



SSSI-NERSC Workshop Report: Svalbard in a local and global perspective

Longyearbyen 29 - 31 October 2021



NERSC Technical report no. 425
15 February 2022

Citation:

Iversen, L. 2021. SSSI-NERSC Workshop Report: Svalbard in a local and global perspective. NERSC Technical Report no. 425, 15 February 2022.

Author:

Lisbeth Iversen, Nansen Environmental and Remote Sensing Center (NERSC), Public Sector PhD Candidate at The Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO) and SSSI.

Funded by:

Svalbard Science Forum through the Svalbard Strategic Grant

Project number: 311275-SSF

Layout:

Opheim, F. RGJ Holding



BACKGROUND

This workshop was part of the project *Svalbard in a local and global perspective: an interdisciplinary science workshop* organised by the Svalbard Social Science Initiative and NERSC, funded by the Svalbard Strategic Grant in 2019.

Svalbard in local and global perspective: an interdisciplinary science workshop organised by the Svalbard Social Science Initiative

Primary and secondary objectives of the project

The primary objective of the project was to develop innovative collaboration between Svalbard-related social science research and the local community in Longyearbyen in the context of climate change and its impacts, which is important for planning and adaptation.

Secondary objectives were to:

- a) identify connections or overlaps between the diverse projects represented within SSSI in order to better coordinate research efforts;
- b) share preliminary results in order to plan further research;
- c) coordinate the dialogue with local actors in Longyearbyen in order to communicate in a constructive way;
- d) strengthen existing collaboration regarding all aspects of Svalbard-related social science research, including links to natural science projects, especially projects dealing with climate changes in the Svalbard region;
- e) plan and develop new projects to extend the ongoing work in the SSSI group, where we can benefit from working together and engage local actors in an organized manner.

In order to develop innovative collaboration between Svalbard-related social science, natural science, and the local community in Longyearbyen, the main activity was to plan and organize a 3-day workshop with participation from the Svalbard Social Science Initiative (SSSI), NERSC, Oslo School of Architecture and design (AHO), invited experts and the local community in Longyearbyen. The workshop intended to develop new collaboration across scientific disciplines which is important for planning the future of Svalbard community, and thereby contribute to the SSF's strategic objectives.





The workshop was a follow-up of the first workshop organized by SSSI on 4 November 2019 as part of the Svalbard Science Conference 2019. <https://svalbardsocialscience.com/report-from-the-sssi-workshop-at-the-svalbard-science-conference-2019-in-oslo/>

Based on the funding we received for this workshop project, we adapted to the challenging Covid situation, prepared possible working topics, and held a monthly digital meeting to prepare for the physical workshop in Longyearbyen in October 2021. The workshop was based on the work of the three working groups established to plan the program, the information, and the dissemination activities, as well as the practical part of the workshop. Over time we have addressed questions on how researchers and community services can respond to Longyearbyen`s rapidly changing needs, and to exploit the potential of multidisciplinary researchers working together with different theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. Co-creation with the local community has been essential for this workshop project, and the mingling event, as well as dissemination events in Longyearbyen, were important arenas to share information, co-create knowledge and anchor future collaboration.

The sharing and collaborative interpretation of already collected data within the SSSI group, including the verification/falsification of developed hypotheses and findings constituted an important part of the workshop. Part of this work was followed up in the next side-meeting and workshop in Oslo, 4 November 2021.

The workshop was accompanied by public outreach activities and the planning of new projects in collaboration with local actors.

Participants came from Norway and Europe, and more than two thirds were early-career scientists from various research fields. The workshop also facilitated the development of joint publications and collaborative projects.



Changes in the project due to Covid 19

Because of the Corona situation, the planned event connected to the workshop and some of the outreach activities in Longyearbyen, were postponed until October 2021. As part of the preparation process for the physical workshop, SSSI ran an online seminar on 10-11 December 2020 for members, to better understand each other's work and to begin to discuss potential future collaborations and the establishment of various working groups. This online workshop was prepared by Dina Brode-Roger and Lisbeth Iversen.

This digital networking activity was an attempt to keep up the dialogue and good spirit in the network, although times were challenging through the Covid lock-down period in 2020 and 2021. The main program of the online seminar was presentations from members and group discussions based on breakout themes prepared after former workshops and SSSI meetings.

Some suggested SSSI Working Group themes were:

Local Topics

Keywords: Urban Planning, Cultural Diversity, Svalbard post COVID-19, Quality of Life Issues, Material Culture, Climate Change, Environmental Issues, Tourism

This working group focused on what is happening in Svalbard locally.

Global Issues

Keywords: Geopolitics, International Law/Law of the Sea, Sovereignty, Climate Change, Fisheries, Complex Governance

The working groups dealt with various aspects in which Svalbard is, on the one hand, implicated in, and affected by, a range of global processes, while, on the other hand, having outstanding global visibility of its own. Svalbard's globally unique legal position as laid down in the Svalbard Treaty produces a particular intense link between global and local dynamics.



Research, Policy and Practice

Keywords: Methods, tools, collaboration, co-production, inclusivity, interdisciplinarity, engagement, knowledge exchange, impact, ethics.

The Research, Policy and Practice working group was established to explore and improve the processes and frameworks steering social science research in Svalbard, from concept through to implementation. It provides a forum to improve research practice, support collaborative opportunities and increase impact. Through the development of a range of activities, the group will focus on identifying best practice and encouraging innovative thinking and initiatives that will have a positive impact on society in Svalbard.

These are topics that will be addressed in the coming year, together with the more concrete initiatives and co-writing projects that have been started along the road.

Some highlights of SSSI activities during the Covid19-period:

SSSI became a formal organization on February 24 2020 and has grown substantially, with 27 members by the end of 2021. Monthly digital meetings have been an important networking activity in order to get to know each researcher, to build trust, and to keep up the engagement for Svalbard and related research- and outreach activities.

The core values of our work are collaboration, co-creation, and community involvement. SSSI has engaged in collaboration projects in Longyearbyen, Digital Community Dialogues, hearings, poster exhibition, presentations, and sessions, as well as participated in international conferences, including:

- "Science for Society" at the SSC2021 to ensure more visibility and integration to Svalbard research;
- Panel at ICASS (online);
- Presentations at AASSW 2021;
- Presentation at the Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference, September 1, by the Imaginaries Group.

Generally, SSSI is getting better known, allowing the organization to continue to grow and build networks and collaborations across institutions and sectors.

A complete overview of SSSI projects and outreach activities can be found in the SSSI Annual Reports for 2020 and 2021: <https://bit.ly/34PxfW>



SSSI workshop Longyearbyen

29-31 October 2021

The SSSI in collaboration with NERSC (Nansen Environmental Remote Sensing Centre) finally could arrange a workshop in Longyearbyen. Invited researchers and members of SSSI took part in the workshop and facilitated other outreach activities. Due to the Covid restrictions, many researchers could not take part in this physical workshop, but fifteen members and guests finally met in person to discuss our work, the future development of the SSSI, and we could plan new projects.



SSSI and NERSC representatives, Longyearbyen workshop, October 2021

29 October started with a welcome and opening session by the SSSI board and NERSC. The Norwegian Research Council was represented by Karoline Bælum who gave a presentation of programmes, goals and funding opportunities.

In addition, one previously established working group presented its work on "Imaginaries", and invited SSSI members and other participants to work on articles or projects related to this topic. This was followed up by group discussions to look at new research possibilities, collaboration and future articles and activities in the SSSI network and beyond, both Friday, Saturday and Sunday.





SSSI, NERSC, and partners also received funding to host a new side-meeting and workshop connected to the Svalbard Science Conference 2021, and the participants decided to continue the discussions for research proposals and articles. The Imaginaries Group received an invitation to be in charge of a Palgrave collection of articles with SSSI members and others. The workshop in Oslo was also going to prepare for future proposals and coordination of data and information across the natural and social sciences.

The SSSI General Assembly 2021

The General Assembly of SSSI and the SSSI housekeeping meeting was arranged as part of the workshop in Longyearbyen at UNIS and via Zoom.

After the General Assembly SSSI and NERSC hosted an open meet and greet at Vinterhagen Friday 29 October for local organizations and actors. People from this event were both invited to join the discussions the next days, as well as the side-meeting/workshop in Oslo, on 4 November.

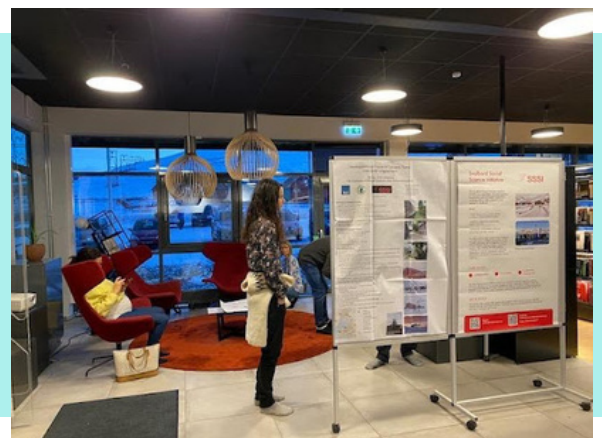
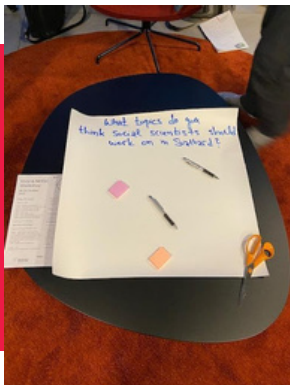


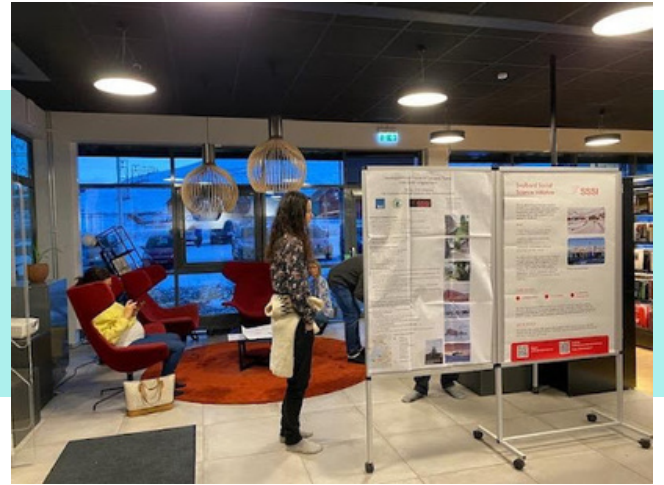
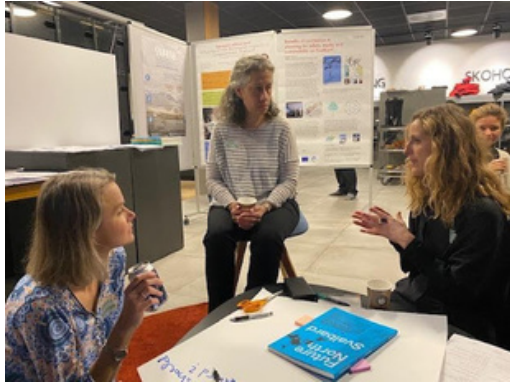


An important part of the workshop was getting to know each other and networking within the SSSI, during lunch and dinners together in Longyearbyen.

Dissemination events in Longyearbyen

On 30 October, SSSI hosted a public sharing event at the public library in Longyearbyen, organized as a "living library" where people could meet SSSI members, visit a poster exhibition and preview scientific papers.





In the evening, a public panel discussion, moderated by the local journalist Line Nagell Ylvisåker, addressed various aspects of our research and talked about social science on Svalbard.



Targets and results

A main target of the SSSI and of the workshop is to develop collaboration between Svalbard-related social science research and local communities on the archipelago.

In Longyearbyen, there has been a range of activities with local community actors through physical meetings, seminars, and poster exhibitions inside and outside, based on collaboration with local architects (LPO), the local council, and others. The SSSI has contributed to the Longyearbyen Community Dialogues, engaged with Youth, etc, thus strengthening collaboration across the public sector, research institutions, and the local community. More information can be found in the SSSI annual reports for 2020 and 2021. Based on the October 2021 workshop and outreach activities in Longyearbyen, further collaboration has been established. Several research institutions collaborated on another proposal for the Svalbard Strategic Grant, to organize a side-meeting and workshop in connection to the Svalbard Science Conference in Oslo on 4 November 2021. The institutions and new projects committed to collaborate across the social and natural sciences to the benefit of the local communities of Svalbard.



We also see that SIOS, UNIS, and The Arctic Safety Centre will be important actors together with the authorities, in order for our work to be successful. Both representatives from SIOS, UNIS, and the local council were taking part in the side-meeting and workshop in Oslo, on 4 November 2021. Outcomes and suggestions for actions from this workshop will be followed up by the SSSI in 2022.

Secondary objectives have been to:

a) Identify connections or overlaps between the diverse projects represented in the SSSI in order to better coordinate research efforts.

This has been done over 3 workshops, and the SSSI will continue to direct the outcome towards common project proposals, articles, and activities on Svalbard, amongst others in a workshop hosted by the CAPARDUS Project, NERSC, and partners, with an invitation to SSSI members and local actors, in Longyearbyen in June 2021, if the Covid Pandemic allows for it to take place physically. A working group will be established for a potential proposal across the social and natural sciences

b) Share preliminary results in order to plan further research.

This has been achieved through an internal online seminar December 2020, as well as in the Longyearbyen Workshop, and in the side meeting/workshop in Oslo on 4 November 2021:

<https://bit.ly/3uUjigh>

c) Coordinate the dialogue with local actors in Longyearbyen in order to communicate in a constructive way.

This has been achieved through the activities described above, as well as through our web page and Facebook. SSSI will prepare an action plan for 2022 to continue communication and information with local stakeholders and other research institutions.

d) Strengthen existing collaboration regarding all aspects of Svalbard-related social science research, including links to natural science projects, especially projects dealing with climate changes in the Svalbard region.

The proposal to the Strategic Grant in 2020 for the side-meeting and workshop connected to the Svalbard Science Conference 2021, has been both a networking activity across the natural and social sciences, as well as a strategic positioning to work towards common proposals and more long-term projects.



The following institutions/organizations were collaborating on this project proposal and the workshop in Oslo:

NERSC, project owner/ project leader

Partners in the proposal writing:

- SSSI
- Queen's University Belfast, United Kingdom
- Development Centre for Weather Forecasting, Norwegian Meteorological Institute, Bergen, Norway
- Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Czech Republic
- Nordland Research Institute, Bodø, Norway
- NIKU, Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage
- NORCE, Norwegian Research Center
- National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia
- Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden
- Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen, Norway

e) Plan and develop new projects to extend the ongoing work in the SSSI group, where we can benefit from working together and engaging local actors in an organized manner.

This is ongoing work, and there have been several projects, presentations, and actions taken to deliver on this goal. (See the SSSI annual report 2020 and 2021): <https://bit.ly/34PxxFw>

Various events have been initiated with local stakeholders in 2021 on various topics such as planning and urban development, the new societal plan based on the UN Goals, sustainable tourism, cultural heritage, as well as dialogues connected to the ongoing processes related to the proposed restrictions of voting rights for non-Norwegian inhabitants on Svalbard. An action plan for further activities will be developed by SSSI and partners in the first half of 2022.

Pictures by Lisbeth Iversen (except landscapes).

15 February 2022

Lisbeth Iversen, NERSC / AHO / SSSI

Lisbeth.Iversen@nersc.no

Cellular Phone: + 47 920 14 606

