

REMOTE: Rethinking Remoteness and Peripherality

16–19 January 2017, Longyearbyen, Norway

<http://www.islanddynamics.org/remote.html>

This international conference explores the concepts of remoteness and peripherality. These concepts are used in numerous disciplines, including geography, development studies, anthropology, spatial planning, and cultural studies. But what do remoteness and peripherality mean in practice, from the perspectives of the people and places deemed to be remote and peripheral? ‘Remote’ and ‘peripheral’ presume a centring of (potentially colonial) power elsewhere and tend to be defined in terms of accessibility to major urban areas.

Are remoteness and peripherality essentially relative concepts, only comprehensible with reference to the near and the central? Can remoteness and peripherality ever be experienced internally, or are they simply projections from the outside? If political, economic, and social power rest with the big cities and centres, is it fruitful or is it damaging to cast some communities as remote and peripheral? Notions of ‘remote’ and ‘peripheral’ connote economic stagnation, decay, and underdevelopment (or absence of development) and are associated with a lack of connectivity, indicating a local state of de-globalization. And yet ‘remote’ is not univocal. Might it be possible to reclaim remoteness and peripherality as drivers of societal creativity, innovation, and resilience?

About Longyearbyen, Svalbard.

Longyearbyen (population 2200) is the world’s northernmost town, the main settlement on Norway’s vast, largely ice-covered Svalbard archipelago. The polar night, when the sun never rises above the horizon, lasts from late October until mid-February. Most residents stay for only a season or a few years, and even those who do remain must eventually return to their homelands. Longyearbyen is iconically remote and peripheral, but the town is also highly cosmopolitan, hosting residents from over 40 nations, an active cultural life, and an economy based on tourism and mining activities. The community is young, close-knit, and diverse. Longyearbyen is thus the perfect place to explore the contradictions and paradoxes of remoteness and peripherality.

During the conference, participants will have the opportunity to travel to a glacier by dog sled and enter the mysterious realm of an ice cave. We will also explore Longyearbyen’s community, speaking with representatives from government, local businesses, and cultural organisations. Conference presentations will take place on 18–19 January at the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel Spitsbergen.

How to make a presentation.

Conference presentations will concern all aspects of remoteness and peripherality. The conference is open to researchers, policymakers, NGO representatives, and community representatives from around the globe. You are also welcome to attend the conference without giving a presentation. The deadline for abstracts is 30 April 2016, but to ensure that you have the opportunity to take part in the conference and have the time to seek funding from your institution or government, we recommend that you <http://www.islanddynamics.org/remote/cfsubmit> your abstract early. You can submit an abstract here: [p.html](http://www.islanddynamics.org/remote/cfsubmit)

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