



# ISISA

## Newsletter

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### EDITORIAL

It's time for the ISISA newsletter once again. In this newsletter there is important information about the next ISISA World XIII conference of 2014. One can also find various interesting contributions submitted by ISISA members. This newsletter is what you make it, so please keep the contributions coming. Photos, articles, forthcoming publications, upcoming conferences, and news on 'research in progress' are more than welcome.

**Contributions for the December 2013 issue are to reach me at [abaldacchino59@gmail.com](mailto:abaldacchino59@gmail.com) by not later than NOVEMBER 15, 2013.**

Read and Enjoy. Suggestions for improvement and feedback are always appreciated.

*Anna Baldacchino*  
Newsletter Editor

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of their respective authors and are not necessarily endorsed by ISISA.

## Penghu, Taiwan, for Islands of the World XIII (22-27 September, 2014)

For a variety of reasons, Jersey has had to withdraw its offer to host Islands of the World XIII in 2014, a conference of ISISA, the International Small Islands Studies Association.

All of us on the Executive Committee and Advisory Council are very grateful for Mike Entwistle for all the time put in on this bid and his extensive efforts working with the Jersey local committee before and after the bid.

There has been some discussion about the dates in late September 2014, so please let me explain how these came about.

Firstly, there is capacity. I believe the smallest Islands of the World meeting was in 1992, Nassau, Bahamas. Those (few) who were there will recall that there were only a couple dozen people present: no need for concurrent sessions and all of us met for each paper in a room the size of what we would have today as a "beak out" room. I remember attending a musical comedy performed by a Kansas USA high school group about the life of Columbus: the Spanish Inquisition sequence featured jolly songs and dances! Not part of the official program, but

## A Dynamic Island for an Island Dynamics Conference

*A variation of this article first appeared in [The Foreigner](#), an English-language news service for Norway.*

Svalbard is the most accessible High Arctic archipelago, with its main island Spitsbergen and capital Longyearbyen being a tourist magnet. It has become engrained as a magical, mystical location at the top of the world, representing isolation, polar bears, climate change, the midnight sun, and weeks of darkness.

In January 2013, I experienced a week of darkness there, through attending an [Island Dynamics](#) conference exploring many of these images. Delegates from Europe and Asia convened in Longyearbyen to discuss "[Local Actions in a Global Context](#)": how small places can make a big impact on the world.

Svalbard does that. Cruise ships land with more passengers than the territory's population.

Moreover, an international treaty governs it, representing a unique model for the world. The archipelago is under full Norwegian sovereignty, but several other countries have access rights for resources and research. That means going through immigration and customs for flights between Norway and Longyearbyen.

We learned plenty about these legal, political, and logistical complexities through fascinating presentations and conversations with the Deputy Governor of the archipelago and the mayor of Longyearbyen. Small places can bring big challenges!



Longyearbyen at noon in mid-January. Photo by Ilan Kelman.

Then came our own conference talks. Academic presentations ranged from non-sovereign islands addressing or influencing international affairs, to innovation for sustainability on islands of Denmark and Taiwan.

My talk was on research from the [Many Strong Voices](#) programme about how small island jurisdictions enact [disaster diplomacy](#). That means using disaster prevention and response, including related to climate change, for conflict resolution. In most instances, disasters (including the hazard of climate change) are not important for solving diplomatic disagreements.

Several elected politicians from around Europe attended. We heard inspiring and pragmatic presentations and interventions based on Scotland's, Catalonia's, Basque Country's, and Flanders' efforts at achieving independence.

It was stimulating to see academics and active politicians vibrantly exchanging ideas to determine how our interests overlap. The conference was an impressive example of practitioners seeking research to adjust their actions, while researchers learned what practitioners seek in order to act.



The aurora as seen from Longyearbyen. Photo by Ilan Kelman.

The archipelago of Svalbard, being an international research centre on global change and the Arctic while navigating the realities of geopolitical games, was the perfect setting. Many island-related lessons are provided to contribute to solving the political and environmental challenges which plague the world.

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