The development of settlements and the history of Longyearbyen

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Content of today's lecture

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
  - "Normalization": creating a family community
  - The modernization of Longyearbyen

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

From camps to communities

- 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
- Høthamn 1917–26, 1938–40
- Sveagruvan (Swedish) 1917–25
- Tunheim on Bjørnøya 1915–25
- Barentsburg (Dutch) 1920–26
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?

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

The Russian settlements

- The Anglo-Russian Grumant Co. In Grumant 1920–26
- Soviet Trust Artikugol 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
- Community structure and standards; post-Soviet development
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

“Normalization” in the 1970s

  - 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
Modern Longyearbyen

- The economic development
  - A new role 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

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?