. The project is mentored by Thomas Hylland Eriksen and it's focus lies in accelerated change (overheating) in terms of environment, economy and culture and identity, in Longyearbyen, Svalbard. The methods used are participant observation during long term fieldwork, and in-depth narrative and expert interviews. Zdenka is interested in finding out more about the perception of changing environment, the perception of economic shift from coal mining to global tourism, belonging to the place and level of integration. The very term „local community“ is being contested in her research and she is also looking into the „Svalbard dilemma“, namely the clashing environmental, economic and ethical concerns of people living in Longyearbyen.

## Ulrich Schilberg-Dipl.-Ing. Ass.



**Photo:** Zdenka Sokolíčková & Lisbeth Iversen

Ulrich Schildberg talked about structural changes in old mining areas through a comparison of past the past and future of the two regions Svalbard and the Ruhr Area, both based on mining. He addressed the question what could be the right strategy for the development of those regions after the end of coal-mining. His main question of research is if science and tourism will be the future for these areas.

The starting point of his thesis is that both regions were developed on the basis of coal. Before coal Svalbard was uninhabited and the Ruhr area was only a rural region. Urban development was organized by the mining companies. He will look into what could be the reason for further existence after the end of coal, especially for Svalbard with no indigenous population? Ulrich was showing examples of monuments, like the Zollverein World-Heritage-mine in Essen and the mines in Longyearbyen. Examples of settlements like the miners-settlement in Gelsenkirchen and the miners-settlement in Nybyen are organized in different ways, and represent different architecture and culture. He also pointed at similarities like the establishment of universities and research activities in both regions, with the new university in the former mining-town of Kamp-Lintfort, and UNIS in Longyearbyen. Ulrich is going to continue his research on similarities and variations in these to regions, and look into what could be possible futures for both of them.

## Young-Sook Lee, UiT



**Photo:** Zdenka Sokolíčková & Lisbeth Iversen

Young-Sook Lee (PhD in Sociology), Professor in Tourism Management, presented her work on Arctic tourism since relocating to UiT The Arctic University of Norway from Australia in 2014. With fast changing Arctic in environmental, political and socio-cultural aspects, tourism is becoming more and more prominent as the next industry following the extractive industry in the Arctic regions, a trait also apparent in Svalbard. She gave an account on the first book on Arctic tourism, of which she was the leading editor and published in 2017 entitled as *Arctic Tourism Experiences: Production, Consumption and Sustainability*. As the first dedicated volume on Arctic tourism, the book investigated the characteristics that are shared and differentiated between tourism at global and Arctic scales. In total, 20 chapters covered both European and North American Arctic destinations, illustrating various socio-cultural, marketing and management issues related to Arctic tourism. The second book on Arctic tourism was also introduced, which will focus on Asian consumption on Arctic destinations. Asia, as the world's biggest consumers, marks its presence in the fast-growing Arctic tourism and the new tourists' consumption behaviours and its theoretical framework will be covered in the second book.

# SESSION 3

Community-based Research on Svalbard:  
Defining Needs and Strengthening Cooperation



## Session 3 «Community-based Research on Svalbard: Defining Needs and Strengthening Cooperation»



**Photo:** Zdenka Sokolíčková & Lisbeth Iversen

Session 3 addressed the strategic objective of strengthening collaboration between inhabitants, the local community, private sector, architects and planners, and individual researchers and potentially also research institutions. Both Norwegian and foreign institutions that are involved in social science, humanities and arts research activities in Svalbard were addressed.

**Session 3** was moderated by Dina Brode-Roger and Laura Fergusson in collaboration with Annlaug Kjelstad (Longyearbyen Local Council)

In this session with the topic «Identifying Needs for Local Research and Strengthening Cooperation», the issue of research that influences and involves local community was addressed as well as possible ways of establishing cooperation between the SSSI and local communities and stakeholders on Svalbard. It was organized as a plenary session with a panel where all participants were invited to spontaneously contribute to the discussion after opening statements of the panelists and the introduction of key topics by the facilitators. The panel was composed of Annlaug Kjelstad, Head of the Planning Department at Longyearbyen Lokalstyre, Edda Falk, AECO, Peter Hemmersam, Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO), Lena Cappelen Endresen (Norwegian Research Council), and moderated by Dina Brode-Roger (SSSI) and Laura Ferguson (SSSI).

Longyearbyen Lokalstyre sees the current social science activity in Longyearbyen as a resource, and is supportive of collaboration with social scientists and the SSSI. Lokalstyret would like to see social scientists talking to the local communities to gain an understanding of the current issues of local importance instead of „guessing“ the community’s research needs, and to connect to existing research. Ideally, social scientists and the SSSI should contribute to creating knowledge that can serve as a basis for fact-based decision making and policies. While researchers often look at the **causes of problems**, local authorities often look for and needs **solutions to problems**. From the perspective of local authorities, it is always useful to learn about **effects and impacts** in order to plan better for the future. However, not all social science is relevant for planning and other way around.

Whereas issues of importance to the community are current, academic research is often planned well in advance and not able to react so fast to changing circumstances and emerging topics. From the perspective of the researchers, both good **time planning** and **funding** are vital. Funding schemes do not always correspond to communities' research needs.

A representative of AECO mentioned that tourism on Svalbard is getting a lot of media attention. The negative effects of tourism are well known and may in some cases lead to stronger regulations and even the closing of areas for tourism. It is hence in the industry's own interest to operate in a responsible and sustainable way. AECO is trying to think long-term and welcomes collaboration with scientists working on related topics that can assist the company to act in a sustainable way. Researchers planning to work on Svalbard should get involved with local stakeholders and communities at an early stage.

A representative of the Norwegian Research Council added that the practice needs to learn from the research, but the cooperation is fruitful also the other way round. **User engagement, user creation, and co-production** are crucial in contemporary social science research and most often a prerequisite for receiving funding. All the projects that were presented during Session 2 are externally funded and it is a good sign that LL is willing to help identify potential research questions.

Some **barriers for conducting social science research** on Svalbard were discussed. In this regard, the lack of an institutional base for social scientists on Svalbard and the lack of work spaces and housing were addressed. Social scientists must hence look for other solutions, e.g. individual contracts as visiting PhD-students at UNIS, using the library as a place to meet and for events, etc. Virtual meeting spaces for sharing and meeting and connecting people (such as Arctic Drinks and Discussions FB group) were mentioned as possible solutions.

When finding ways of collaborating between social scientists and the local community, we should look into already existing practices. LL cooperates with the Department of Arctic Technology and Arctic Geology at the University Centre in Svalbard (UNIS) on topics related to avalanches and permafrost. Maybe such a cooperation could also be developed in the social sciences? Lokalstyret is in the process of finding an agreement with the University of Tromsø (UiT) for cooperation and knowledge exchange and creation regarding social issues (probably more through quantitative research methods). The SSSI joining in on this cooperation and also including more qualitative approaches would be welcomed by all participants.

One of the basic strategies agreed upon is to **make research accessible and the outcomes openly available**. This would also help avoid research fatigue, overlapping and over-researched topics. The SSSI should play a leading role in keeping an overview over researched topics, ongoing research, and community needs. In this regard, it is important to make use of already existing infrastructure, such as the Research in Svalbard (RiS) database or the Planportal on Lokalstyret's website. When we browsed online the webpage of LL which included numerous reports and documents potentially useful for researchers, it was obvious that the content available in Norwegian is substantially richer than the content accessible in English. We briefly discussed how useful it would be if there were one **website or online platform** where open access journal articles, book chapters and monographs relevant to Svalbard would be accessible. Such a platform could be used also for **sharing research ideas**.

Furthermore, **local outreach and dissemination** is of major importance. The SSSI should ensure that research conducted on Svalbard is also discussed with and communicated back to the local communities. A space in Longyearbyen for exhibiting ongoing research and research results (on posters etc.) would be useful in this regard. The library could serve as such a space. Possibly Lokalstyret could rent a space somewhere for exhibiting research and results? A virtual meeting space, such as Arctic Drinks & Discussions on Facebook, was also brought up as a possibility. Research should furthermore be exhibited in public presentations.

Outreach and dissemination could be achieved also by establishing cooperation with Svalbard Seminaret, or inventing a similar tradition for presenting social science research. Again, the library could be a place to have these presentations. Another form of outreach is to visualize research results. Here social scientists should strive for cooperation and collaboration with architects and urbanists (AHO, DOGA) who can assist in visualizing research.

The SSSI should strive for **holistic and integrative research** that does not focus on specific topics in isolation, but takes into account the complex whole picture. Collaboration between researchers through the SSSI is one way of accomplishing this. As the presentations in the previous session indicated, most social science research on Svalbard is focusing on the local community level. However, Svalbard is not demarcated by its borders, but extends to Oslo and beyond. Local politics in Longyearbyen are constituted within a very narrow framework that is decided by national policies, often through top-down decision making. On the other hand, local politicians in Longyearbyen have a more direct connection to the central government. Social scientists studying Svalbard should hence **work across scales** and also “**study up**”, and conduct research among politicians in Oslo and other fields that have an impact on the local communities in Svalbard. Furthermore, researchers should look at how national policies are being implemented on the local level.

Another point discussed was how to behave in the community in order to foster good cooperation and not to create inadequate pressure and research fatigue (a point further discussed in the following session). Here the importance of coordinating research efforts and connecting to existing projects, as is precisely one of the intentions of the SSSI initiative, comes in. It was suggested to draft **community guidelines in terms of social science, humanities & arts research** which could be available on SSSI and LL website and future researchers would be welcome to consult those when planning fieldwork. The LL representative updated us on the **current issues that local authorities need more knowledge about**, e.g. top-down frameworks and how these impact Longyearbyen; new regulations and their impact on the local community (e.g. the plan to protect the area of nedre Adventdalen); design, quality and characteristics of good public outdoor spaces in the Arctic; developing a tool for monitoring and analysing a community in constant change (e.g. living conditions, costs, and control of assets); and the gap between community needs and social service provision (especially of social services aimed at children and youth). Another suggestion for further research was in terms of human rights of people living in an international territory, or sustainability goals in the context of Svalbard. This list of needs should be constantly updated and communicated to the SSSI, maybe through the Website of Lokalstyret or the SSSI website.

The issue of sharing thoughts and inspiration is related to the **sharing of data, topics** (possibly also identifying over-researched ones) and **results**. The SSSI should be used as a platform for working together on certain topics, for pooling the knowledge of individual researchers and the results of different projects. How to share and co-develop research questions relevant to the local communities is also a challenging task. Lokalstyret’s list of questions and needs should be used as a point of departure for this process.

If we are serious about our will to share the results with the public and policy makers, we have to bear in mind that **executive summaries** written in a language that avoids academic jargon are crucial. It would be beneficial for all parties if our research could help shape future policies and analyze/develop future scenarios. **How can research shape policy?** One possibility is through creating the concepts (we describe the matter and policy makers shape the measures to tackle it). The other possibility is that dissemination of research outcomes makes people who have political influence more knowledgeable. One concrete way for engaging different researchers, policy makers and the local community on Svalbard would be through the method of scenario-building.

As the AECO representative admitted, non-academic stakeholders are always looking for **applied research** and **concrete outcomes** to be used in decision-making process, whereas researchers often provide more philosophical and academic work. Through specific case studies research can be made more graspable and locally relevant. In the context of Svalbard, it would be useful to describe how climate change influences the communities, whether the phenomenon of „climate ambassadors“ works, or how much pressure tourism puts on local infrastructure.

An academic reply to the comment of the business industry was that research certainly should be useful, but it also should be **critical** and ought **not** to be **instrumental**. Especially on Svalbard, social science research is of extremely high interest to **Norwegian central authorities** and a more lively **public debate** should be triggered. Should SSSI boost the debate about Svalbard politics and policy?

# SESSION 4

Community-based Research on Svalbard:  
Topics, Methodologies and Theories

## Session 4 Community-based Research on Svalbard: Topics, Methodologies and Theories

Group discussion: topics, methodologies and theory - based on the outcomes of the discussions in Session 3  
Moderated by Zdenka Sokolickova & Alexandra Meyer

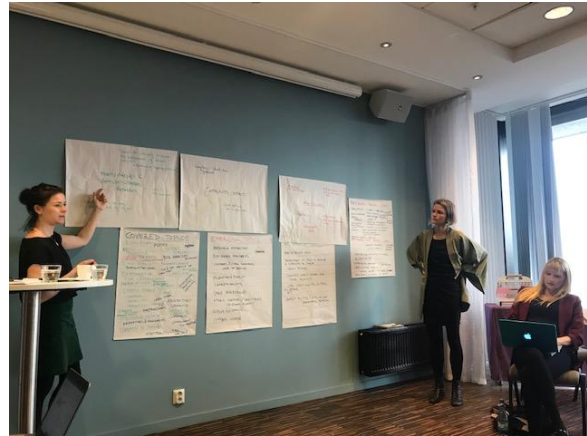


Photo: Lisbeth Iversen & Zdenka Sokolíčková

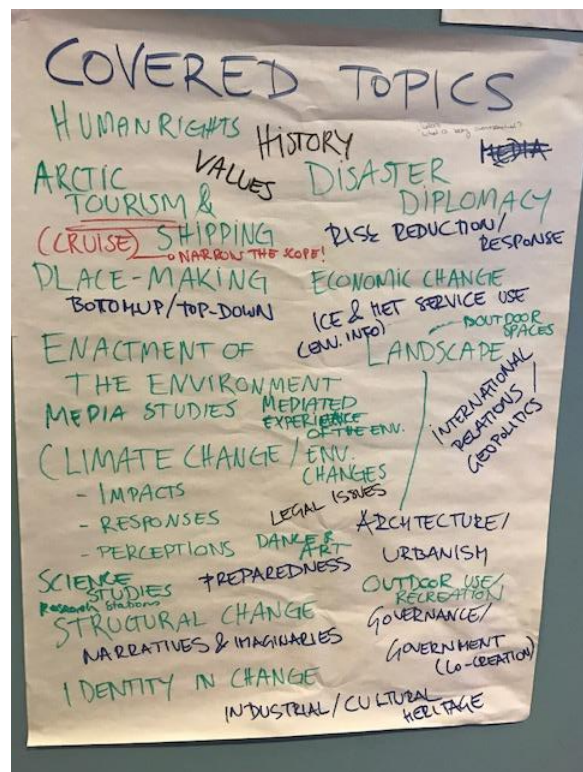
## Session 4 Workshop



Photo: Zdenka Sokolíčková

### Part 1: Group Discussion

The first part of the workshop was based on collating what participants were aware of and thinking of the emerging research topics and gaps. Taking the form of a roundtable discussion with the whole group, it mapped current and emerging topics, identified research gaps and explored the methods being used and potential methods not currently in use that may be appropriate for application in social science research in Svalbard.



A wide range of topics were listed as current topics, and these are presented in **Table 1**, below.

Topic	Notes/Elaboration
Arctic tourism	
Place-making	Bottom-up and top-down
Shipping	
Enactment of the environment	
Media studies	
Climate/environmental change	Impacts/responses/perceptions
Structural change	
Narratives and imaginaries	
Identity in change	
Cultural heritage	Including industrial cultural heritage
Disaster studies	Diplomacy, risk reduction and response
Economic change	
Landscape	
Built environment	Architecture and urbanism
International relations/geopolitics	
Human and environmental rights	
Governance/government/co-creation	
Preparedness	
Science studies	
Legal issues	
Outdoor spaces	Including nature use
History	

**Table 1: Social science topics currently researched in Svalbard.**

It was highlighted that cruise tourism in the general sense is over-researched, and that research in this topic should be designed to be more specific and have a narrower scope. There is still valuable research in this area to be conducted, but it must adopt a more refined approach and study more specific aspects in order to make new and more useful contributions.

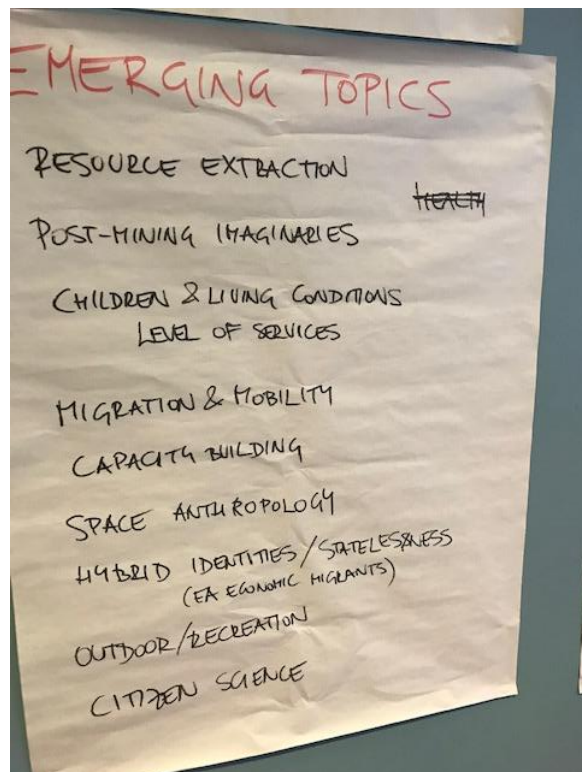


The emerging topics are presented in **Table 2**.

Topic	Notes/Elaboration
Resource extraction	
Post-mining imaginaries	
Children and living conditions	
Level of services	
Migration and mobility	
Capacity building	
Space anthropology	
Hybrid identities/statelessness	Including economic migrants
Recreation	Including outdoor space quality
Citizen science	

**Table 2: Emerging social science topics in Svalbard.**

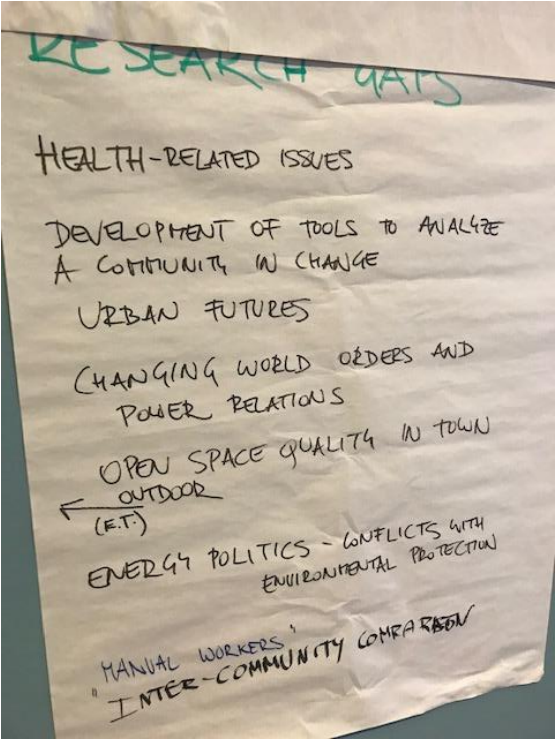
The emerging topics feature strong representation of community services, to meet Longyearbyen's current and rapidly changing demographics and their evolving needs.



This is also evident in the research gaps that the group identified, which are presented in **Table 3**.

**Table 3: Svalbard’s social science research gaps.**

Topic	Notes/Elaboration
Health	
Gender	
Tools for analysing rapid social changes	The normal planning tools are not good enough to respond to the rapid changes in Svalbard societies.
Urban futures	
Changing world orders and power relations	New power, new political/economic centres/ new consumers
Outdoor space quality	
Energy policy	
Conflicts with environmental protection	
Research on topics relating to manual workers	



The discussion then developed from research topics to research methods, first with a mapping exercise to identify the methods known to currently be used, the results of which appear in **Table 4**.

Qualitative	Quantitative
In-depth interviews	Surveys – live and online
Focus groups	Mapping
Participatory observation	Satellite data (e.g. ship tracking, snowmobile tracking)
Mapping	Analysis of secondary data (e.g. existing statistics)
Action research	Scenario building (this is an emerging method)
Visual methodologies (e.g. ethno-documentary, photo elicitation), physical embodiment; ethnography and auto-ethnography, discourse analysis)	

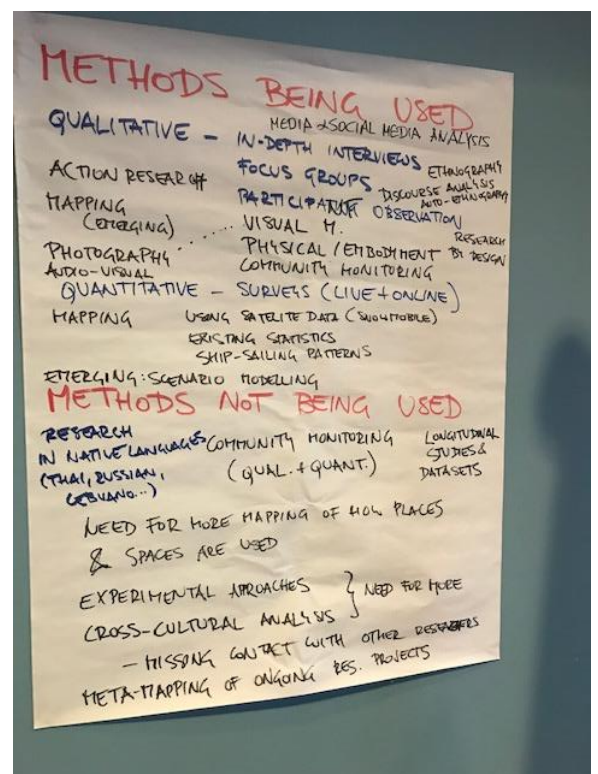
**Table 4: Social science research methods identified as currently practiced in Svalbard.**

Finally, Part 1 of the session concluded by looking to the future of social science methods, through the exploration of methods of which participants are aware that may be suitable for application in the context of Svalbard social science research.

The methods not currently being used are:

- Community monitoring (qualitative and quantitative)
- Mapping how people use and experience the spaces
- Experimental approaches combined with existing methods (It was suggested that such methods might be the most interesting methods we could apply.)
- Meta mapping of ongoing research projects (It was noted that this exercise is a starting point for that.)
- Longitudinal studies and datasets

It is considered that these methods would add something to the field and hoped that researchers currently working in Svalbard can be encouraged to diversify and adopt them, or that researchers currently using them elsewhere can be encouraged to apply in them in Svalbard.



## Part 2 – Breakout Groups



**Photo:** Zdenka Sokolíčková

For the second part of the workshop, participants divided into three breakout groups based on the primary interest of each individual participant. These were:

**Participatory and community-based research** – looking at issues including who the “community” is, what interests are being considered or not being considered and why they are or are not, and whether the community should influence the development of research projects.

**Community impact** – discussing long-term and short-term fieldwork issues, and what and how can we give back to communities?

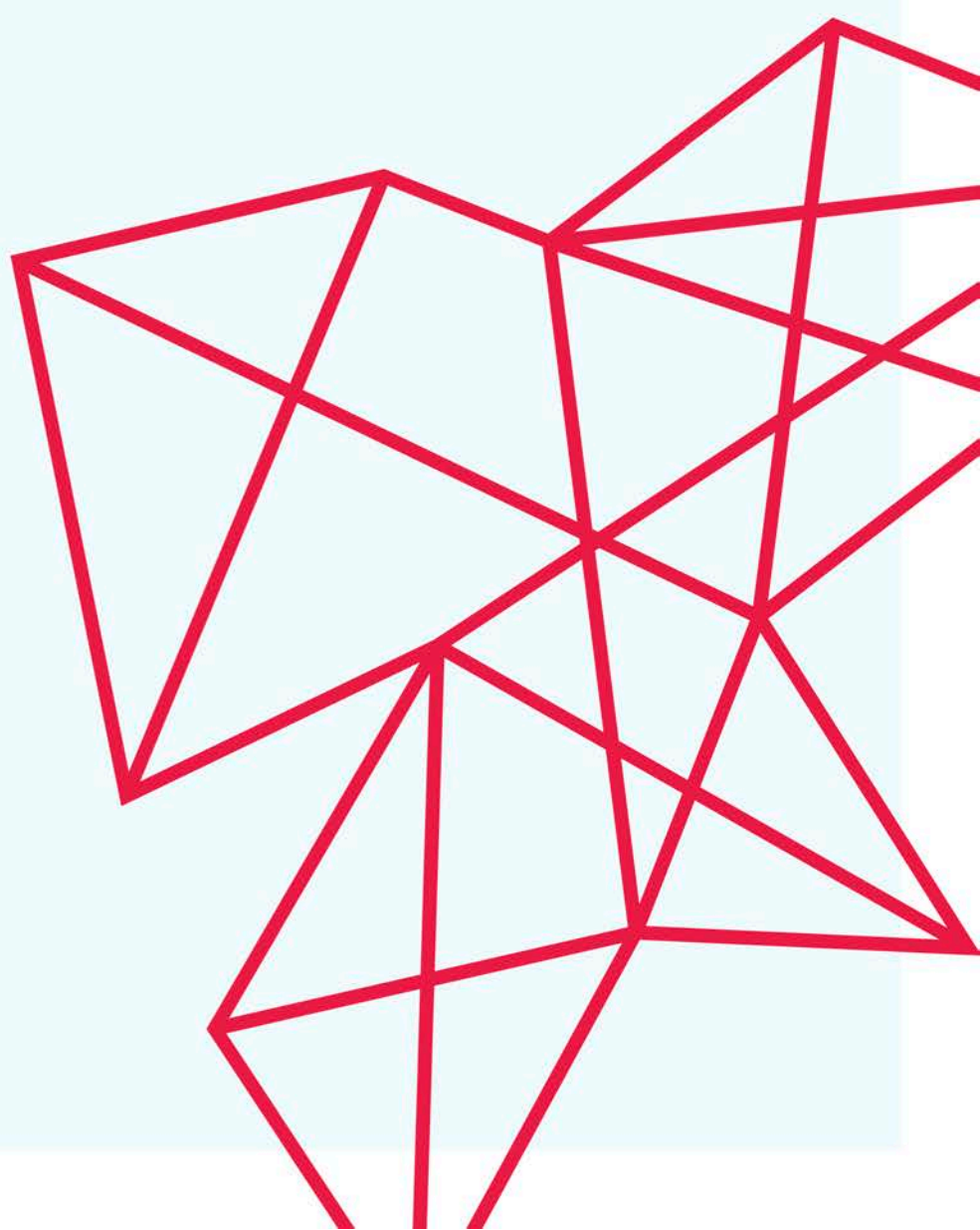
**Fieldwork** – exploring matters surrounding research with the same people, barriers to field research in Svalbard, access to the field, fieldwork challenges and how to overcome them, and mistakes being made and how to avoid them.

The following are notes taken from the **Fieldwork Breakout Group** which elaborate on what was written on the board and presented at the end.

- (i) Participant fatigue is a major issue in social science research in Svalbard. It was, however, specified that there is a difference between the same researcher going back year after year and cases of repetitive projects by different researchers contacting the same potential participants. This was defined as repeated contact vs. repeated solicitation. The former is considered a more acceptable practice than the latter. It was then highlighted that the issue of participant fatigue was an inevitable symptom of a high level of research being conducted in a small community. It was suggested that perhaps more social science that does not involve interviewing people could be conducted as an alternative. The matter of a high turnover of residents in Svalbard was identified as a positive aspect in the face of participant fatigue, as it means fresh participants. However there is also the negative aspect of participants leaving too quickly for long-term studies.
- (ii) It is difficult to coordinate between researchers. Difficulties include issues relating to ethics, such as an inability to exchange contacts, with the result that researchers are unaware of who in the community have already been interviewed on certain subjects. It was also mentioned that prior to SSSI there was a lack of knowledge on what other social science research projects were being conducted in Svalbard – as well as nobody to share the social science research in Svalbard experience with!
- (iii) It was also considered that people, particularly those outside of the SSSI, still don't realise that a lot of research has already been done in Svalbard and that there is a misconception of a lack of research there.
- (iv) It was raised that there is too much media attention on Svalbard and it negatively impacts social science fieldwork. The media attention feels intrusive to people and may make them less cooperative when a researcher requests their participation, so it is important to explain to people that what we are doing is research and that it is different from media interviews/filming and will be conducted in a different manner.
- (v) In terms of recruiting participants, some advice was given that it is more likely to succeed through phone calls than email communication, which it was suggested is part of a cultural factor.
- (vi) A logistical barrier to fieldwork is the lack of housing and office space. This contributes to people doing less and shorter fieldwork, and also in Barentsburg a lack of supplies was cited as a related issue.
- (vii) There is also a language barrier for non-Norwegian/non-Russian/non-Thai speakers in conducting research in those communities. It was specified that the Thai community is particularly excluded from research. Related to this are cultural barriers, if researching among a culture different from your own.
- (viii) Another excluded group that was identified is manual workers, partly because they are more difficult to establish communication with.
- (ix) Finally, it was noted that it has been proven by experience to be easier to make contact with and get participation from women than men, so there is also a gender bias in social science research in Svalbard that could lead to the research output being more reflective of the participatory community than the geographic community as a whole and skew the results.

# SESSION 5

The SSSI



## Wrap-up and session 5 with action points for the future

This session was an open discussion for SSSI members and those who wanted to stay and take part in reflections on future collaboration, on organizational issues related to the SSSI, and how the SSSI could provide support and guidance to social science, humanities and arts researchers interested in future work on Svalbard. This session was moderated by Lisbeth Iversen.



**Photo:** Zdenka Sokolíčková

During the wrap-up all participants gave a short reflection on the workshop or a closing statement. In the house-keeping session organizational issues and the agenda of the SSSI, as well as future activities, were discussed and agreed upon.

## Setting the agenda for the SSSI:

- The already existing **communication between the SSSI and the local community** should be upheld and strengthened to ensure the local relevance of social science research on Svalbard.
- The SSSI should strive for community-based and locally relevant research, and at the same time **remain critical**.
- Science-communication, **dissemination**, and outreach were important topics during the workshop and identified as areas the SSSI should focus more on in the future. The SSSI should work further on facilitating both virtual and physical dissemination.
- The variety of projects presented during this workshop shows the **multiple perspectives** of Svalbard social science research and the importance of exploring communities on Svalbard from different angles.
- The SSSI should work across **scales**. The focus on the local community scale should be complemented by studying up and focusing on national and international scales. The next SSSI workshop should hence both zoom in and zoom out: working in-depth on specific topics but also contextualize these within broader frameworks.
- The SSSI should not solely focus on Longyearbyen. Our newest members study the Russian settlements. **Comparisons** between the different settlements on Svalbard are encouraged.
- The SSSI should continue with the **mapping of existing and ongoing research** and the identification of research gaps. This meta-mapping should be made publicly available, through the SSSI website and maybe in the form of a report/article.
- The SSSI should make an effort to **facilitate social science and humanities research** on Svalbard and encourage UNIS and Ny Aalesund to accept all researchers who need to be present in Svalbard in order to carry out their research.
- The SSSI should use the existing connections to and collaboration with AHO and DOGA to **visualize** research and findings.

### Concrete next steps:

- The SSSI will become an association (“forening”).
- The SSSI will facilitate community-based workshops on Svalbard. Upcoming in February 2020 is a public presentation of first results from three projects at UNIS, and a public workshop/presentation should be organized as part of the planned SSSI seminar in November 2020.
- Specifically, the SSSI will apply for funding through the Svalbard Strategic Grant for a seminar/workshop in Longyearbyen in November/December 2020. The workshop will consist of sessions where the researchers work in-depth on specific topics and cases, working with texts and analysis, and a public workshop for the presentation and discussion of findings.
- The SSSI will look into whether it could establish an IASSA working group.
- This workshop report and the short presentations will be made publicly available on the SSSI website. A snapshot executive summary of the report will be translated into different languages and disseminated both locally and throughout the scientific community.
- The SSSI will create a mailing list intended to keep those interested in the network updated on its activities.
- The SSSI will look into better tools for internal communication and possibly move the website to another host.



## List of Participants:

### Invited Speakers:

Thor Bjørn Arlov, NTNU/UNIS, NTNU  
Thomas Hylland Eriksen, UiO  
Peter Hemmersam, AHO  
Annlaug Kjelstad, Longyearbyen Local Council, ( Longyearbyen Lokalstyre)

### From the SSSI-group:

Lisbeth Iversen, NERSC and AHO  
Laura Ferguson, Queen's University Belfast  
Alexandra Meyer, University of Vienna  
Zdenka Sokolíčková, UiO  
Dina Brode-Roger, KU Leuven  
Cecilie Vindal Ødegaard, UiB  
Eva Kotoskova, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic  
Andrian Vlahov, Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia  
Eva la Cour PhD, Gothenburg University, SE via Skype  
Ulrich Schildberg

### Other Participants:

Ilan Kelman, UCL, London  
Young-Sook Lee, UiT  
Stein Sandven, NERSC  
Edda Falk, AECO  
Lena Cappelen Endresen, Forskningsrådet  
Morgan Alexander Ip, AHO  
Berta Morata, LTU, Sweden

# Svalbard Science Conference - POSTER SESSION



SSSI had a poster session at Svalbard Science Conference 2019



# SSSI

The Svalbard Social  
Science Initiative, SSSI

**- a side meeting to the  
Svalbard Science  
Conference 2019**

