

Re-evaluating Svalbard's human past in view of looming social change

Dr. Frigga Kruse

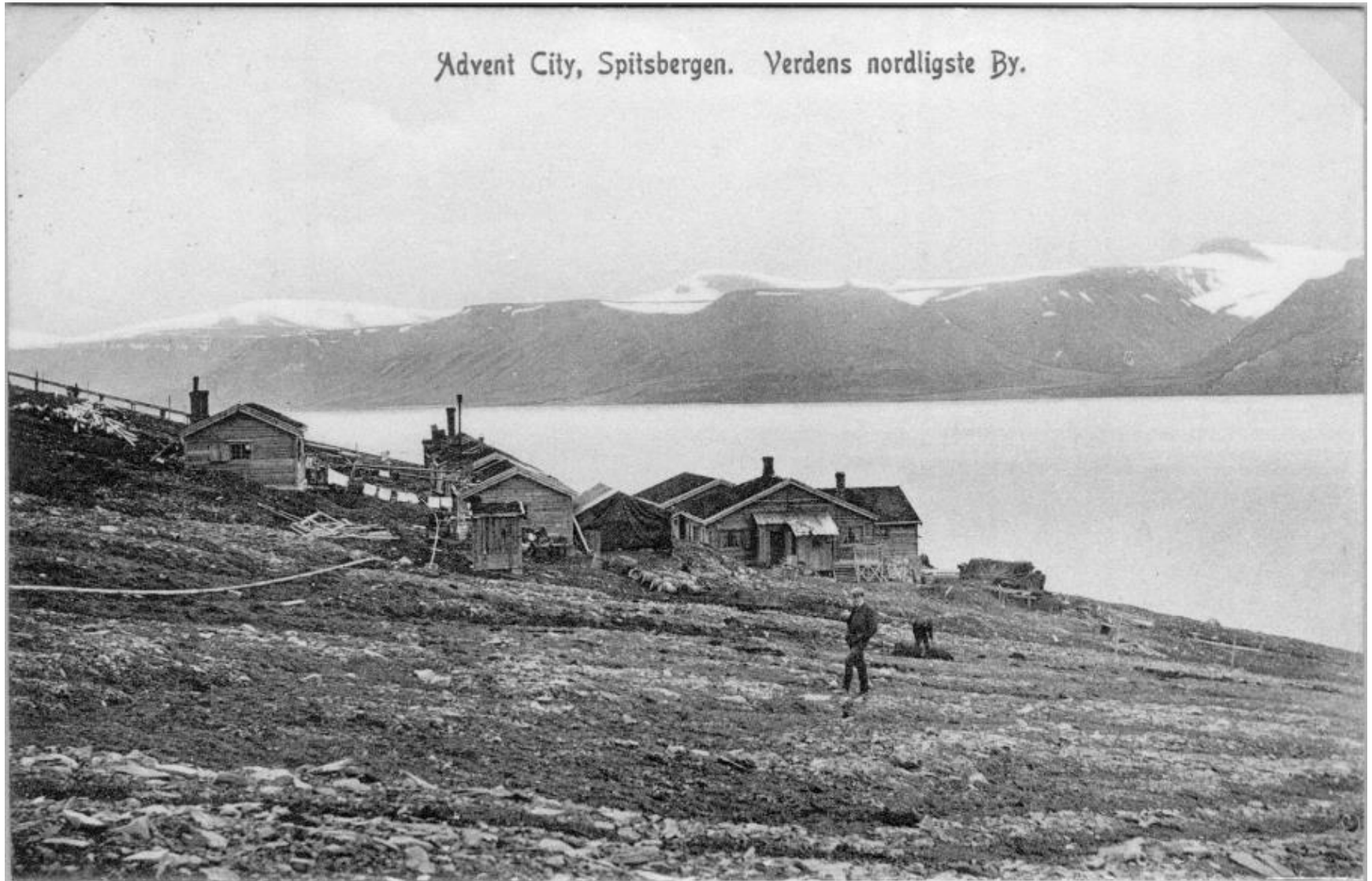
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The case study



Source: Norwegian Polar Institute, Photo Library, np002343

1. Advent City, an English coal mine and mining settlement in Svalbard (1905 – 1908)

The site boundaries



2. Location of Advent City, opposite Longyearbyen in Adventfjord, Svalbard

Trench M2 (midden of the pigsty)



3. Eye-catching vegetation



4. Capping layer of animal bones (predominantly cattle)



5. Five different contexts



6. Few finds

Trench M1 (middens of the horse stable)



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7. Trench size reduced (from 25 % to only 2 sqm)



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8. Terminated in permafrost



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9. Several animal bones; very few finds



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10. Horse dung a valuable biocultural material

Trench Z1 (dump of workers' barrack)



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11. Very orderly in wooden boxes



© Gary Nobles

12. A lamp holder recognisable as such



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13. Predominantly ash



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14. Ptarmigan leg bone in a wire

Special surface finds



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15. Aerial ropeway carrier from 1903



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16. Glass bottles for alcohol



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17. Slop pail with bullet holes



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18. Spare parts for fox traps

An upcoming conference: *Human Agency and Global Challenges: Re- Centering Social Change in Archaeology*

(Source: UiB. 2021. Call for papers: Human Agency and Global Changes. Available at <https://www.uib.no/en/rg/materiality/>)

**They ask,
„How does
change
happen?“**

**I wonder,
„Could I
submit a
paper
here?“**

Materiality of rapid change

„Identifying the nature and influencing factors of rapid change (climatic events, migrations, demographic collapse, etc.), the response from individuals or societies and the resulting impact“

(Source: UiB. 2021. Call for papers: Human Agency and Global Changes. Available at <https://www.uib.no/en/rg/materiality/>)



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19. Discovery and claiming of a **resource** (coal) in 1901



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20. Formation of **companies** (1901, 1904)



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21. Abandonment of the mine in 1908;
lasting **environmental impact**

Materiality of resilience and adaptation

„Strategies of gradual adaptation, sometimes in spite of considerable social or environmental challenges, and the circumstances under which balanced relations between people with the environment are achieved“

(Source: UiB. 2021. Call for papers: Human Agency and Global Changes. Available at <https://www.uib.no/en/rg/materiality/>)



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22. Exposed position



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23. Undesirable machinery

24. „Unrest“ followed by changed provisioning



© Frigga Kruse

Materiality of trajectories to and from inequality

„Defining factors contributing to (un)equal social relations and the role of worldviews, social and ritual traditions and technological innovations in altering power balances. Is a decrease in hierarchical relations always a „collapse“ and is it possible to write narratives of resistance?“

(Source: UiB. 2021. Call for papers: Human Agency and Global Changes. Available at <https://www.uib.no/en/rg/materiality/>)



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25. **Differential** house building



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26. **Alcohol** sold to the workers by the company store

27. **Newspapers** read by the Scandinavian workforce

© Geert van Oortmerssen



Materiality of scales of transformation

„Bringing together multiple scales of social action by looking at the same processes from micro or macro perspectives. What can big data models gain from site or regional narratives (and vice versa)? And how can complex multi-scalar models best be modelled and presented?“

(Source: UiB. 2021. Call for papers: Human Agency and Global Changes. Available at <https://www.uib.no/en/rg/materiality/>)

The individual



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28 The stable-hand at work



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29 The worker at rest

The company



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30 Mining machinery from Great Britain



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31 Less crucial equipment from Norway

Third parties



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32 They took the whole outhouse...



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33 ... but left the slop pails!

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**Advent City
does not fit
the call
easily.**

Why not?!

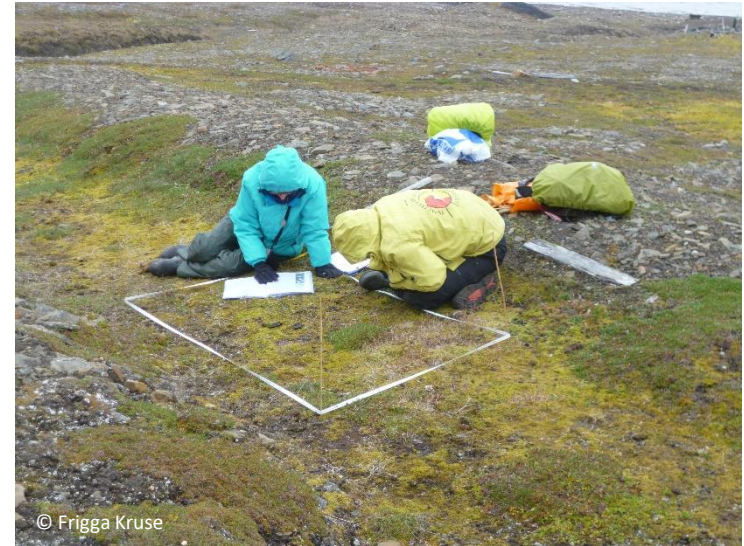
- Recent timeframe?
- Basic unit the company?
- Commercial focus?
- ...?

Arguably, recent history better reflects present processes, in which consumerism is an pivotal driver.

Continued research potential



34. Waste management at Advent City



35. Vegetation surveys at Advent City and elsewhere



36. Excavation/sampling of a midden at Dolerittneset, Edgeøya

Continued outreach potential



1908 AD

Advent City: City of Arctic Firsts

Resurrecting a Ghost Town

Voices from the Past

Very Real People

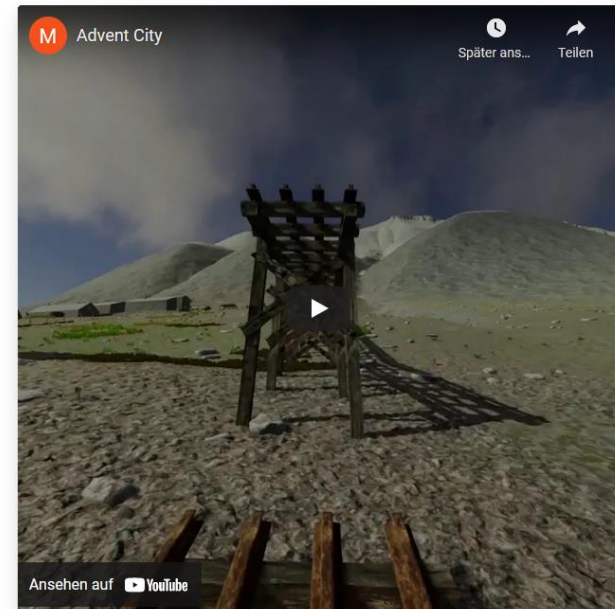
1908 AD

The order to down all tools came in late summer 1908. The miners now abandoned Advent City, and coal would never be extracted here again. At the end of August, the midnight sun touched the horizon, counting down the last mild days of an Arctic autumn. Soon, ferocious storms of the polar night would claw at the forlorn buildings.

Our digital visualisation pinpoints that moment when the last ship of the season had steamed out of Adventfjorden to return the British and Scandinavian pioneers of Advent City to their respective homes. Did they know they would not be coming back? The small mining settlement would soon be dismantled and reused elsewhere. Svalbard was after all industrialising quickly now.

Our fly-through passes the company's proud claim sign on the shore and the large engine house for the gas producer plant before reaching the prefabricated wooden buildings of the mining settlement. The construction of the manager's house, the workers' barracks, the store, and others began in 1905. The piggery was among the last to be erected, while some like the surgery were never put up. The double-acting incline transported materials to and coal from the mine that lay ca. 110 m above sea level. The small smithy was essential for repairs to keep the work going.

*You will probably spot the notice boards here and there on which we pinned some historical photographs. The fly-through does not allow time to linger, but additional details will be accessible in the **Virtual Reality (VR) of Advent City**, which we are bringing to Longyearbyen in August 2019. Feel free to contact us for more information.*



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