



university of  
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## **Human Impact at Advent City (RiS ID 10516)**

August 5 – August 16, 2016

### **History in Photographs II: environmental impacts**



Reindeer hunt at Sassanelva (Photo by S.A. Fangen: NPI, Photo Library, np034472)

Kruse, F. 2016. Human Impact at Advent City (RiS ID 10516). History in Photographs II: environmental impacts. [Unpublished report.] Groningen: University of Groningen, Arctic Centre.

### **About this report**

The aim of this report is to outline presently known evidence for the **local environmental impact** at Advent City from the initial development of the mining settlement via its operations and abandonment to the removal of all houses, plant, machinery, stores, etc. The period in question is 1901 till 1917.

### **Sources**

The following sources have been consulted:

Doel, N. 1922. America in Spitsbergen. The romance of an Arctic coal mine. Vol. 2. Boston: Marshall-Jones Company.

Hoel, A. 1966. Svalbard. Svalbards historie 1596-1965. Vol. 2. Oslo: Sverre Kildahls Boktrykkeri.

Kinck, J. www.kinck.no

Kruse, F. 2013. British mining, exploration, and geopolitics on Spitsbergen, 1904-53. Groningen: Barkhuis.

Norsk Folkemuseum. Fotosamlingen. Anders Beer Wilse.

Norwegian Polar Institute. Photo Library.

Oglethorpe, M. Private collection.

Summer 1901

A/S Bergen-Spitsbergen Kulgrubekompani expedition of **7 men** (Hoel 1966: 554)

Summer 1903

**1 skipper** and **5 crew** plus Bergen Co. expedition of **15 men** (Hoel 1966: 554)

**levelling** at pithead → physical change for the vegetation

**stockpiling coal** → physical and chemical change for the vegetation

men shot **SEALS** for blubber as lighting in the mine (Braastad nd, in Kruse 2013: 183)



Photo probably S.A. Fangen, in Hoel 1966: 557

Summer 1903

**stockpiling coal** →  
physical and chemical change for  
the vegetation

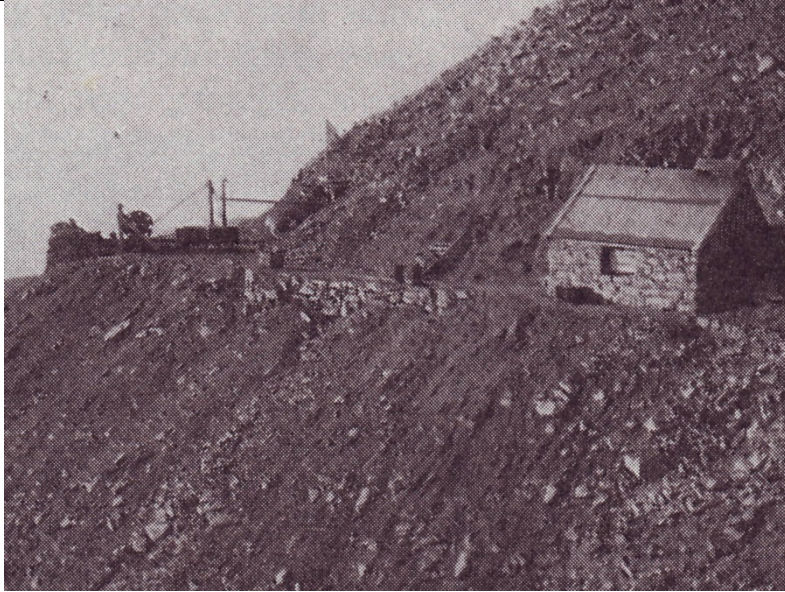


Photo probably S.A. Fangen, in Hoel 1966: 560

Summer 1903

**levelling** at pithead →  
physical change for the vegetation

Summer 1904

Spitzbergen Coal & Trading Co. expedition of **26 men**, including 5 English (Hoel 1966: 557)



Norwegian Polar Institute, Photo Library, np003419 (S.A. Fangen)

Summer 1903 or 1904

**quarrying beach sand** → this  
probably did not have a large  
impact, but it is important to keep  
the extraction of geo-resources in  
mind



Norwegian Polar Institute, Photo Library, NP034472 (S.A. Fangen)

Summer 1903 or 1904

**hunting REINDEER** at Sassanelva  
 → it is not known if the hut in the background was one of the two company hunting hut: probably not as a pre-fab can be expected (see below)

1905

summer: approx. **80 Scandinavians** and **14 English**, constructed seven houses, started year-round operations (Hoel 1966: 559)

**levelling** during house construction → physical change for the vegetation

winter: **24 men** [unclear if 'men' were always workers excluding officers; number could have been higher], working by paraffin lamps (Hoel 1966: 561)

**wintering**: environmental impacts now year-round

**paraffin** lamps: seal blubber no longer used?



Norwegian Polar Institute, Photo Library, np002341 (S.A. Fangen)

Summer 1905

**levelling** during house construction → physical change for the vegetation



Norwegian Polar Institute, Photo Library, np002339 (S.A. Fangen)

Summer 1905:

**levelling** during house and track construction → physical change for the vegetation

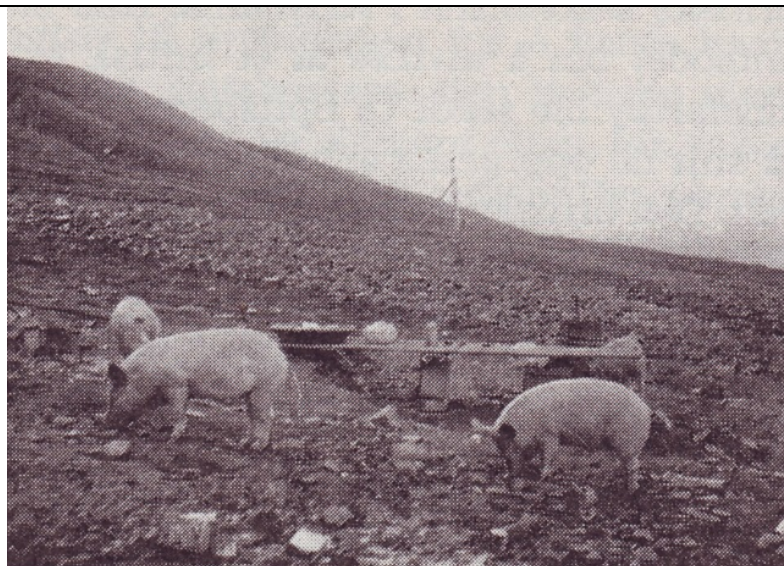


Photo S.A. Fangen 1905, in Hoel 1966: 563

Summer 1905:

pigs were imported as living provisions → introduction of non-native species and maybe of associated pests or parasites, foraging a physical impact on vegetation

1906

summer: lengthy period without a manager, **short of food** for a month (Munroe 1906, in Kruse 2013: 177)

end-of-summer report (Husmoderen 1906): apparently peaceful territory around the mining camps → was hunting self-regulated... or had animals become too scarce to hunt?!, **blue fox skins** very expensive at 90 to 100 kroner, **4 HORSES, 2 PIGS, 4 DOGS, 1 GOAT, provisions** in abundance, workers live on **salted reindeer meat** and **dried fish**

winter: mention of **two hunting huts**, report of only **1 REINDEER** killed by an employee, **24 REINDEER** got from Arctic Coal Company, provisions at first 50kg of meat per person, then down to 30kg per person: meat running low: signs of **SCURVY**, strike after April 1, 1907: 40 armed men vs 20 NOR men & 2 NOR women & 7 ENG men and 1 ENG woman, end-of-winter skins: **123 REINDEER, 7 BLUE FOX, 8 WHITE FOX**



Norwegian Polar Institute, Photo Library, NP032551 (Arve Staxrud)

(1913)

**hunting hut** of the Spitzbergen Coal & Trading Co. (claim sign on the wall), location unknown



Norsk Folkemuseum, Fotosamlingen, A.B. Wilse, NF.W 05514

Summer 1906

Did the **WATER PIPE** (damming of meltwater streams) constitute any environmental impact?



Norsk Folkemuseum, Fotosamlingen, A.B. Wilse, NF.W 05521

Summer 1906

There appears to be straw or hay bales on the left of this picture.

**importing STRAW/HAY** → introduction of non-native species

**importing PESTS?** → introduction of non-native species



Norsk Folkemuseum, Fotosamlingen, A.B. Wilse, NF.W 05522

Summer 1906

**importing HORSES** → introduction of non-native species, introduction of parasites

**importing STOCKFISH** → what would be the implications?

**catching local FISH?** → reducing local populations





[www.kinck.no](http://www.kinck.no), KINCK\_10028

Winter 1906/7

**importing DOGS** → introduction of non-native species, introduction of parasites (rabies?!)

what did the dogs eat?, did they run free?, what was their impact on local wildlife?



[www.kinck.no](http://www.kinck.no), KINCK\_10021

Winter 1906/7

Advent Bay appears to have been **frozen over** → reminder how **waste** could be got rid of: dump it on the ice, upon thawing, it will sink or wash away



www.kinck.no, KINCK\_10055

Winter 1906/7

Skins are pinned onto the walls of the store house.

These appear to be **REINDEER skins**. Seal skins would not have 'legs'.

1907

summer: the men reported that they had never eaten so well, although the company gave them exactly the **same food** with the exception of **FRESH BEEF** (Black 1907, in Kruse 2013: 194)

talk of but no evidence for netting **beluga**



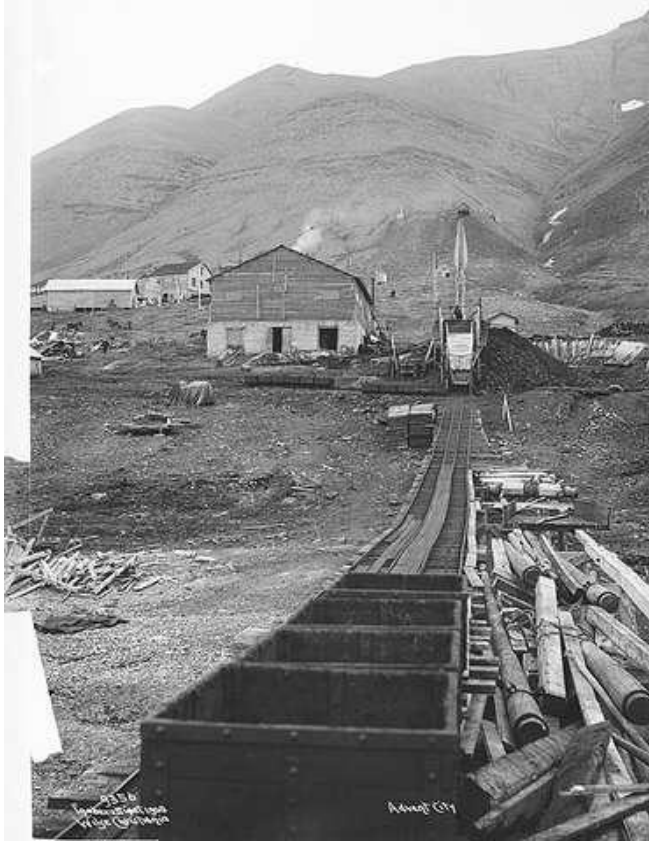
038-070 (Miles Oglethorpe private collection)

Summer 1907

Infrastructure at the beach was rudimentary. Did the company ever have much of an impact on the **shallow water**? By losing loads or dumping **waste**?

1908

June: the American steamer delivered a cargo of four tins of **ANTHRACITE COAL** and about 900 pounds of **CARBIDE** to Advent City. (Dole 1922: 359.



Norsk Folkemuseum, Fotosamlingen, A.B. Wilse, NF.W 09356

Summer 1908

This is currently the best photo of the stables and pig house (left of engine house). It is assumed that **REFUSE** (dung and other organic waste) was just pushed outside through hatches in the walls.

**animal fodder / dung** → introduction of non-native species and parasites



Norwegian Polar Institute, Photo Library, np003825 (Orvin Anders, 'fangsthytte')

post-1908

It is likely that the last remaining building ("official building") at Advent City was used by wintering hunters in 1908/9 and 1909/10.

**hunting** → decimation of local animal populations

1909

The winter watchmen were not paid and therefore started to take movable possession (Kruse 2013). Subsequently, the Arctic Coal Company and A/S De Norske Kulfelter Spitsbergen (Hiorth) removed most of the houses, plant, and machines. This concluded in 1917.