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The development of settlements and the history of Longyearbyen

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Content of today's lecture

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1st half:

- The growth of permanent settlements
 - Settlements: from camps to communities
 - The development of mining settlements
 - Company towns: for better or worse?

2nd half:

- The modern Longyearbyen
 - White Paper no. 39 (1974–75)
 - "Normalization": creating a family community
 - The modernization of Longyearbyen

Problem:

- Why and how did local communities develop?
- How "normal" are the communities?

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From camps to communities

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- What does it take to be a local community?
 - Permanent or semi-permanent settlement
 - A minimum of physical and social infrastructure
 - Social composition of the community, demographical characteristics
- Some short-lived settlements on Svalbard
 - Advent City 1905–08
 - Hiorthamn 1917–26, 1938–40
 - Sveagruvan (Swedish) 1917–25
 - Tunheim on Bjørnøya 1915–25
 - Barentsburg (Dutch) 1920–26

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The early mining camps



- Advent City – a pretentious name?
 - Established 1905 by Spitsbergen Coal & Trading
 - 1905–06: 30 winterers; 1906–07: 70
 - Advent City reborn in Hiorthamn 1917
- Longyear City
 - The American period 1906–15
 - An (almost) all male, multi-ethnic community
 - Working and living conditions
 - Labour conflicts
 - The Norwegian take-over in 1916: did the conditions really improve?

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Ny-Ålesund



- Established 1917 as a mining camp. 150 people wintered in 1918–19
- First production period 1920–29
- Fishery station 1935–39; hotel 1938–39
- Reopening of coal mining in 1945
- Modernization and investments after the accident in 1953; coal mining until 1963
- The Kings Bay accident 5 November 1962 and its aftermath
- The ESRO-period 1965–74 and development of Ny-Ålesund as a research base

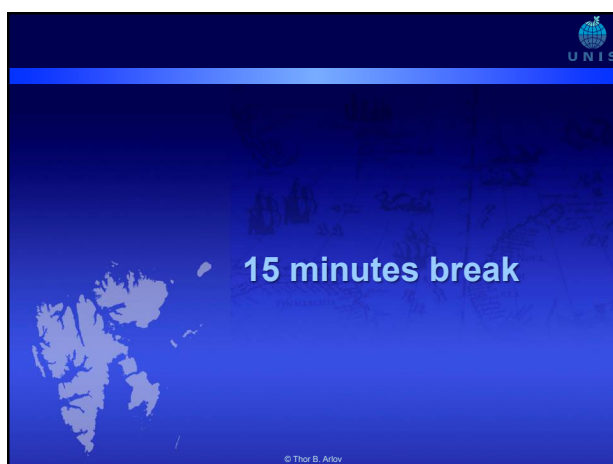
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The Russian settlements



- The Anglo-Russian Grumant Co. In Grumant 1920–26
- Soviet Trust Arktikugol bought Barentsburg from NESPICO, took over Grumant and bought the Pyramiden property in 1931–32
- Evacuation 1941, settlements bombed and destroyed in 1943
- Rebuilding after World War II; Pyramiden established 1949–56
- Grumant closed in 1962, Pyramiden in 1998
- Community structure and standards; post-Soviet development

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A company town



- Store Norske: more than a company
 - The requirements of the Mining Code
 - Social, medical and spiritual (!) services
 - Caretaker of Norwegian sovereignty?
- The physical lay-out of Longyearbyen
 - Local development: the needs of the company
 - Living standards and welfare
- A class-conscious and controlled society
 - Privileges and benefits
 - Recruitment practice; seasonal contracts
 - Labour rights and local democracy

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"Normalization" in the 1970s




- Parliament White Paper no. 39 (1974–75)
 - Nationalization of Store Norske in 1976
 - Housing; construction of a family community
 - Expansion of public services, infrastructure and local administration
- The airport opened in 1975: a watershed in the local development
- Social and demographical structure in the 1980s: how did Longyearbyen change?
- Cross-cultural contacts: gradual opening of the Russian settlements from 1986

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Modern Longyearbyen



- The economic development
 - A new rôle for Store Norske: reorganization 1989-90
 - Diversifying the economic structure: White Paper no. 50 (1990-91)
 - Rebuilding the local community – an unexpected success story?
- Demography and social structure
 - A stable or unstable community?
 - Living standards and quality of life
 - Local democracy 2002 – another watershed
 - Effects of globalization

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Summing up: Past, present, future



- A slow, gradual development from mining camps to local communities
- Permanent or temporary settlement? Average mobility is still high (4-5 yrs)
- Svalbard communities are fundamentally different compared to the mainland. Will they ever be "normal"?
- Longyearbyen on its own: from instrument of Norwegian policy to a goal by itself
- Towards a post-industrial Svalbard?

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