



# Youths seize power

Longyearbyen gets fifth-highest participation in experimental voting for 16- and 17-year-olds

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

Being able to cast ballots for one of their classmates probably helped, but that's hardly a strike against Longyearbyen's relatively high participation in an experimental election where people under 18 could vote.

The city ranked fifth out of 21 cities participating in the experiment during the 2011 municipal elections with a 65.9 percent turnout among 16- and 17-year-olds, according to a report released this week by Norway's Institute for Social Research. The average turnout was 57.8 percent, with Luster scoring highest at 82.2 percent and Hammerfest the lowest at 44.8 percent.

The election was particularly unusual in Longyearbyen since one of the candidates was Viljar Hanssen, then 18, who suffered life-threatening injuries during the mass shooting at Utøya on July 22, 2011. He remained hospitalized in Sunnaas until after the October election, campaigning from his bed by social

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TOBIAS LUTHE / ARCALPNET

Children playing near an ancient mine trestle, above, are a reminder of Longyearbyen's divergent subcommunities and the need for them to communicate better so the town can achieve long-term stability in the wake of climate change, according to the author of a new study. He compared Longyearbyen to three towns in the Swiss Alps, at right, facing similar issues that have strong coordination, but lack diverse thinking.



TOBIAS LUTHE / ARCALPNET

# Swiss decision

Study: Svalbard ought to be more like the Alps – and vice-versa

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

It's advice more fitting for married couples than Swiss diplomacy: to sustain, communicate better.

That's the bottom line of a two-year study trying to determine how Longyearbyen can achieve long-term stability in the face of climate change and the decline of the coal indus-

try that's its primary economic base. In looking for possible solutions, it compared the community to three tourism-oriented towns in the Swiss Alps facing similar problems.

The results, published earlier this month by the Swiss-funded ArcAlpNet project, states Longyearbyen's high population turnover and the "compartmentalization of the community

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## Steal these books – gov't OKs it

135K copyrighted titles free at National Library site, including many in English about Svalbard

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

If Stephen King isn't sufficiently chilling there's always "The Toxic Effect of Polar Bear Liver."

Visitors can skip pricey guidebooks and freeload on tips from a master, such as viewing wildlife, the midnight sun and the ever-popular 24-hour shooting parties in Sassendalen.

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THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NORWAY

The book "Women in a Northern Landscape" is part of a new free online copyrighted collection.

## Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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## Corrections policy

When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

## Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.

## The quintessential portrait of desperation



MARCO GAIOTTO / HOTSPOT MEDIA

"I desperately wanted to take a picture of a polar bear with the full moon behind it." This image from last fall appears to meet the minimum requirements set by Marco Gaiotti, 30, of Genova, Italy, in an interview this week with the *London Daily Mail*, one of numerous publications running a series of his photos. Gaiotti recently received the Global Arctic Awards' "Arctic Photographer of the Year 2013."

## Icesheet

### Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Since we're passing off last year's stuff ("steal these books") as news this week, we thought we'd share the humiliation with a few belated "breaking" items from other publications. British newspapers are going ga-ga over the bear-in-the-moonlit photo above, as well as another happened-way-back-when-it-was-light tourist pic of **this seal that "looks like it's trying to mimic the fiery coiffure of Mad Men star Christina Hendricks,"** as the *Daily Mail* of London puts it. But the ruddy appearance captured by photographer Hank Perry of Walnut Creek, Calif. is actually the result of the seal dipping its head into the water to grab some lunch. "The guides we were with said the red face was due to the food sources on the bottom which are primarily clams and other mollusks," Perry told the newspaper. "And while doing so, the seal was constantly coming



HANK PERRY / NATURALREALM.COM

**Superhero of Svalbard?** Maybe this masked man is the reason the crime rate is so low.

in contact with iron particles in the sandy substrate. These particles stick to hair follicles which causes a reddish color in the face." ... Also coming late to the party is the U.K. newspaper *Scilly Today*, which this week is **hauling the release of the album "Isles" by the Swedish duo Bolywool. That's very nice, since one of the songs inspired by their trips to various islands is Spitsbergen (Svalbard),** but it was released back in March of 2012. Anyhow, you can listen to the thing free at [bolywool.bandcamp.com/album/isles](http://bolywool.bandcamp.com/album/isles) ... Finally in actual breaking bizarre news that isn't local thanks to our stretch of mild weather, muckrakers worldwide are seriously hot for a story about a **school of fish that literally froze in place in a lake in Lovund** due a combination of sub-zero temperatures and strong wind.

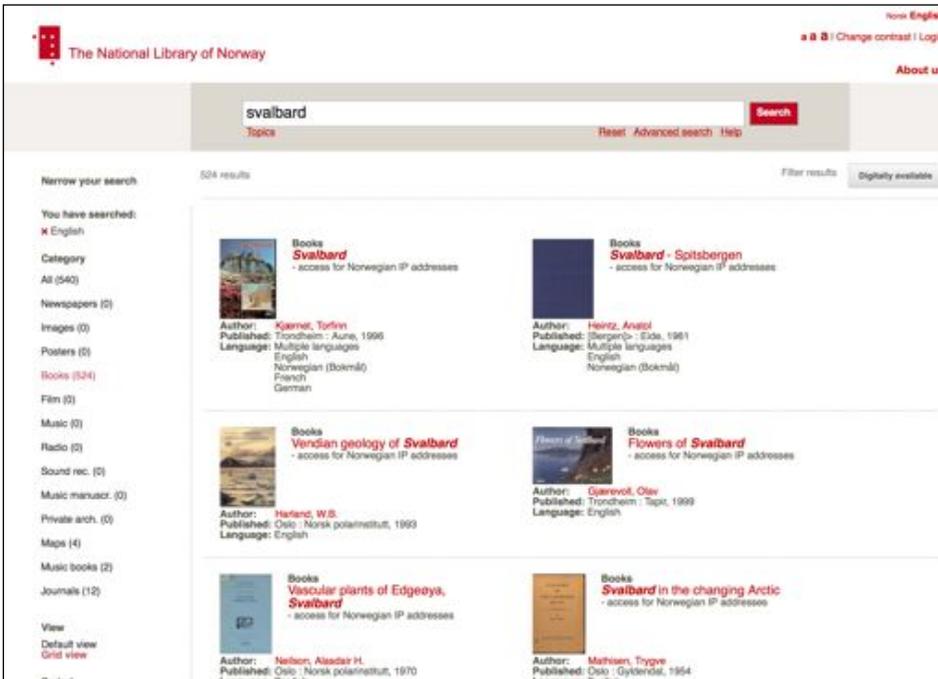


INGOLF KRISTIANSEN / FACEBOOK

**Fishapocalypse:** Looks like a bird's bountiful buffet, but begets beak breakage.

## Yeah, this pitiful message is still here...

Our rogue editor could use a job so he doesn't have to take out a mortgage in order to keep giving this fishwrapper away for free. He's done and seen a lot, and is happy doing pretty much anything he doesn't have to write about (washing dishes, stocking shelves, etc.). Yes, he has nice references and all that from people who may or may not have received substantial bribes.



THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NORWAY

A search for English books about Svalbard turns up more than 500 results at a new online library hosted by The National Library of Norway. It is the first of its kind to offer books still in copyright.

## Library goes online, but only in Norway

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Such tomes are part of a 135,000-title collection of books still in copyright now available free online from the National Library of Norway at bokhylla.no. While the vast majority are in Norwegian – including those by bestselling authors such as Tom Clancy, Karin Fossum and Jo Nesbø – there are still thousands in English, including more than 500 featuring Svalbard.

Most titles about the archipelago are, perhaps unsurprisingly, about science, history, politics and expeditions. But some intriguing reads – and bizarre surprises – surface when perusing the search result for "Svalbard" at the site.

A female perspective of all aspects of life in the far north, historical and current, is in the highly accessible "Women in a Northern Landscape," a 1999 compilation of essays edited and partially written by Sylvi Liljegren. Among Liljegren's contributions is "To Open Up the Lawless Room," a feature/interview with Ann-Kristin Olsen, Svalbard's governor from 1995-98.

Cruise ship tourists may discover itineraries have changed surprisingly little since nearly a century ago in a 1923 Thomas Cook and Son "Traveller's Handbook" for Scandinavia and the Arctic. Steamers traveling up the west coast until they reach the ice sheet stopped at cultural

sites like ancient whaling stations, docked in Longyearbyen for a day, and highlighted the usual natural wonders. Today's visitors are missing a few things, like Russians patrolling Bjørnøya after becoming concerned about a German flag planted there.

But some of that *Volksgemeinschaft* is still lingering, according to the 1997 title "Racist and Right-Wing Violence in Scandinavia." It quotes a Norwegian neo-Nazi leader who asserts two million foreign invaders "have to be exterminated because they are racially inferior of traitors ... or at best, send them to labour camps on Svalbard."

Interest in the site has skyrocketed since an article in *The Atlantic* in late December led to global news coverage. But nearly all outsiders are out of luck, since access is limited to internet users in Norway and foreign researchers. In addition, the books cannot be downloaded.

According to the National Library, titles must be published before 2000, have the consent of the copyright holders, and a small royalty (0.36 kroner this year) for every page is paid that will be distributed to authors and publishers.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### New Lt. governor goes from high-profile to high latitude

New Svalbard Lt. Gov. Jens Olav Vestgøte Sæther is a prosecutor with experience in high-profile cases, but he said there's a bit of "dread" starting his new job during a quiet period far from the big city. "I cannot hide the fact that some tasks are unfamiliar to someone who has worked in the prosecutors on the mainland," he said. "It's not exactly like there's a lieutenant governor school." The former Oslo attorney general succeeded Lars Erik Alfheim as of Jan. 1. Alfheim, also a former Oslo prosecutor who served three years as Svalbard's second-highest ranking authority, spent much of his final year investigating mining accidents in Barentsburg and Svea, plus accidents related to tourism.

### Stores report good, not great, Christmas shopping figures

Local merchants are reporting a solid, if not spectacular, Christmas shopping season. "There were a lot of tourists visiting the store with good shopping attitude," said Camilla Flygel Granstrøm, an employee at Sport1 in Lompensenteret. Some said the resumption of flights to Svalbard by Norwegian Air may have resulted in more tourists, while others said the "good" sales figures are relative. "It has been better than last year, because last year was a complete disaster," said Morten Pettersen, owner of Arctic Sport. "But I can not say that Christmas shopping has been very good." Svalbardbutikken Manager Morten Helliksen said December sales increased 4.76 percent, about equal to the store's performance for all of 2013.

### Governor investigating two accident at Svea this week

Two workers were involved in accidents at Svea this week, although neither results in serious injuries, according to the Svalbard governor's office. On Wednesday a man stumbled over a bolt sticking out from a pallet, sustaining an injury to his side that may include broken ribs. Another accident occurred Monday when a truck driver, who told officials he fell asleep at the wheel, veered off a road at 40 km/h. He and the truck were unharmed, but the load of coal was thrown by the impact.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. S winds to 32 km/h. High -1C (-6C wind chill), low -6C (-12C wind chill).	Cloudy. S winds to 29 km/h. High -1C (-6C wind chill), low -4C (-9C wind chill).	Cloudy. S winds to 25 km/h. High -2C (-6C wind chill), low -3C (-7C wind chill).	Cloudy. S winds to 29 km/h. High -1C (-5C wind chill), low -2C (-7C wind chill).
24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, cloudy, -2C (-6C), -3C (-8C), light 0:00h; Monday, cloudy, -1C (-6C), -5C (-10C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, snow, -1C (-6C), -6C (-14C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, -3C (-8C), -7C (-13C), light 0:00h			

Data provided by storm.no



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Reidar Hjermann, right, who initiated an experimental voting plan for 16- and 17-year olds as Norway's Children's Ombudsman in 2011, discusses ways to increase awareness and participation with Longyearbyen youths at Ungdomsklubben shortly before the October election.

## Youth vote seen as limited success

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media and other means. He became the youngest-ever member of the municipal council by receiving the third-highest number of votes among Labor Party candidates.

There was a record turnout of 57 percent among all voters. The higher turnout by those under 18 was a reverse of the national trend, with the 58 percent of youths voting lower than the overall turnout of 63 percent.

Hanssen said at the time he didn't believe the shooting resulted in sympathy votes and he might have done even better if he been able to campaign locally. His mother, Christin Kristoffersen, who was elected mayor in the election, said this week she agrees the tragedy wasn't the reason for the high turnout by his peers.

"I think it probably made a role that my son ran because he was extremely involved in politics," she said. "I don't think that Utøya had so much to say. I think that the association with Utøya is emotional and I think voting is

intellectual."

The report calls the experimental youth vote a limited success, noting the 58 percent turnout was 11 percentage high than other first-time voters.

"Being in a stable phase of life when you live at home, are established in the community and in school, seem to work on mobilizing participation," the report notes.

But the relatively high level didn't result in increased participation in last year's Parliamentary elections.

"We had good reason to expect that a new group would be more interested in putting himself into politics, but it did not happen," said Johannes Bergh, an Institute for Social Research member who edited the report, during a media presentation this week.

The report, in English and Norwegian, is available at <http://tinyurl.com/pjwkpwj>.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## Be more like the Swiss, report suggests

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into sub-groups" spurs innovative thinking, but with short-term objectives and a lack of a central vision.

"To develop resilience, Longyearbyen should increase strategic and long-term collaboration between its tourism businesses, e.g. through joint networking initiatives, workshops, or events, and develop common values and a vision that may help to increase individual and collective place attachment," the report states. "This may then lead to more engagement in local sustainable development."

By comparison, the Swiss communities have strong central visions, but the drawback is potential "groupthink" that limits new ideas.

But the study's author, Tobias Luthe, raises at least as many questions as he answers as

he acknowledges "this goal is rather abstract." He states energy is "at the forefront of the sustainability discussion," but with coal's fortunes changing for the worse, the potential for energy-efficient lifestyles and renewable energy production is remains unknown.

"Does the increasing global pressure for energy and tourism push indigenous communities into a similar direction of developing tourism, employing research, and opening wide areas for resource extraction – thus making Longyearbyen something of a blueprint for future Arctic communities?" he wrote in a Jan. 11 essay for *National Geographic*.

The study is available at [tinyurl.com/q6az8tb](http://tinyurl.com/q6az8tb).

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## What's up

### Jan. 15

6 p.m.: Movie: "Vi Er Best!" Swedish drama, all ages. Kulturhuset.

### Jan. 16

8 a.m.: Yoga. Kulturhuset.

### Jan. 18

2 p.m.: Movie: "Frost," U.S. animated/family, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

4 p.m.: Movie: "Kill Buljo 2," Norwegian comedy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

10 p.m.: Concert by Schmeerenburgh. Kroa.

### Jan. 19

5 p.m.: Movie: "Vi Er Best!" Swedish drama, all ages. Kulturhuset.

6 p.m.: Concert featuring Norwegian compositions by horn player Eirik Tonnem. Free. Svalbard Church.

7 p.m.: Movie: "The Book Thief," U.S./German drama/crime, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Jan. 20

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

### Jan. 21

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and fireplace social. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. UNIS.

### Jan. 22

6 p.m.: Movie: "Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs 2" (3D), U.S. animated/family film dubbed in Norwegian, all ages. Kulturhuset.

### Jan. 23

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. UNIS.

### Jan. 24

7 p.m.: Après-ski in Nybyen, with food and drinks, hosted by Spitsbergen Up and Down.

### Jan. 25

Noon-2 a.m.: Spitsbergen Up and Down race and events in Nybyen. Family activities until 4 p.m., followed by race from Nybyen to Trollsteinen and back at 6 p.m. Full schedule and details at [www.spitsbergenupanddown.no](http://www.spitsbergenupanddown.no).

## What's online

**Icepeople.net** provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *Climate helps advance Doomsday Clock*
- *Save Norway's wolves, not whales?*
- *Warming a boon for geese in Alaska*
- *Rejoice bug haters: cold snap kills them*