



Foresight 1: Vision Phase
References from local workshops in Iceland

Árborg and Fjarðabyggð, Iceland



Introduction

Nordic Council of Ministers, working group on sustainable development in the Arctic works with a threefold process in terms of developing local economic and social development strategies for the Nordic Arctic, based on a structural dialogue between relevant agents. The methodology is called Foresight analysis and contains three rounds of workshops, whereof the first one focuses on the perspectives, seen from the point of view of local inhabitants and their communities.

In this first phase, the Vision phase, the inhabitants phrase their visions on behalf of the communities, as well as sharing their views and ideas on how they wish to achieve the emphasised aims. The two workshops in Iceland are a part of a broader analysis of the development trends and development perspectives in the Arctic regions of the Nordic countries. Overall 12 locally embedded workshops were held in Greenland, Iceland, Finland, Sweden, Norway and the Faroes Islands.

Two regions were chosen as focus areas in Iceland. These are Árborg municipality in the South and Fjarðarbyggð in the East.

Árborg is a municipality, with Selfoss the biggest settlement, and Eyrarbakki and Stokkseyri as smaller coastal communities. Only an hour's drive away from Reykjavik, Árborg is within the radius of the effect zone of the capital region. Before the economic collapse in 2008 there was a great influx of new inhabitants seeking less expensive housing but still keeping their jobs in the capital region. Over the decades especially Selfoss has grown from being a service centre for the heartland of the agricultural region of Iceland, to become more a servicing town for the flow through town by tourists in the South region and for the second home owners. Eyrarbakki hosts the largest prison in Iceland and is thus a large employer, so is the milk processing plant MS that is the largest of its kind in the country as an effect of amalgamations and consolidation. Stokkseyri and Eyrarbakki are popular places to visit by gourmets and leisure tourist visiting museums.

The municipality of Fjarðarbyggð is the most populated municipality in East Iceland, in terms of number of inhabitants. It is an amalgamated municipality of the settlements, Reyðarfjörður, Neskaupsstaður and Eskifjörður (1998), and later Fáskrúðsfjörður and Stöðvarfjörður (2006). The largest employers in Aluminium and Fisheries operating within Fjarðarbyggð, including Alcoa, Síldarvinnslan and Loðnuvinnsla (pelagic species processing companies), Eskja (a fishery company), and the regional hospital in Neskaupsstaður. After opening of the aluminium smelter, employment opportunities have increased in industrial jobs. Fjarðarbyggð ports are among the largest in Iceland.

The local workshops in Foresight 1 is part of a 3-step process which through a dialogue with the municipality and the national administration will seek to realise as well as add perspectives to the challenges and opportunities as they are perceived by the participants in the workshops.

The workshop in Árborg

The workshop in Árborg was held 14. February 2015, from 17-20 in facility at hotel Selfoss in Selfoss town. Participants did not have to register beforehand. Along with the local contacts we reasoned it to have a negative effect on the participation since the Icelandic culture is responsive and impulsive. 14 persons participated; six of them were young people from the youth board at the municipality. The participants were divided into three groups (gender, age and professional background varied and we tried to let closely related participants divide on the tables).

The three groups discussed first what they felt were the biggest challenges the region faced and thereafter what were the biggest potentials for Árborg. In the end of the meeting each individual participating voted two of the most important issues in his/her mind for challenges and opportunities. Following issues are listed as prioritized by votes (from most to least):

The most important opportunities

1. Selfinitiated innovation
2. Transport issues
3. Better access for the entrepreneurial activities, spin-offs and new initiatives in the Árborg activities
4. Building rental housing
5. Retail services
6. Summer house areas in the vicinity
7. Support more collective traffic and transport connections (decrease flight costs)
8. Showing that the region hosts a rich cultural capital

Innovation is a big priority. One that should grow from inhabitants own initiatives would be very important because boosting the self confidence among people would play crucial role in showing that there are important skills and talents among the inhabitants of Árborg. The participants meant this would both create an attraction value for the area as a whole, and change the reputation as well as create other initiatives of innovative value. *Supporting and advancing entrepreneurship* in all sectors by establishing an enabling environment (facilities, funding,) was named as one of the best development opportunities.

Physical *infrastructure* was considered quite important. As mentioned earlier the physical planning intentions and the new area plan involving a construction plan for a new bridge were of high concern to the inhabitants, but mostly those who had a long story of settlement in the region. Also bus connection was repeatedly mentioned, they should be strengthened and more linkages made through collective traffic. The young people emphasised this in particular.

Social and cultural capital is there, but not as visible as would be most feasible. Participants believed that Selfoss was highly dependent on the traffic flow through the town, but it also meant it was not a place that was a visiting point in itself for its cultural attraction value. There is a book café in Selfoss, and highly valued restaurant both in Stokkseyri and Eyrarbakki, and then all the different and varied museums. This would have to be highlighted more visibly.

Rental housing development was mentioned as a way of solving the immediate and long term challenges connected with housing.

The most important challenges

1. Building up an attractive service cluster/centre in the centrum of Selfoss
2. Increase job opportunities for the university educated.
3. Need to improve environmental protection
4. To balance between different communities in the municipality in decision making.
5. Shortage of rental housing
6. There is a sore need to make the attractiveness of Selfoss more apparent
7. Planning and construction intentions for the new bridge, likelihood of the bridge construction to spoil opportunities for the local companies (strengthening vocational education and technical education)

Árborg is a very varied municipality, as a result of amalgamation of different communities facing different challenges. It covers “Flói area” and contains also beside the agricultural service centre, Selfoss, earlier fishery communities that have transformed into satellite communities both for the Capital region but also for Selfoss. Eyrarbakki has particularly been in decline as a community; many houses are owned by people living elsewhere and used as second homes. Only small portion of the houses are settled by inhabitants. The same counts for Stokkseyri and many locals believe that this is a negative effect of residing close to the most urban region of the country, the capital region. The inhabitants, those who have lived here since the fifties, feel that the community has changed radically, both for the good and bad. The good thing is the large second home areas around Selfoss which reinforces Selfoss as a servicing town, but also makes the town a transient zone. The inhabitants are concerned about planning and future physical planning, especially building of a new bridge and the location of it. The location will depend on if Selfoss manages to *ðarkeep* its position as a service town or lose out to the neighbouring community of Hveragerði or even the outskirts of the capital region. Selfoss relies on the tourists stopping to shop. Some of the older population is also concerned about elders from Reykjavik buying less expensive housing to have more relaxed Refugio without too much concern for making ends meet as in the more expensive and busy Reykjavik. They feel it puts strain on the health services that have not accounted for the elder population on the rise, concentrating in the region.

More highly professional and specialised jobs ranked highest in the voting. During discussion among the involved groups there was a demand for initiatives fostering innovation. Even if Selfoss is so close to the Capital region, people feel there is brain drain, young people who educate on secondary level in the large and popular gymnasium (FSU), they move on and don't get back to the community. Some of them might return, but not until after 30 and closer to 40. Their children have then not enjoyed the qualities of upbringing there, or developed sense of belonging to the region.

Employment and job creation was a challenge identified by most participants. Some of the participants were very concerned about lack of jobs for women. Others voiced their concern about a strikingly high seasonal unemployment among women in the municipality as remnants of a seasonally work-driven culture. They thereby insinuated that it was a question of mentality rather than a real challenge. Other participants mentioned that it was to some extent preventing people to

settle, that partners had hard time finding jobs. The region receives many seasonal workers for the tourism sector especially during the summer season and there has been a strong and rising demand for labour in recent years. However housing, especially renting accommodation is a problem for people recruited to the region.

Education was identified as a crucial future question and challenge especially in terms of recruiting and attracting educated labour to avoid the trap of low skill low pay jobs dominance in the region. Also because this has a much gendered effect that the participants identified as a challenge; attracting young well educated women, because availability of jobs matching qualifications was not widely available. Other educational challenges were related to sports education and leisure for children, more variety of courses or educational options for adults residing in the municipality.

Especially the young people voted for a need to improve environmental protection. The river of Ölfus goes through Selfoss town and is a major characteristic of the area. During melting periods the water rise of the river can flood a substantial part of the upland country area, the waterbeds cannot deal with the strong streams. Some of the physical planning intentions will have to take this fact into account, if these flooding conditions are to become continuous in the melting season. Also garbage and industrial pollution was mentioned, as well as the need for beautifying and nurturing close environment.

Need for rental housing was issued as a serious challenge in years to come. The young people voiced this especially but also other participants that felt, that many families were in need of rental housing but could not get any. There had been recent attempts of attracting investors/entrepreneurs to buy lots for construction of rental housing in Eyrarbakki but they told the municipal governors, that the price was not competitive (too high), which sounded unlikely for the locals, especially because into the offer was the incentive of a significant deduction of property and land taxes for the first three years. These properties if build would be meant for elder people who want to settle for a less expensive housing and then vacate their larger properties that suit better for families with children. As for now many elders whose needs have changed are prisoners in their houses, because elder care or serviced rental housing is not available. In some of the discussion the inhabitants also voiced concern over the limited capacity of the regional hospital in Selfoss, because of cut backs and shortage of doctors and medical staff, they have not managed to keep a position for other than ER and basic services.

Future perspectives and how we wish to see our community

The next session concentrated on four different themes, where each of the groups discussed each theme for 20 minutes and then shifted to the next subject. We had a nice dinner (soup and bread) after the first round, and before we began the next four rounds. Therefore people had warmed up before the thematic turns took over.

Now and the next ten years

- Increased tourism (if the new bridge does not prevent flow through traffic in Selfoss)
- Ratio of elder population is heavily increasing
- The ratio of families living in the communities is increasing
- Increased supply of housing and especially rental housing (some disagreement on that)
- New bridge will be there
- 10 thousand inhabitants in Árborg 2020-2025 (low estimates if the summerhouse cluster have become annual stays).

In 10-30 years

- Árborg will be the capital of the South region
- Árborg will be more sustainable and richer with various opportunities
- Less dependence of the Capital region (in terms of jobs and services)
- More environmentally conscious
- There will be a domestic airport in Selfoss
- Selfoss centrum has a distinctive attractiveness
- Selfoss, Eyrarbakki and Stokkseyri will have become coherent urban structure
- Distance education on the increase
- More job opportunities

Special wishes

Under theme special wishes the participants were asked to specify how they wished to see the community turn out in terms of demographic development, gender and age ratio and in relation to economic development. The wishes are listed below.

Age composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make the region more attractive for young educated people, to get them back• Strengthening educational options in the region• Improved conditions for elders (NOW)
Gender composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As equal as possible, both in terms of numbers and equal rights.• Don't be too obsessive about gender ratio unless there are unequal rights and unfair treatment

Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make emphasis on innovation and entrepreneurship • Increase ratio of highly paid jobs (university degree professional jobs) • Coherent impact zone (Capital region and Árborg) • (Don't divide between settlement and work it does not necessarily go together. Many will be working in Árborg and living in Reykjavik and vice versa in the future). Employment related mobility.
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Whose responsibility

Under the theme responsibility, the participants were asked to explicit what governance level should be responsible to ensure that their wishes came true (nationally, regionally, locally). The wished for liabilities are listed below.

National authorities

- Increased and improved transport
- Develop political direction for the vocational and technical educations
- Build a bridge

The municipality

- Tourism and increased attractiveness
- Increase access to cultural funds (museums)
- Establish FabLab/Entrepreneurial nest, and utilize existing facilities
- Secure supply of construction lots
- Lots for the build-up of rental housing (through decrease incentives in local tax for the first 3 years)

Others

- Collaborative campaign raised by inhabitants together (and the Lotto winners)
- Visionary people

Advice to those responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The municipal council of Árborg gets to decide almost solely on the location of the future bridge • Look at the worrying rise of the elder ratio among inhabitants • Increase citizen democracy and transparency • Stop the bullying political debate (<i>koma</i>
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	<p><i>uppúr skotgröfunum</i>) and have a balanced conversation of pros and cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the importance of general life skills education in the primary school system • Social skills/competences
Ideas for own contribution to ensure that wishes come true	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More environmentally friendly waste (<i>flokkun</i>) • Encourage people to walk or bike instead of driving • Decrease voting age among young people for the local/municipal election.

Vinnuhópur um sjálfbæra, svæðisbundna þróun á Norðurslóðum Norðurlanda heldur íbúafund í Árborg 12. febrúar á Hótel Selfossi frá kl. 17 - 20

Boðið til fundar um framtíðina

Hvernig sérðu Árborg fyrir þér næstu 10, 20 eða jafnvel 30 ár?
Hvaða samfélagslegu og auðlindatengdu tækifæri finnast á þínu svæði?
Hvernig er mikilvægt að halda á málum er varða búsetu og búferlaflutninga?
Hvernig sérð þú atvinnutækifæri og nýsköpun þróast í þínu samfélagi?
Verða börnin þín við stjórnvölinn í Árborg eftir 20 ár?

Við viljum heyra hvaða sýn þú hefur?

Norræna ráðherranefndin kom á laggirnar viðamiklu verkefni árabílin 2013-2016 sem fjallar um sjálfbæra svæðibundna þróun á Norðurslóðum Norðurlanda. Nokkur ólík byggðarlög á Norðurslóðum Norðurlanda eru sérstaklega tekin fyrir og er Árborg eitt þeirra svæða.

Sem liður í fyrrnefndu verkefni standa NordRegio og Samtök sunnlenskra sveitarfélaga að opnum íbúafundi í Árborg 12. febrúar á Hótel Selfossi frá kl. 17-20.

Allir hjartanlega velkomnir. Góðar veitingar í boði.

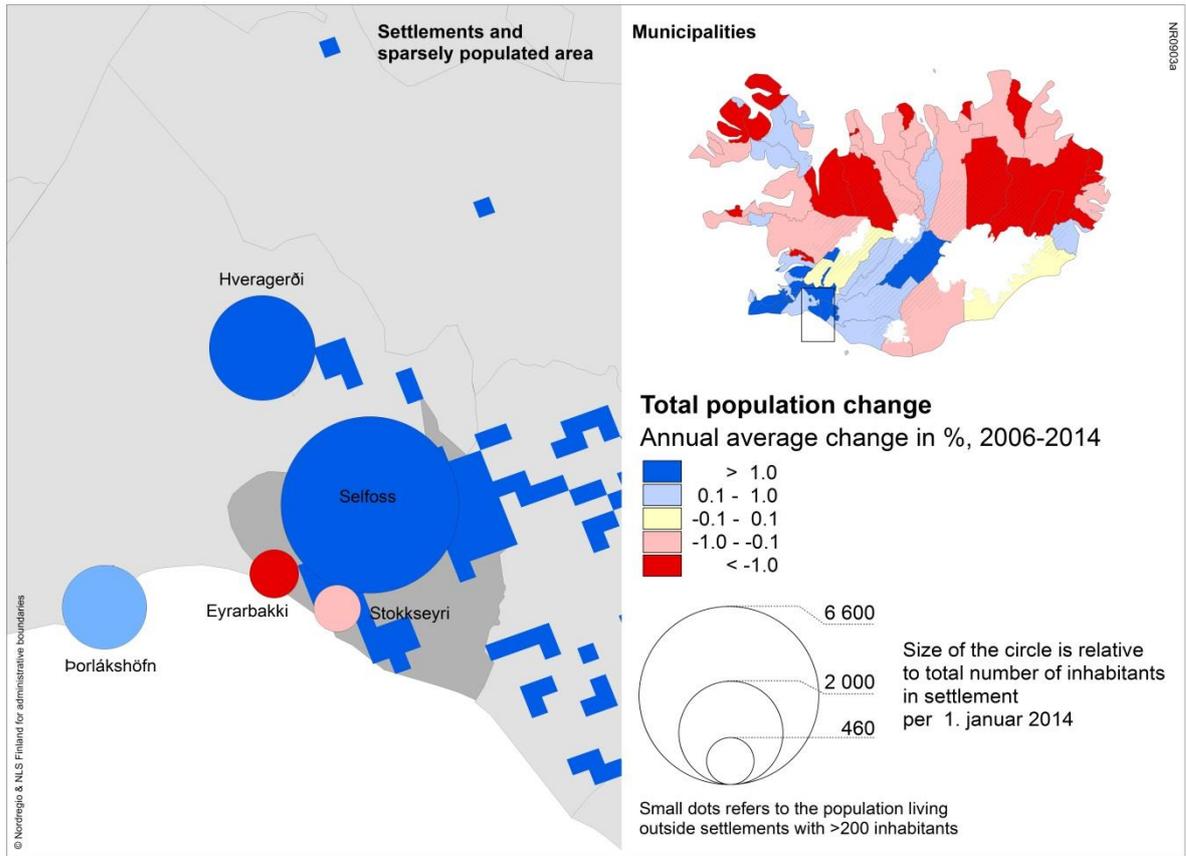


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Nordic Centre for Spatial Development

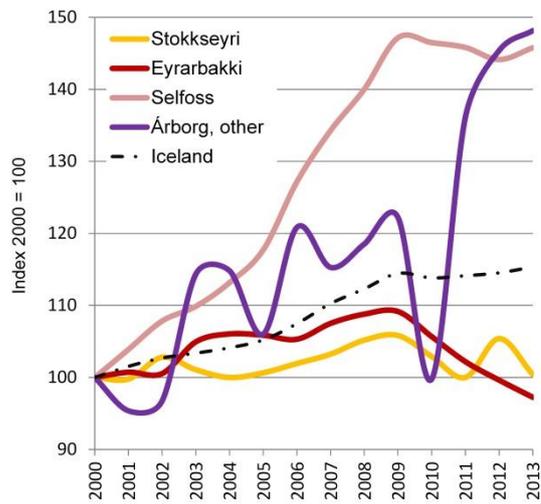
Media coverage before and during the workshop

The local newspaper Dagskráin, Fréttablað Suðurlands posted an announcement on the meeting and the national radio interview mobilized a couple of the participants to come to the meeting.

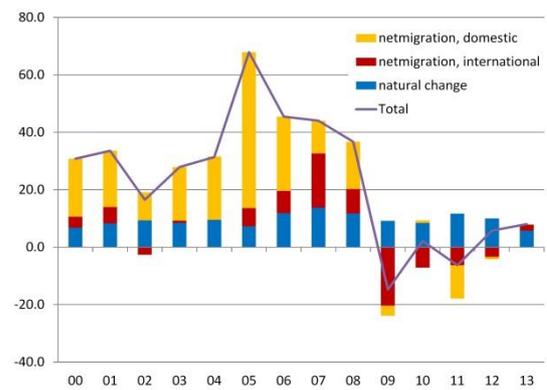
Population Structure in Árborg



Population change in Sveitarfélagið Árborg in 2000-2013



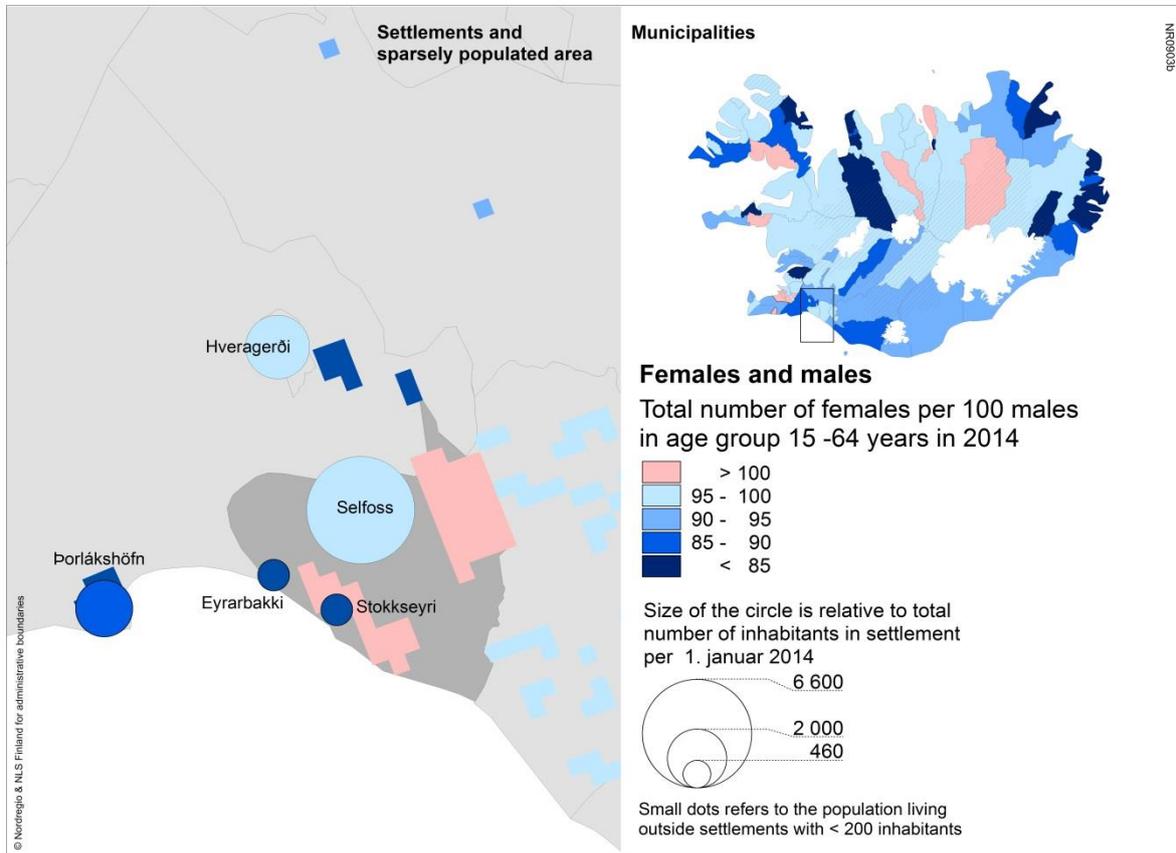
Population change in Sveitarfélagið Árborg in 2000-2013 by main components, in %



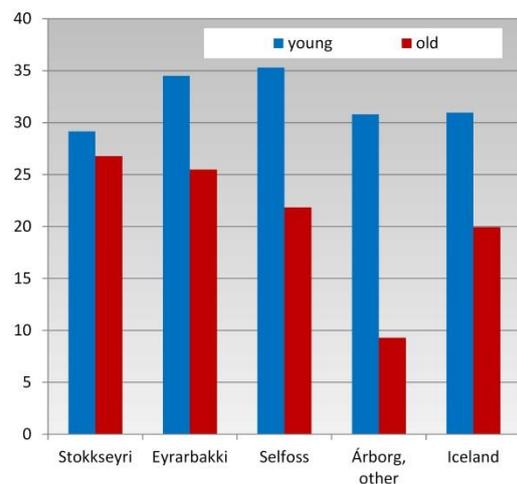
Data source: Statistics Iceland



Population Structure in Árborg

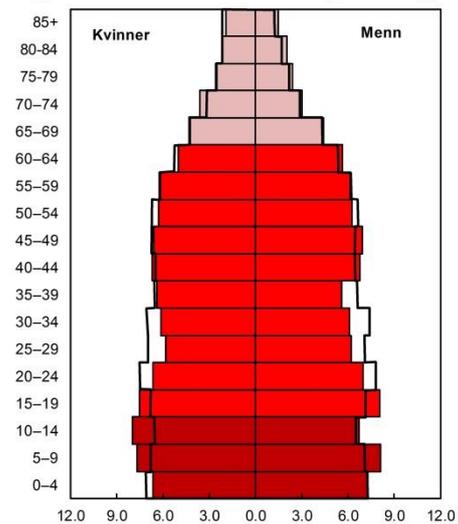


Demographic dependency ratio in Sveitarfélagið Árborg in 2014



'Young' refers to population aged 0-14 years in relation to population aged 15-64 years
'Old' refers to population aged 65 years and more in relation to population aged 15-64 years

Age & gender structure in Sveitarfélagið Árborg, in 2014

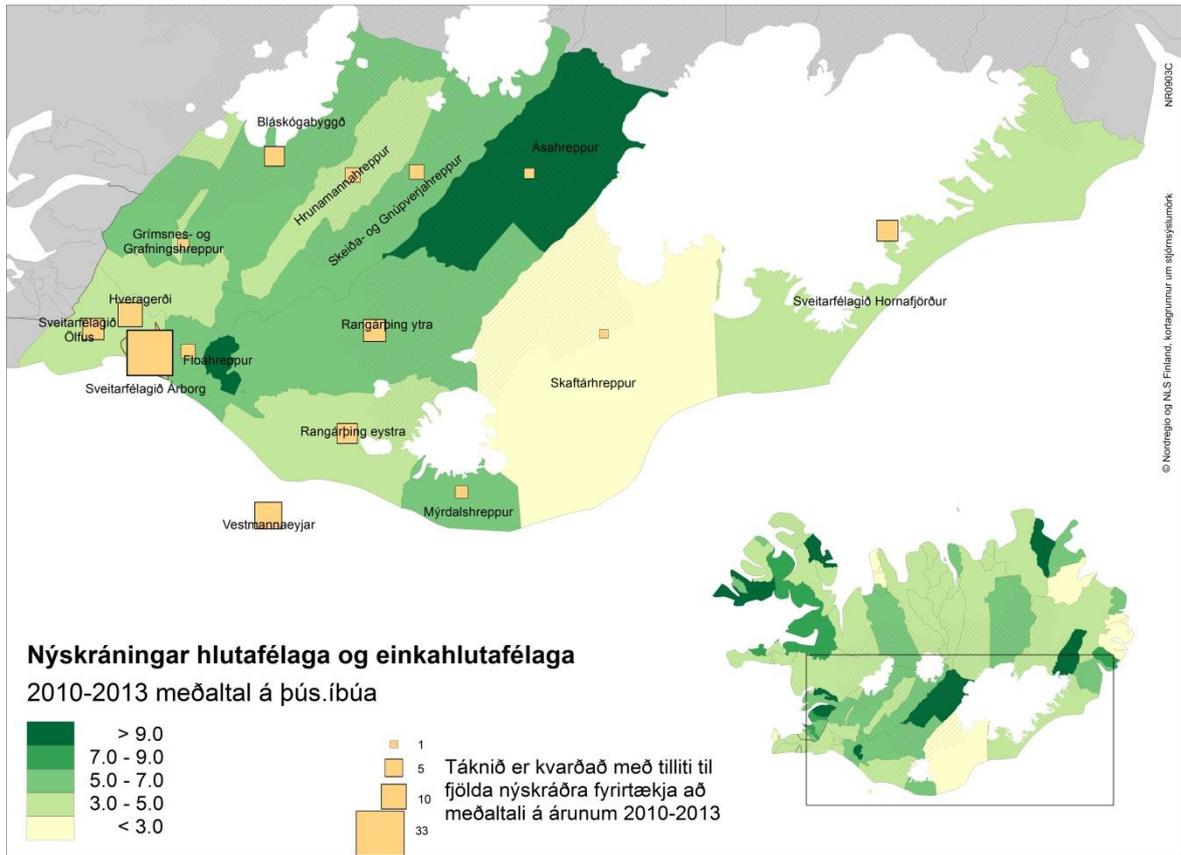


Árborg
Iceland, total

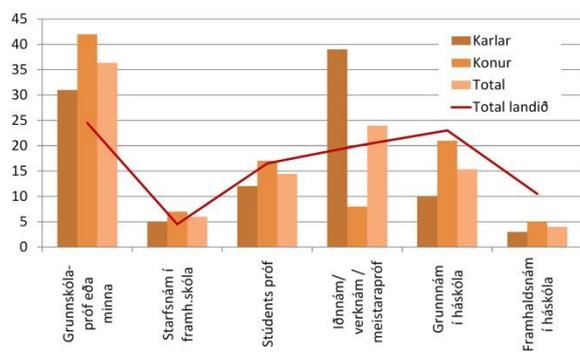


Data source: Statistics Iceland

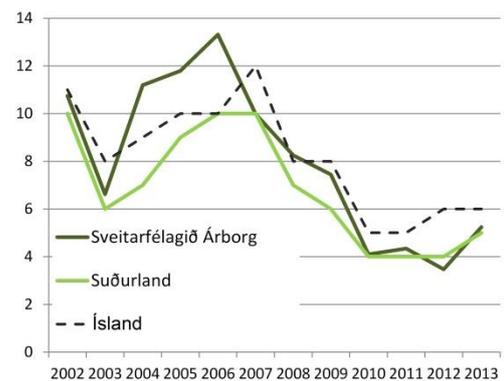
Rannsóknir og Þróun (R&Ð) í Árborg



Hlutfallsskipting íbúa 18 ára og eldri 2011-2012 eftir menntun í Suðurland



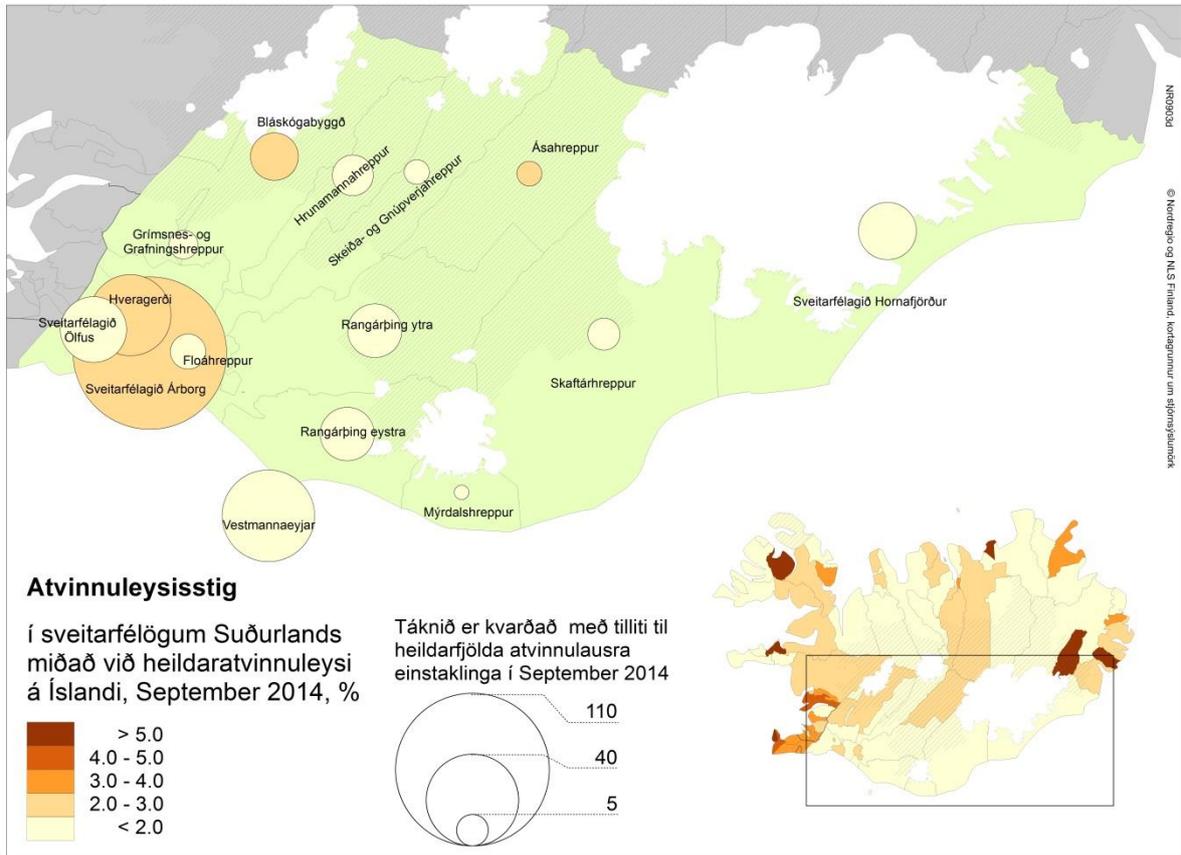
Nýskráningar hlutfélaga og einkahlutfélaga eftir sveitarfélögum 2002-2013



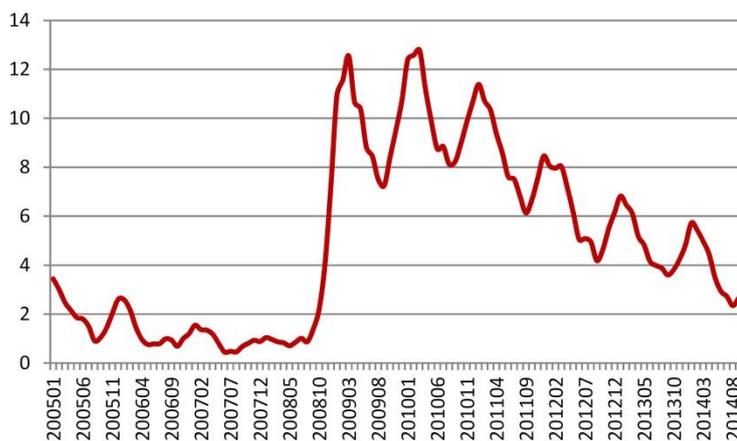
Young and old discuss responsibilities (Árborg workshop)



Atvinnuleysi í Árborg



Áætlað atvinnuleysi í Sveitarfélaginu Árborg frá jan. 2005 til sept. 2014, %



Sveitarfélagið Árborg- fjöldi atvinnulausra í sept. 2014

Atvinnulausir - allir*	113
Kyn	
Karlar	46
Konur	67
Aldur	
16-24 ára	17
25-34 ára	41
35-54 ára	36
55 - 69 ára	19
Atvinnugrein	
Iðnaður/hráefnav.	17
Verslun	21
Gisting og veitingar	9
Heilbr./félagsbj	18
Annað	48
Starfsgrein	
Sérmenntaðir	19
Þjónustustörf	20
Verkafólk	31
Annað	43
Lengd atvinnuleysis	
0-6 mán (skammtíma)	66
6-12 mán (langtíma)	27
meira en ár (langtíma)	20

The workshop in Fjarðarbyggð

The workshop in Fjarðarbyggð was held 12. February 2015, from 17-20 in the classroom-meeting facility (Fróðleiksmolinn) provided by Austurbrú, in the community. Participants did not have to register beforehand. Along with the local contacts we reasoned it to have a negative effect on the participation since the Icelandic culture is responsive and impulsive. 14-16 persons participated (a couple of them had to leave the meeting before it ended). The three groups discussed both what they felt were the biggest opportunities in the region and also what the biggest challenges Fjarðarbyggð is facing. In the end of the meeting each individual participating voted two of the most important issues in his/her mind for challenges and opportunities. Following issues are listed as prioritized by votes (from most to least)

The most important opportunities

1. Innovation. Aiming at systematically supporting entrepreneurs, spin-offs and embryotic activities.
2. Make social capital more visible – make more appearing what leisure options are available (hiking tracks, musical events, other events)
3. Support innovation and entrepreneurs, especially in the more vulnerable communities in the municipality (i.e. Stöðvarfjörður).
4. Build up mutual office-space facilities for sole professionals (office-hotel)
5. Increase collaboration within the municipality across communities and more vivid collaboration within the entire region (Austfirðir).
6. Develop geothermal heating infrastructure
7. Support more collective traffic and transport connections (decrease flight costs)

Opportunities

Innovation is a big priority. One company towns, like the ones residing within the Fjarðarbyggð municipality can suffer from the syndrome of lack of local initiative. As the new director of Austurbrú told, there needs to be more of recognition of the innovators who are basically working on an individual basis in different occupations, often on basis of some specialised education. Entrepreneurs are generally highly spoken, after a certain point of resisting against a more negative laden reputation within communities. Participants thought that support of small initiatives/workshops/firms/spin-offs/embryotic attempts to create economy had to be more systematically supported – because they would help diversify the local economy and make the communities more resilient to changes. *Supporting and advancing entrepreneurship* in all sectors by establishing an enabling environment (facilities, funding,) was named as one of the best development opportunities.

Development of both social but also physical *infrastructure* was seen as a fruitful opportunity for the better future of the local communities. Even though listed as one of the main challenges, the participants also saw great benefits in fixing the existing infrastructure, including also the planned tunnel, and geothermal heating systems, as well as providing more cost efficient flight fares and collective transport options (bus transports).

Social capital is there, but not as visible as would be most feasible. There are various options for leisure time spending but they are sporadically promoted, and could be boosted more.

There are great hiking and walking trails and paths in a varied landscape including everything from beautiful seascapes to mountainous tracks and everything in between. There is a selection of musical events, both as festivals in the summer, but also in concerts provided by quires and individual musicians residing in the region. This is rarely highlighted. Events of all kinds have to be more visible as options. They will also make the local communities together in the municipality feel more as one, and enhance harmonious co-existence.

Other things mentioned but did not gain vote in the end, were following: Women's jobs were mentioned as an opportunity, as well as increasing the educational options for local people on secondary and tertiary educational level. Also development of charitable housing associations (búseti, andelsselskaber, bostadsretforeninger) like in other Nordic countries was mentioned as a way of solving the immediate and long term challenges connected with housing.

The most important challenges

1. Lack of expertise/special professional jobs (and for university educated)
2. Monobased economy and jobs (lack of jobs for women and partners)
3. Work-driven culture
4. Big area, variety of conditions for the different communities in an amalgamated municipality
5. Challenge to increase variety of leisure options (after work, with family), i.e. cafés, culture (not drunk disco)
6. Transport (access, weather, mountains), flight connections and bus transport
7. Heating costs
8. Education and service consciousness in tourism services

Challenges

Fjarðarbyggð is a very varied amalgamation of different communities facing different challenges. It covers a wide area in size and landscape conditions as well as in economic conditions, and contains communities that are mostly dependent on pelagic fisheries and processing and others that are dependent on the aluminium industry. There are also communities facing downturn in primary industries and decline in population. There is a thriving fishing town and a culture tourism town – so there is an asymmetry existing in between communities in terms of future prospects. Some of the participants did think that there lacked more cohesiveness and togetherness spirit.

More highly professional and specialised jobs ranked highest in the voting. During discussion among the involved groups, many participants expressed frustrations on how the regional economic development also with the relatively newly established Aluminium smelter in the region had not provided as many highly professionalised jobs as expected. The multiplication effect of the new industry in the region was mostly evident in Egilsstaðir, where people chose to live often prioritizing it higher than staying in Fjarðabyggð. Many of the companies associated with the specialised tasks in connection with the smelter activities also were

located elsewhere than in Fjarðabyggð (either fly in fly out expertise, or located in for example Egilsstaðir). Many of the larger engineering companies were located with the regional headquarter in Egilsstaðir, and a smaller satellite office in Reyðarfjörður. For the other communities in Fjarðabyggð besides Reyðarfjörður, minimum part of the jobs available would require formal educational background.

Employment and job creation was a challenge identified by most participants. Some of the participants were very concerned about lack of jobs for women. Others voiced their concern about a strikingly high seasonal unemployment among women in the municipality as remnants of a seasonally work-driven culture. They thereby insinuated that it was a question of mentality rather than a real challenge. Other participants mentioned that it was to some extent preventing people to settle, that partners had hard time finding jobs. The region receives many seasonal workers for the tourism sector especially during the summer season and there has been a strong and rising demand for labour in recent years. However housing, especially renting accommodation is a problem for people recruited to the region.

Education was identified as a crucial future question and challenge especially in terms of recruiting and attracting educated labor to avoid the trap of low skill low pay jobs dominance in the region. Also because this has a very gendered effect that the participants identified as a challenge; attracting young well educated women, because availability of jobs matching qualifications were not widely available. Other educational challenges were related to sports education and leisure for children, more variety of courses or educational options for adults residing in the municipality.

When mentioning *values* as a challenge the participants referred to work-driven culture as a concern in the shifts between camp like settlement (existing only for the purpose of certain economic activities) and a more varied and family friendly community.

Local *demographics* also concerned the participants, mainly due to the gender imbalance in opportunities in the region. Also because of an imminent disadvantage of transport conditions. People feel isolated depending on weather patterns during especially the eight months long winter season, flight prices to Reykjavik are as high as for Capital dwellers to go abroad (not for the Alcoa staff though that gets on average 15 tickets pr.year for a significantly reduced market price), and when mountainous roads prevent people driving in between different communities in the municipality. The intended Norðfjarðagöng (Nordfjordur tunnel) will enable a more efficient traffic in between the most remote communities to the center communities (within 6 years if everything goes well and funding is secured). Also shift arrangement within the Aluminium smelter production was seen by some as a preventing factor in stabilizing the foundation of inhabitants (high labour turnover now) but also contributing to prevent the Alcoa staff to be active in the leisure activities and social life of the communities. Even if not gaining votes people were concerned about the lack of rental housing. Though families have left their children or they themselves keep owning the house for second home purposes. There is a regional inequality problem existing in the way the funding institutions are hesitant to approve mortgage loans for home constructions, and also the sales price is so low that new buildings will costly outrun the sales price making it

extremely unfavourable to raise new housing in the area. (No one mentioned if the Bechtel container houses might be used in helping out the shortage of rental housing).

How do we want to see the local community develop?

The next session concentrated on four different themes, where each of the groups discussed each theme for 20 minutes and then shifted to the next subject. We had a nice dinner (soup and bread) after the first round, and before we began the next four rounds. Therefore people had warmed up before the thematic turns took over.

Now and within the next ten years

- Increased support of cultural activities
- Schools will amalgamate
- The educational level of the population will have risen and we see more diversified occupations
- More powerful transport links for Mid region (Miðausturland)
- National road 1 goes through Fjarðabyggð
- Increased importance of tourist services
- Food related tourism
- The whole East will become one municipality
- International connections in education increases

In 10-30 years

- The municipal amalgamation process will be completed
- Population development will have increased in all the communities (and fill voids in empty houses)
- Tourism sector will have been strengthened
- Transport, tunnel under Berufjörður, and tunnel instead of Fagridalur will have strengthened the region
- More equal housing and settlement qualities between capital region and rest of the country.
- Geothermal heating most places
- More future oriented job opportunities (rather than traditional occupational opportunities)

Special wishes

Age combination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance, more of taxpayers (rather than property owners not staying in the region and not paying taxes) • Families (they need to increase) especially a wish to increase families
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	<p>with adults between 30-40</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local companies become more active in strengthening vocational training and education to make young people stay.
Gender composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase women, especially in the age group 25-39 Create museums because it presents equal opportunities for both sexes
Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More varied jobs Increased emphasis on womens jobs Increased emphasis on specialised jobs Work towards increased the courage and self-confidence to take on new things and initiatives We need more SMEs and to increase the collaboration in between those Stronger and more varied tourist products. Heritage of the sailor community/coastal community and the farmers community and a wish that women take part in society all year round (not only seasonally).

Whose responsibility?

Under the theme responsibility, the participants were asked to explicit what governance level should be responsible to ensure that their wishes came true (nationally, regionally, locally). The wished for liabilities are listed below.

National authorities

- Transport, for example tunnels, flight connections
- Education and increasing educational options
- How?
- With strategies and policies, long term planning and funding, for example actions plans (10-20 year perspective)
- Disciplined and professional approach to development

The municipality

- Conditions for innovation and entrepreneurship
- Image promotion (image reinvention)
- Supporting cultural life
- Transport provision within municipality
- Conditions and facilities for creative people, arts makers
- How? Finding role for housing that is available for innovation center etc.
- Area plan for all the urban settlements in the municipality

Advice and ideas

Advice to the responsible ensuring the wishes come true

- Encourage people to live a more balanced life between work and family
- Improve and increase public transport/collective traffic and ensure that it will be a more cost efficient option for people
- Create facilities for entrepreneurial activities both in relation to job creation but also culture
- Enable grown-ups to increase or add to their educational merits parallel with their work (from home community)
- Dare to take painful decisions and stand with them
- Opening hours for the primary school should start at 9 (family friendly)
- Try to create job opportunities for those who have left and locals who are under education

Ideas on own contribution to ensure that wishes come true

- Increased participation among the public in events
- Increased consciousness, knowledge and proudness of our community and origin of it
- Enable shift in the work driven culture (it is OK to both be a family person and a professional/blue collar worker).
- Tough and cool to go home from work by 16 in the afternoon, start on the top, to create role models - Educate directors and leaders in work-family balance.
- Empower the school system to strengthen creative minds and thoughts.
- Promote better what is available as leisure and free time options in the municipality (external marketing)
- Couple better companies and university institutions to support and increase possibilities and research activities in the region.

Media coverage around the workshop in Fjarðarbyggð

The local newspaper Austurfrétt interviewed Lisbeth Greve Harbo about the workshop. A press announcement was made for the local papers and announcement was distributed around the Fjords. The national radio (RÚV) and the program Samfélagið (samfundet) with Leifur Hauksson journalist, interviewed Anna Karlsdóttir on the process of the foresight and the meeting in Reyðarfjörður.

Byggðapróun á norðurslóðum Ef fólk vill aðra stefnu en mörkuð hefur verið þarf að taka tillit til þess



Sérfræðingur hjá norrænu rannsóknamiðstöðinni Nordregio segir það hafa verið forvitnilegt að sjá með eigin augum þá þróun sem orðið hafi í Fjarðabyggð á síðustu árum með tilkomu mikillar fjárfestingar í stórum vinnustað. Sveitarfélagið er eitt af tólf norrænum sveitarfélögum sem eru til skoðunar í verkefni miðstöðvarinnar um byggðapróun.

„Við höfum heyrt og lesið töluvert um Fjarðabyggð en vildum sjá staðinn með okkar eigin augum, hvar hlutirnir eru staðsettir, meta fjarlægðirnar og hvað það þýðir fyrir lífið á svæðinu. Íbúapróunin hefur verið jákvæð hér síðustu ár í kjölfar mikillar fjárfestingar og okkur þykir áhugavert að skoða það,“ segir Lisbeth Greve Harbo, rannsakandi hjá Nordregio sem er með höfuðstöðvar sínar í Stokkhólmi.

Nordregio vinnur að norrænum samanburðarrannsóknum á ýmsum svæðum. Vinna Lisbeth er hluti af verkefni sem norræna ráðherraráðið fyrirskipaði um byggðapróun á norðurslóðum. Rannsókn hennar gengur út á að skoða smábæi á norðurslóðum, það er á Grænlandi, Íslandi og Færeyjum auk norðlægari byggða í Svíþjóð, Noregi og Finnlandi. Valdir voru tólf staðir, tveir í hverju landi, sem eiga að endurspegla flórana út frá umhverfi, samfélagsgerð, atvinnu- móguleikum og fleiru.

„Við reyndum að velja staði sem endurspegla fjölbreytnina. Sums staðar fækkar fólk, annars staðar fjölgar því, við skoðum aldursdreifingu og fleira,“ segir hún en Árborg var hitt íslenska sveitarfélagið sem varð fyrir valinu. Í Fjarðabyggð hefur íbúum fjölgað eftir tilkomu álversins og það er áhugavert dæmi fyrir aðra staði eins og Grænland þar sem

hyllir undir fjárfestingar í stórum atvinnutækiferum. Við skoðum líka bæi eins og Hestvig sem hefur búið við olíuðnað árum saman til að sjá hver langtímaáhrifin eru.“

Skoða viðhorf heimamanna

Það er hins vegar ekki eingöngu horft á stóru tækiferin. „Við erum að skoða viðhorf heimamanna og safna heildstæðri þekkingu á því hvað er að gerast í samfélögunum. Sums staðar er áherslan á viðskiptatækiferi, annars staðar á öryggismál. Það er mikið talað um hvað gerist ef heimskaupstíðin bráðnar og siglingaleiðir opnast eða ef olía finnst á nýjum svæðum. Við erum líka að horfa á hið smáa. Býsna oft tengist fjölskyldunni mikilli fjárfestingu eins og þið hafið séð hér en við skoðum líka samfélög þar sem atvinnulífið byggir á nokkrum mismunandi greinum. Það þarf að taka það með í reikninginn ef ætlunin er að byggja upp lifandi samfélag.“

Íbúarnir virðast opnir fyrir ólíkum lausnum og gera sér grein fyrir að það þarf líka að styðja við litla frumkvöðulinn, jafnvel þótt hann sjái ekki nema einni fjölskyldu farborða. Þegar við ræðum við fólk þá fáum við hugmyndir og sýn og það vill ekki bara hið stóra. Það getur verið einfalt og ódýrt að ráðast í litlu atriðin og oft er hægt að vinna í þeim á sama tíma og stefnt er að stærri markmiðum.“

Móta stefnurnar að vilja fólksins

Verkefnið skiptist upp í þrjú verkþætti. Í fyrsta skrefinu er lítið á viðhorf íbúa en til þess var haldinn íbúafundur á Reyðarfirði fyrir skemmstu. Þar var reynt að fá íbúa til að hugsa út í þróun staðarins næstu 10-30 árin út

frá þeim auðlindum og samfélagsgerð sem til staðar er. Búið er að heimsækja alla staðina tólf í þessum tilgangi og næsta skref er að taka saman niðurstöður og ræða við viðeigandi stjórnvöld. Ekki er bara rætt við sveitastjórnir því tilgangurinn er meðal annars að komast að því hvort byggðaaætlanir virki í raun og séu sniðnar að þörfum íbúanna.

„Það eru allir með stefnur sem snúa að byggðamálum eða norðurslóðum, hvort sem það er Evrópu-sambandið, Norðurlandaráð eða stakar ríkisstjórnir. Við reynum að spyrja bæði þá sem móta stefnuna og þá sem eiga að framfylgja henni. Við berum svör ráðamanna saman við svör fólksins og ef fólk vill eitt-hvað annað en stefnt hefur verið að þá þarf að skoða það.“

Atvinnuálin koma oftast fyrir

Lisbeth segir fjölbreytnina í valinu á sveitarfélögunum koma vel fram í svörum fólksins. „Þau velta algjörlega á samhenginu á hverjum stað og uppbyggingu stjórnkerfisins.“ Atvinnuálin er það sem helst brennur á fólk en undir ólíkum formerkjum. „Sums staðar vantar fjölbreyttari störf, annars staðar einfaldlega atvinnu og enn annars staðar stuðning við frumkvöðla.“

Fjarðabyggð var þar engin undantekning en þátttakendur bentu á að stærstu vandamálin fælust í einhæfu atvinnulífi, jafnvel af mikilli áherslu á atvinnulífið í samfélaginu. Samgöngur og hversu dreift sveitarfélagið er var einnig nefnt og minnst á að fjölbreytni vantaði í afþreyingu. Að sama skapi voru stærstu sóknarfærin talin felast í stuðningi við frumkvöðla, aukinni samvinnu milli austfirskra sveitar-

félaga og að koma því á framfæri sem þegar er til á svæðinu.

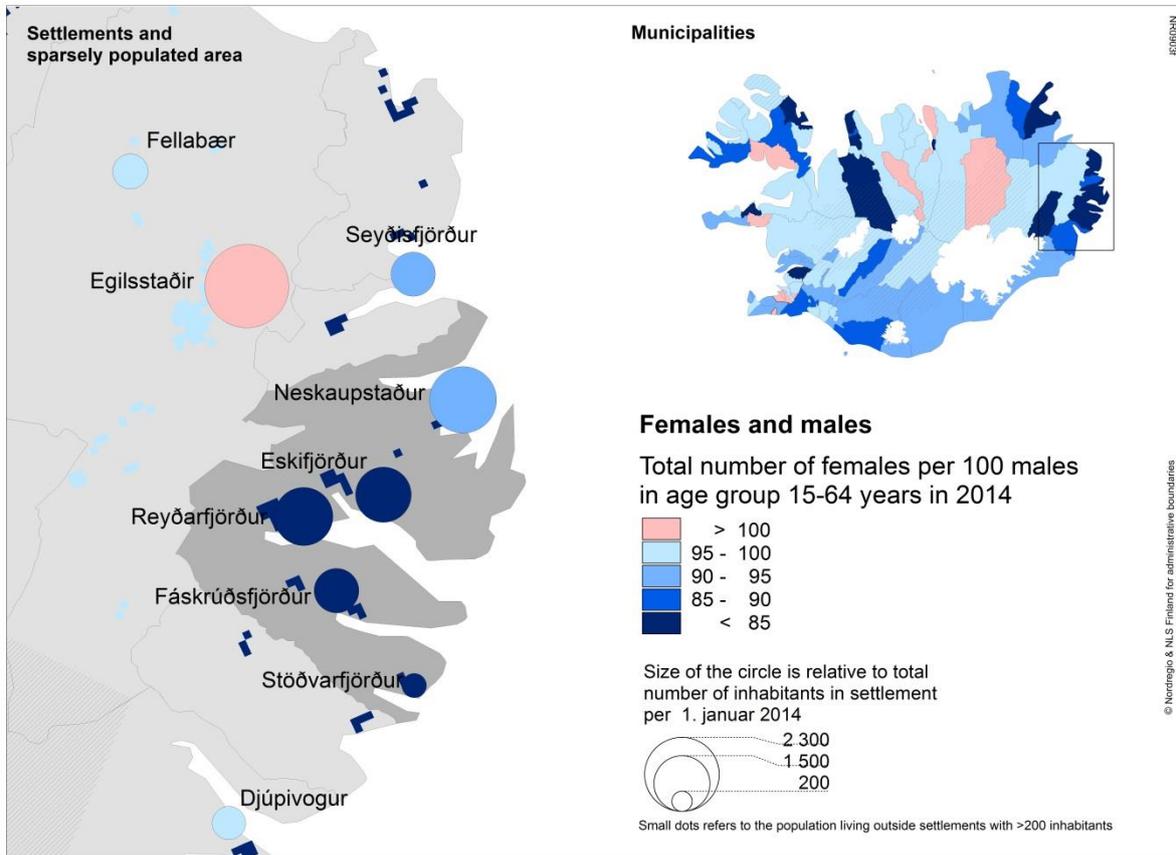
Íbúarnir almennt ánægðir með samfélagið

Lisbeth er varfærin þegar hún er spurð út í niðurstöður enda á ekki að kynna lokaskýrsluna fyrr en um mitt næsta ár. „Mér finnst fólk þetta velur sér að búa á norðurslóðum jafn fjölbreytt og annars staðar. Ég sé engan einn samnefnara meðal þess. Kannski sérðu meira um fólk sem nýtur útveru en við hittum fólk sem kann vel við sig innandyr. Þetta ræðst fyrst og fremst af persónuleika hvers og eins. Snjór og vond veður eru algeng á veturna en annars tekst fólk á við áskoranir hvers staðar á sinn hátt.“

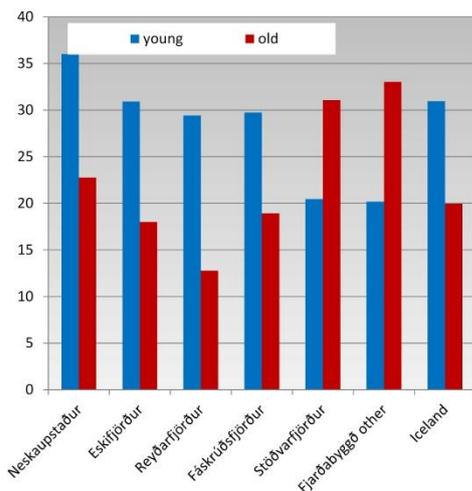
Íbúarnir virðast almennt ánægðir með samfélagið sitt en það er erfitt að alhæfa út frá þeim sem taka þátt í rannsókn okkar. Við náum til hópsins sem vill ræða samfélagið en ekki til þeirra sem er sama. Fólk sem kemur til okkar sér samt alveg ákveðin vandamál en líka það sem þarf til að þróa samfélagið áfram.“

Þriðja og síðasta skrefið í rannsókninni verður að bera það sem fram kemur hjá íbúum og ráðamönnum fram á alþjóðlegum vettvangi. „Við vinnum út frá ákveðinni aðferðafræði en við erum með vinnuhóp sem tekur lokaákvæðanir um vinnuna. Það sem við fáum frá hverjum stað fyrir sig ræður því við hverja við tölum næst. Samtalið á síðasta stiginu gæti bæði orðið milli ákveðinna ríkja eða á samráðsvettvangi Norðurlandanna alla. Við höfum safnað miklu af þekkingu, staðreyndum og tölfræði, vandi verður útkoman góðar spurningar til þeirra sem taka ákvæðanir.“

Population Structure in Fjarðabyggð

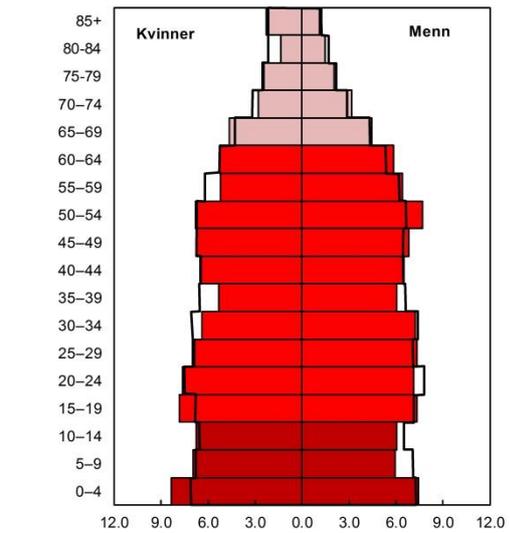


Demographic dependency ratio 2014



'Young' refers to share of population aged 0-14 years in relation to population aged 15-64 years
'Old' refers to share of population aged 65 years and more in relation to population aged 15-64 years

Age and gender structure in Fjarðabyggð, in 2014

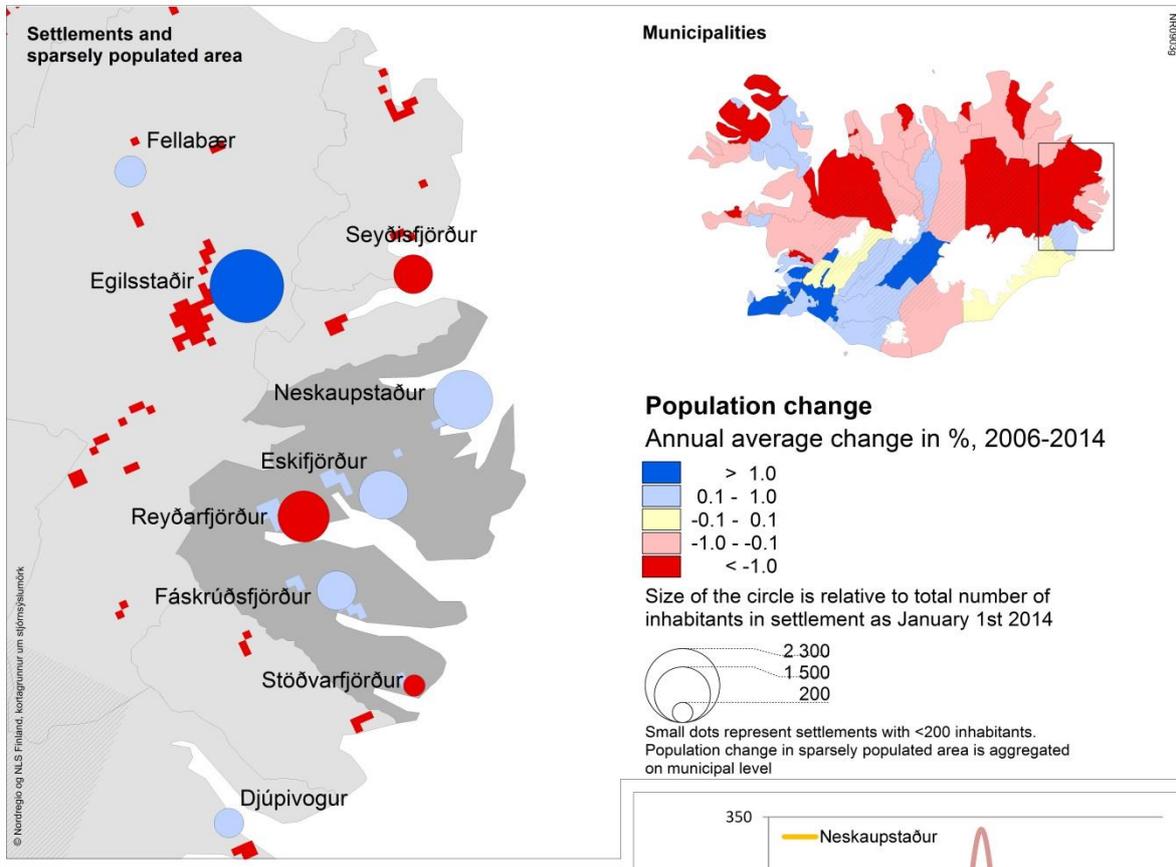


The black line refers to Icelandic average

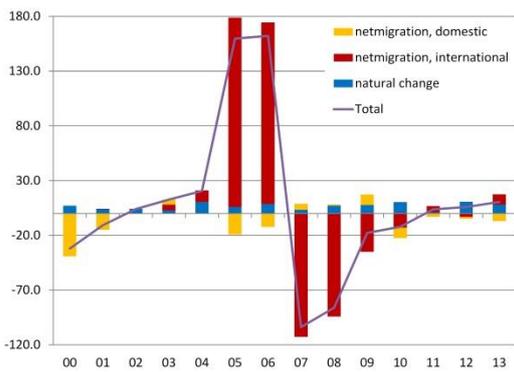
Data source: Statistics Iceland

NORDREGIO
Nordic Centre for Spatial Development

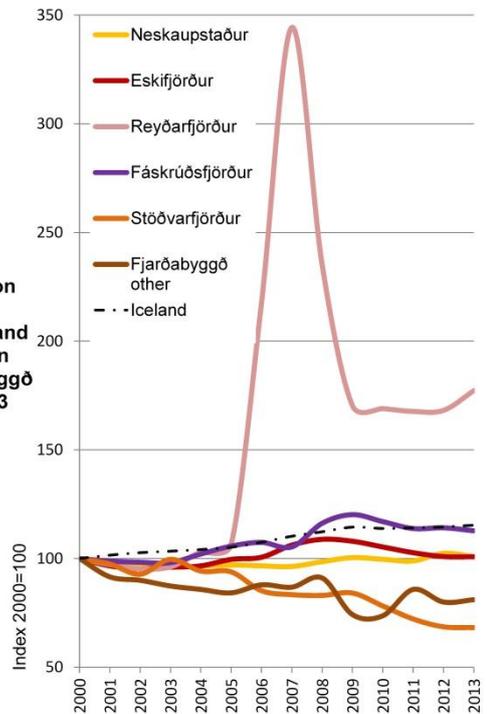
Population change in Fjarðabyggð



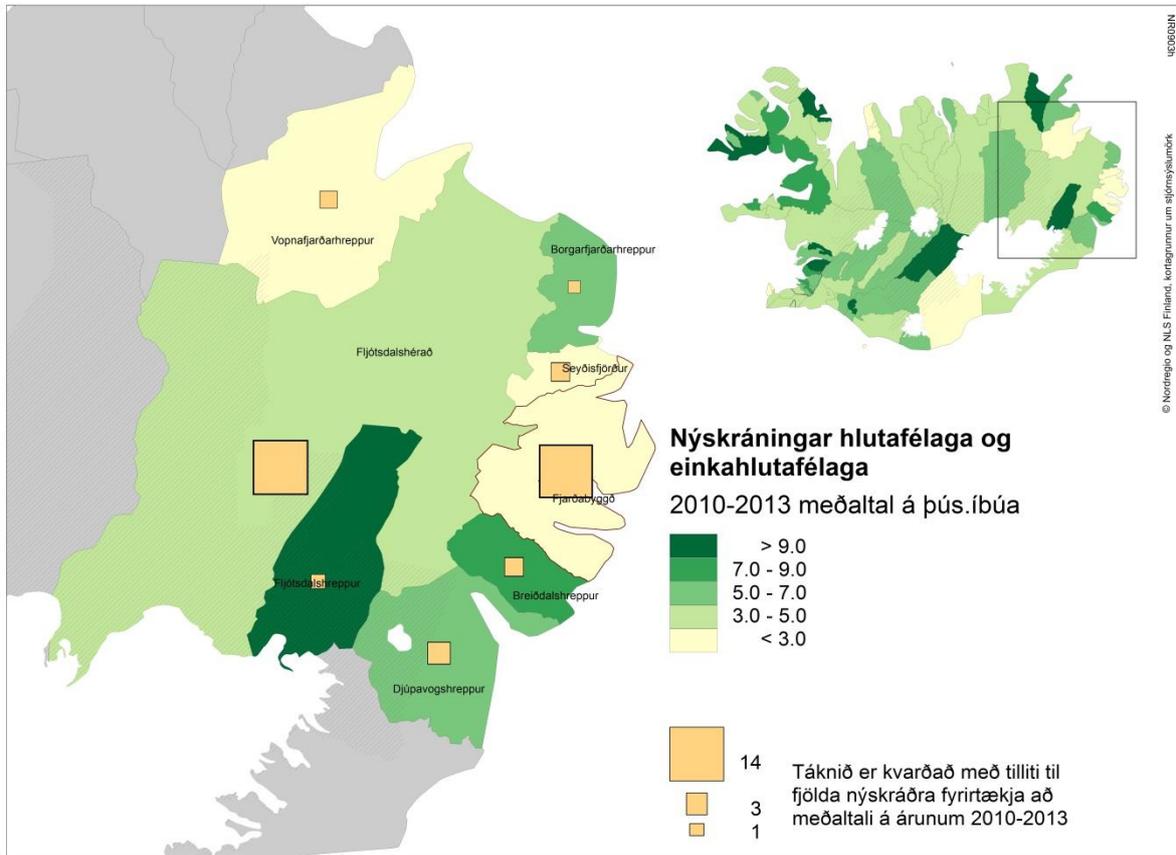
Population change by main components, in % 2000-2013



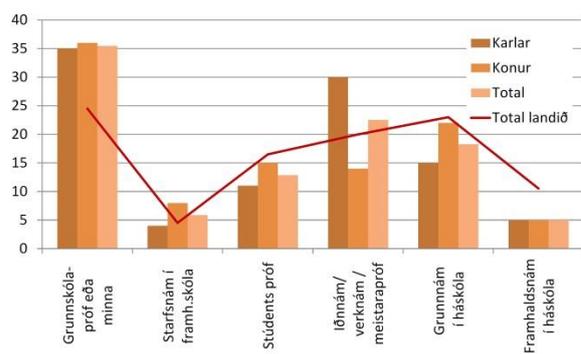
Population change in cities and villages in Fjarðabyggð 2000-2013



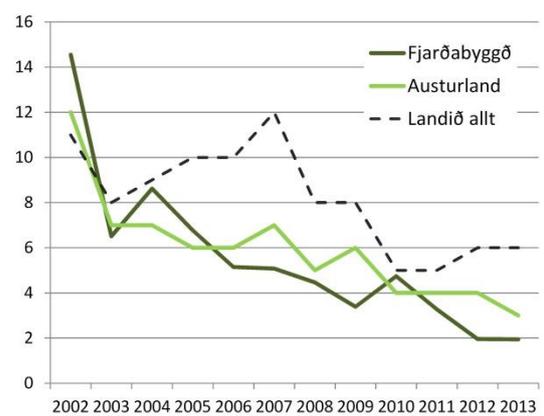
Rannsóknir og Þróun (R&D) í Fjarðabyggð



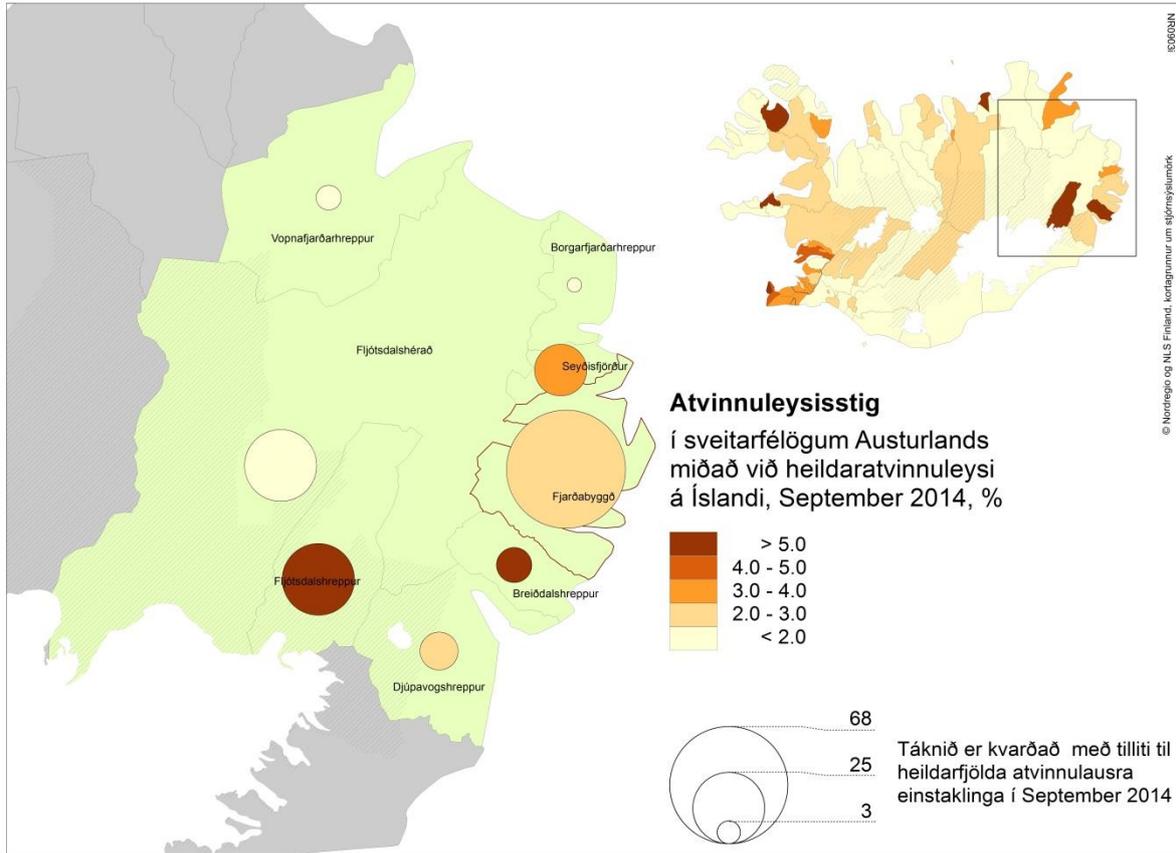
Hlutfallsskipting íbúa 18 ára og eldri 2011-2012 eftir menntun í Austurland



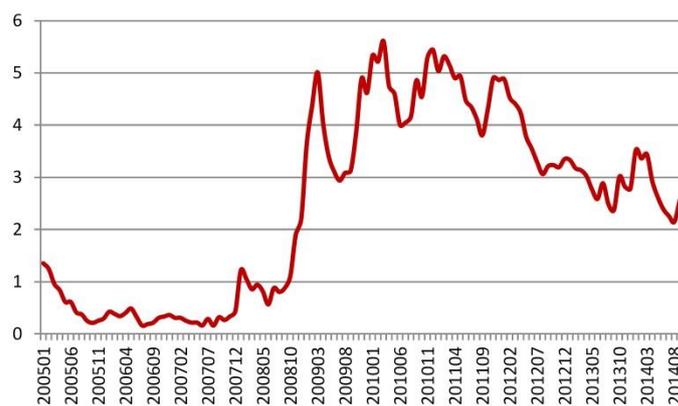
Nýskráningar hlutafélaga og einkahlutafélaga eftir sveitarfélögum 2002-2013



Atvinnuleysi í Fjarðabyggð



Áætlað atvinnuleysi í Fjarðabyggð frá jan. 2005 til sept. 2014, %



Fjarðabyggð - fjöldi atvinnulausa í sept. 2014

Atvinnulausir - allir* 68

Kyn

Karlar 22
Konur 46

Aldur

16-24 ára 14
25-34 ára 21
35-54 ára 20
55 - 69 ára 13

Atvinnugrein

Iðnaður/hráefnav. 10
Verslun 10
Gisting og veitingar 10
Heilbr./félagsþj 4
Annað 34

Starfsgrein

Sérmenntaðir 9
Þjónustustörf 10
Verkafélk 21
Annað 28

Lengd atvinnuleysis

0-6 mánn (skammtíma) 34
6-12 mánn (langtíma) 16
meira en ár (langtíma) 18