Hubs, Corridors, and the Space Between:
Transportation and Information Networks in Remote Areas

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The logic of transportation and information technologies is linear and focused on access points. The lives of people have never been free from these points and lines, but also were never fully determined by them. While we have a limited understanding of the social agency of existing infrastructures, we know even less about the impacts of their absence. Thus, the question arises: how can we acquire a comprehensive understanding of transportation and information scapes, embracing the space beyond and between communication hubs and corridors?

The logic of transportation and information technology and engineering is to make the world "un-remote". There is no doubt that many people in distinct parts of the world enjoy or want to enjoy access to transportation and information. At the same time, people should also have a "right to remoteness". Knowing that transportation infrastructure is most often built to enable the transport of raw materials and goods, and that information infrastructure is there to make the conduct of business easier, the question what the human costs and benefits of remoteness and un-remoteness are seems overdue.

This presentation builds on some ethnographic examples from remote areas in the Circumpolar North and beyond, as well as on theoretical insights from the anthropology of infrastructure and technology, writings about the built environment, and science and technology studies. The goal is to explore the theoretical affordances of the topic and to engage audience members in identifying ethnographic gaps.