

## **Timeless Arctic - commercial hunting in the reconstruction of human impact in Svalbard**

Initiative: Freigeist-Fellowships

Bewilligung: 02.07.2018

Laufzeit: 5 Jahre

Projekt-Website: [www.timelessarctic.org](http://www.timelessarctic.org)

Let me loose on Svalbard! The island group also known as Spitsbergen lies in a seemingly Timeless Arctic. It is uniquely placed to study commercial hunting in the reconstruction of human impact on a polar ecosystem: clear boundaries, no prior subsistence hunting by indigenous peoples, and a first contact with European explorers in 1596. The evidence of the subsequent profit-driven decimation of its wildlife (including bowhead whale, Atlantic walrus, polar bear, Arctic fox, and Svalbard reindeer) is locked up in the vast treasure chest of international archives, museum collections, and material remains. Historical and archaeological methods are the multidisciplinary key to unlock a wealth of information from logbooks, travel diaries, animal bones, hunting stations, and more. Each animal accounted for represents a rough diamond of data: from the number of individuals, we can deduce population changes over time as well as pre-contact population sizes. The identification and explanation of historical hunting trends will substantially deepen our scientific understanding of human-induced changes in Svalbard. The project may potentially facilitate policy-making and environmental management decisions. Thus by panning the historical sands of Svalbard, we are making a valuable, socially relevant contribution to a sustainable Arctic and our future Earth.

### **Projektbeteiligte**

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