An Arctic transformation; from an in-person international summer school to a digital MOOC

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The Arctic, Nordic, Scandinavian and “global north” regions have, individually and collectively, gained increased public, political, commercial, and academic interest over the last decade. For example, regarding issues ranging from climate change to polar ecosystems, and from shipping routes to indigenous knowledge. As such, there is an increasing demand for state-of-the-art knowledge about the region from truly interdisciplinary viewpoints and multi-scale perspectives (e.g. past, present and future changes, as well as feedbacks between and within the environment and society).

To address such issues, members of the University of Oslo (UiO) and the UiO International Summer School (ISS) developed an interdisciplinary MSc-level course, titled “A Changing Arctic” \cite{1} worth 15 ECTS. The course was structured around three major modules with the opportunity for cross-thematic discussions and knowledge transfer; Natural Sciences and Technology, Law and Legal Regimes, and Governance and Society. From 2014-2018, for 6-weeks over the northern hemisphere summer, this in-person course welcomed between 15-25 enrolled students annually. It was coordinated by representatives from the Faculties of Law, Natural Sciences (PI from the Department of Geosciences), and Humanities, and also involved a number of guest lecturers from Norway, Europe, and internationally.

Since 2018, we have been in discussions to develop an additional digital, or hybrid (in-person and online), version of the course to alleviate financial and summertime availability constraints. In 2020, the pandemic further brought to light the need for more flexible, wide-reaching teaching options. A “MOOC” - Massive Open Online Course - offers a framework for a formal, high
quality, free and widely accessible educational resource. This particularly exciting avenue for reaching people in remote Arctic areas, those who do not fit the traditional university-admissions profiles, as well as people in the global south who may not be familiar with northern processes.

In 2020, we secured funding from UArctic, and other partners, to begin this process, and as of Jan 2021 have begun with digital course preparations for a interdisciplinary Arctic MOOC to be released in late 2021 (in addition to an ISS enrolled-student stream in summer 2021). We aim to share some of the opportunities and challenges associated with this transition, including coordinating a very large thematic project and many international lecturers/contributers, switching from in-person lectures to "flipped-classroom" and video-style lectures, interdisciplinary pedagogical considerations, Nordic educational frameworks, financial challenges and funding opportunities, typical student profiles, as well as more practical filming and digital elements.