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**Session title: SME-strategies for social sustainability in the High-North: Examples from the Circumpolar North.**

*(Informative and concise title, up to 100 characters)*

**Proposed by a representative of AF Partner institution (Name, Institution):**

*(AF Secretariat expects that this person could take a role of a co-lead of the respective Science Committee; together with other Science Committee members, co-leads will be responsible for development of the Session description and the Call for Abstracts, review of abstracts and scheduling of the Science program prior to the conference; see Timeline at the bottom of this document for details)*

- Associate Professor Trude Høgvold Olsen, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Harstad, Norway

**Potential members of the Science Committee (Names, Affiliations):**

*(ca. 4-5 Names; both international and national; consider emerging mid-career professionals, gender and geographic spread; Provide links to personal web-pages and/or other relevant web resources; as to national committee members consider representatives from various AF partner institutions – list of all partners can be found here <https://www.arcticfrontiers.com/about-the-conference/partners/>)*

- Professor Markku Vieru University of Lapland, Rovaniemi Finland
- Professor Elsa Solstad UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Harstad, Norway
- Professor Svein Tvedt Johansen, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Harstad, Norway
- Professor Yaso Thiru Alaska Pacific University

**Relevance of the topic for AF 2021 conference entitled "Distant connections"**

*(Describe links to larger international and national programmes, projects and initiatives)*

The session will look at strategies for social sustainability across the Circumpolar North with the purpose of identifying commonalities as well as contextual differences between different institutional and cultural contexts.

**Anticipated number of submitted abstracts: 10-15**

**Is there a potential that the session will evolve into a special issue in a peer-review journal?**

*(If yes, please provide potential names of journal(s), tentative title of a Special Issue, expected number of papers. Note that AF Secretariat puts an emphasis on increased publication outcomes associated with conference production. Sessions that may result in special issues, books or other types of peer-reviewed publications will be prioritized)*

- Journal(s): We plan to contact the following journals (in prioritized order) to investigate the possibilities for a special issue: Regional Studies, International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development
- Title of special issue: To be developed.
- Expected number of papers: 4-6

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**Brief description of the proposed session:**

*(max. 150-200 words; descriptions can be edited at a later stage after discussions between members of the appointed Science Committee, Strategic Science Committee and AF Secretariat)*

Small and medium sized enterprises or SMEs constitute the bedrocks of many northern communities. While local communities rely on Northern SMEs, Northern SMEs also tend to be deeply reliant on their communities and relationships to local stakeholders.

The UN Global Compact describes social sustainability as a proactive way of managing and identifying business impacts on employees, workers in the value chain, customers, and local communities. Strategies of social sustainability thus are likely to form a critical and integral part of many Northern SMEs strategies. Yet such strategies also incorporate a series of potential conflicts and dilemmas, between different logics and different values, such as between expectations about local affiliations on the one hand and market competitiveness on the other.

In this session, we welcome contributions that explore how SMEs perceive and manage different and in some cases conflicting expectations. How do northern SMEs see social sustainability relating to their local communities? What are some of the challenges and opportunities that SMEs see present themselves and, which strategies do SMEs draw on while seeking social sustainability for their organization and their communities? Particularly welcome are process-studies that describes how such strategies form, or changes over time.

SMEs perspectives and strategies will differ reflecting different social, economic and institutional contexts. To reflect this, we hope to include a geographically and diverse set of contributions spanning the Circumpolar North.

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**Proposed timeline:**

<b>Late October 2019</b>	Call for session proposals open among AF partners
<b>5 December 2019</b>	Session proposals deadline
<b>Mid December 2019</b>	Session proposals evaluated by AF Secretariat and Strategic Science Committee; recommendations are given
<b>December - January 2019</b>	Science Committees are formed, and work begins on session descriptions
<b>26-30 January 2020</b>	Science session titles announced at Arctic Frontiers 2020
<b>February-April 2020</b>	Further work on session descriptions, Call for Abstracts is drafted and discussed at Strategic Science Committee meeting in April
<b>Early May 2020</b>	Call for Abstracts is sent out and advertised widely
<b>Early August 2020</b>	First reminder is sent out
<b>Early September 2020</b>	Second reminder is sent out
<b>15 September 2020</b>	Abstract submission deadline
<b>6 October 2020</b>	End of abstract review process, notification of authors

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<b>20 October 2020</b>	Finalized Science program is advertised (Session names and chairs, provisionally allocated presentations)
<b>October 2020 – January 2021</b>	Minor Science program adjustments due to cancellations