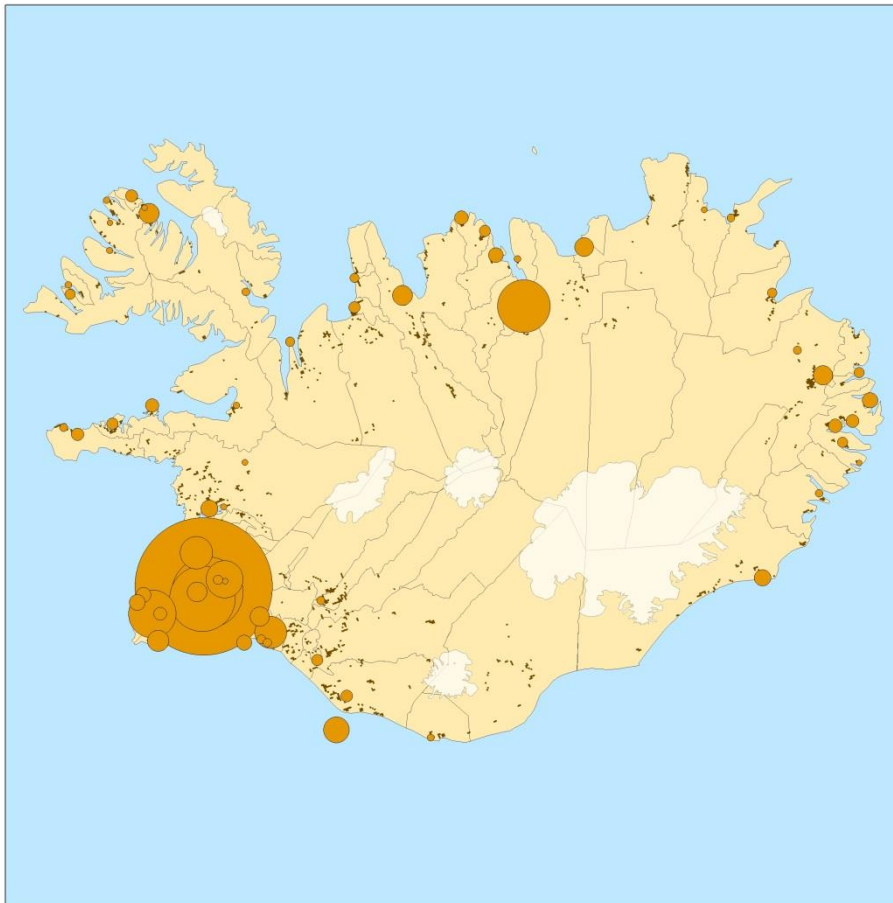




## **Future development initiatives for Árborg and Fjarðabyggð in a regional and national context.**

**Report from a foresight workshop in Sauðárkrókur, 24.August. 2015.**



*Index map: Population distribution Iceland*

## **Introduction**

Nordic Council of Minister's 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 (vision phase) focuses on the perspectives, seen from the point of view of local inhabitants and their communities, the second one (realism phase) is elevated to the municipal, regional and national level with participants consisting of various stakeholders and administrative institutions from various levels. The third phase will involve workshops in a transnational perspective (The realization phase). The Icelandic member of the working group for sustainable regional development in the Nordic Arctic is Snorri B. Sigurðsson, from the regional development institute in Iceland.

The vision phase period lasted from September 2014 to February 2015. As a result of those, various visions were articulated for the future of those local communities, as well as phrasing ideas about how to implement the visions to make them come true.

The case sites were chosen from a criterion that they should represent a combination of different characteristics dominated in the Nordic Arctic. Arborg and Fjarðabyggð were selected as case sites in Iceland. Arborg because of its vicinity to the capital region and associated growth potential and Fjarðabyggð because of its relatively recent new industrial structure (with the establishment of the Aluminium smelter).

This second workshop in Iceland was the first one (in the realism phase that lasted from August to November 2015) and was held in the headquarters of the Icelandic regional development institute in Sauðárkrókur, North West Iceland. Various stakeholders had been invited and Snorri acted as a local contact person. Fifteen participants came from various administrative levels

The results from the workshop in Sauðárkrókur are summarized in the following document and follow the structure of the workshop program, with an additional summary of the results from the thematic discussions on economy and job generation, education and skills, culture and social activities and infrastructure and transportation. Maps that were used as a background material in the workshop are also included.

## **Economy and job creation**

- **Which initiatives can strengthen the economy and create jobs?**

### **The elder populations conditions**

The elder and nursing homes situation is really bad and needs an urgent reform to improve conditions. There is a need for nursing homes for around 50-60 elders in Arborg. The participation and contribution of the municipality is non existing and it is not considered that there is a lack of specialised and qualified nursing home personell. Economic sources are lacking and there is no plan on behalf of the national authorities. A parallell structural problem was also identified in East Iceland, particularly in Eskifjörður (community within Fjarðabyggð).

- Barriers: Economic sources to ensure sound development are shunned by the national authorities and the municipalities are ignorant of the need for improvement.

### **Cooperation between educational institutions and labour market**

There is a need to deepen the collaboration between schools and labour market, especially in South Iceland. There is a need for more willingness to partner with each other. The schools need to be more open minded for the introduction of companies and institutions who generate jobs in the communities, and the job providers need to be more attentive to what is going on in the schools. Participants believed that the labour market could collaborate with schools on primary and secondary levels. There is an example of good practice of this in East Iceland, where there is an ongoing collaboration between the nonprofit private organisation, Austurbrú, and companies, municipalities and East Iceland fisheries school. The school in Norðfjörður was from the beginning the main initiator, but now the collaboration has been extended to cover all in the East part. The educational programs are not part of the normal curriculums in the school and classes are held beyond working hours (nights and weekends). Representatives from the municipalities who were at the workshop in Sauðárkrókur, believe that these closer ties between labour market and the schools would fit students in 9th and 10th grade (the final classes in primary school) and first year students in gymnasiums.

The need has even increased with youths decreased access to companies. Their understanding of the function of the labour market is not as sharp as before. The participants felt this was an urgent matter and articulated that the state should mobilize initiatives in this direction, along with municipalities, private and public companies, and the schools.

- Barriers: Lack of will to collaborate and rigidity

### **Environment**

Emphasis on environmental issues has decreased according to participants. They believe they should be part of childrens upbringing from early on in their life. This should be implemented immediately. It is particularly important to increase awareness among children and youth. Focus should also be emphasised on waste recycling and sewage, and securing sustainable practices. Homes, schools,

inhabitants and municipalities should mutually work towards these goals, and the should be ongoing and continuing.

- Barriers: Lack of interest in supporting environmental issues

### **Innovation**

Limited discussion, time shortage and lack of courage are mentioned as factors preventing innovative dynamics. Courage to innovate is to be found within companies according to participants, whereas individuals are less prone to realize the ideas they might have by themselves,. The participants aired ideas on strengthening and encouraging innovation courage that they believe often exists among children. Also to prevent the creativity among them being suffocated through the educational system (this rests on the assumption that the educational system is often counterproductive to creativity and innovative courage).

Rigid curriculums decrease independence and do not take into account the needs and multiplicity among pupils, but aim instead at shaping everyone the same, and spur effectivisation in the economy of the schools.

The participants discussed vividly the importance of allowing flexibility and multiplicity in the schools with active support of parents. They also believed that the image of innovation should be cherished by creating framework and providing facilities for embryonic initiatives. The schools, the households and society in general need to be involved in campaigning for this kind of development to stimulate activity and innovation.

- Barriers: Funding issues and mental shift

### **Institutional support infrastructure and workplaces**

Peripheral areas do not experience that they have access to the institutional support infrastructure of the country (for example the national research council). Everything is so capital centred and little attention is paid to local service in the rest of the country. It has been noticed that Rannis/the national research council funds very few projects generated or invented by individuals and companies in the „landsbyggð“ (Icelandic term for all areas outside the capital region). By the same coin, the requirement for increased effectivization within insitutions that have multiple locations have the most negative effects on the units located in „landsbyggð“. The participants assessed it to be urgent, that state authorities and municipalities counteracted this type of development, and found solutions to strengthen the labour makret and local communities of the countryside municipalities.

The participants felt a need for creating some framework for creative industries, to stimulate thriving culture and performing arts. They believed lack of patience and funding were main factors of hindrance for creativity to thrive and enable change of participation by the state authority, municipalities and artists.

Tourism services offered in the municipalities should be based upon the distinctive characteristics of each area, both natural attributes and cultural attributes. The main limitation towards reaching this is short termed vision or lack thereof. Therefore it is urgent that the municipalities are willing partners in collaboration with tourism companies, environmental organisations and other stakeholders, to ensure improved planning, sustainability and functionality.

- Barriers: Lack of connectivities of the institutional support infrastructure with people and companies in the countryside. Lack of intersectional collaboration to secure sustainable development.

## **Education and skills**

Discussants agreed that an analytical conduct was needed in order to identify within what fields of occupations, jobs were created, what kind of education was needed and which preference the youth demanded. Access to varied and multiple educational opportunities will support more diversified development and thus enhance variety in the community. Also some firmly ingrained ideas about what is valid education need to be revolted. Varied educational possibilities are most likely to support positive skill development.

The participants were doubtful about what is the precondition for which, change in the education, or change in the mindset. It is a complex reflection. One of the consideration discussed was whether the gymnasiums in each location should locally adapt to local conditions, in order to reflect job market. The participants reflected over whether it would be possible to change in that direction without the municipalities also had the financial responsibility of running the gymnasiums.

Some participants expressed concerns. Firstly if local conditions were to be the point of departure for curriculums and programs available in the countryside schools, availability of programs would be fewer, and less varied.

Technology can make up to limitations in transport (through providing and supplying with distance educational possibilities). The participants agreed that those possibilities should be harnessed as much as possible.

Pedagogics need to be up to date and sensitive to zeitgeist. Also they need to reflect what is applicable in the labour market. Furthermore the discussants felt that educational system should also be open to grown-up people, but identified a barriers in shortage of time as well as lack of will to coordinate and combine work and education (both on behalf the educational places as well as on behalf of the employers). People involved in work and functions based on shifts are often challenged trying to combine education and work.

The participants felt that there were possibilities in more strategic education focused on the labour needs of existing companies. The large scale industry school of Alcoa is an example of how these things

can be better. The participants mentioned specific needs for education in food industry since food production in some areas is a dominant occupation for many inhabitants (this is true both in the country side and the coastal fishing villages). Also education in logistics was identified as needed in places with existing shipping companies.

## **Culture and social activities**

### **What initiatives can stimulate regional proudness and strengthened attractiveness of the area?**

Participants wanted to make clear that there is limited access to the supply of state supported events and cultural offerings, for the population living outside the capital region. The symphonic orchestra and national museum and theater are an example of that. It is therefore of utmost importance to nurture selv-initiated cultural initiatives in the municipalities, enable them to grow, so locals and guests alike can enjoy it.

### **The dynamic of inhabitants and outmigrated**

The discussant felt culture can be an important part in peoples life and improved life contenment, but lack of economic funding is its main limitation. The dynamic within the population is an important source in making culture and events. There can be hindrances, though, for example limited cultural literacy, shortage of time in life, transport hindrances and lack of exposure/visibility. By creating a framework and supporting local cultural initiatives and other cultural events, the municipalities can nurture local and regional culture. Cultural consultants are often mentioned as important actors in spurring culture and social activities in places. In cases where communities offer artist residences, creative capital in artists settling for a while, can be marked through blowing life into the local art scene. It is also important to invite emigrated artists with background in the region to visit with exhibits and event making. An example of a succesful local development initiative like that is, „að heiman og heim“/Home is where the Island heart beats“.

The group believe inclusion, participation, initiative, cohesion and solidarity among inhabitants is very important within a framework that supports difference and enables entrepreneurs a maneuveru space. There is a lot of difference in facilities, tools and expertise available and provided between places and municipalities. The locals need to nurture cultural heritage and share proudness of its origin. Fundraising cultural and social activities is seldom problem free, but there are sources to be found within the state, municipalities and companies, so it is worthwhile the try.

Mentality and acknowledgement of the community and society in general can make a lot of difference in terms of how the local cultural life is turning out, and what social activities are offered. In some cases the initiatives that are there need better outreach, to get to people. The municipality could be supported this part while the cultural events needs to come from the inhabitants themselves.

### **Village festivals and events**

Village festivals like LUNGA in Seyðisfjörður blow life into the communities which attract guests from many different directions. The discussants feel that emigrated people who left to become

educated and specialise themselves in creative industries but have not moved permanently back are still valuable to the communities where they were brought up. They mentioned several initiatives that have contributed to re-imagining of the communities, for example Bræðslan in Borgarfjörður Eystri, and Eistnaflug in Neskaupsstaður. These festivals and events strengthen the self image and reshape it. The municipalities gain by these in various ways. Some of the discussants felt the municipality representatives were too ignorant and needed to be more positively aware of the benefits, and acknowledge these initiatives for them to thrive into the future. Events like that are often supported economically by the municipalities, this goes also for music festivals, whether located in cities or smaller settlements.

## **Infrastructure and transport**

### **Which initiatives can strengthen transport linkages and infrastructure?**

#### **Fiber development**

ICT infrastructure and modernisation are interlinked. The municipalities see this as a prioritized assignment according to the participants. The quality of the net connection and service is a hindrance in different ways. Therefore the state needs to emphasise population equity in terms of access to quality net connections, through fiber infrastructure. The municipalities are responsible for tasks related to improving access. There were various discussions in the group. The municipalities can, according to discussants, play a role in making an emphasis on good ICT infrastructure, as well as making it more visible to the existing population. This will also appear attractive for potential inhabitants in that it is presented as an asset or quality in the community. This would appeal to young people who are especially attentive to image making on social medias.

#### **Transport**

Transport weigh heavily as a topic of discussion in areas outside of the capital region, more remote areas in particular, and areas with distance to main population centers. The participant brought up several ideas to improve transport linkages. Of the several issues mentioned, road tunnels were specifically emphasised as a key for improved transport linkages in East Iceland, where local stakeholders and population in some cases are facing one sided bridges and gravel roads as part of their daily commuting reality (for example in Berufjörður).

Vivid discussion was on the South coastal road/Suðurstrandarvegur (between Þorlákshöfn and Reykjanes peninsula), a road which could link South Iceland and Reykjanes peninsula both as an excursion circle, and as a commuting route. This has for long been discussed as a potential in improving transport links for this part of the country. However, it has not proved to be the optimum solution for improvement because the road is badly serviced by the road authority, especially in the winter time, where it proves to be a non functional road, because of icing conditions, snow and bad

weather conditions for driving that route.

### **Flight connections**

For a while now, there has been an acting committee at work to try out international and scheduled airline connection from the airport at Egilsstaðir. Previous efforts have failed but the local stakeholders and regional actors believe it can prove to be an alternative gateway into the country and into areas that so far have not yet reaped benefits too much out of the increased tourism development in Iceland. Those who have been working towards realising this, feel that they need support from central government, who might assist on developing a strategy for international flight connections from the different parts of the country where airports are located to accommodate international landings and departures. Iceland has three available internationally fit airstrips (Keflavík, Akureyri and Egilsstaðir). The only international airport in function now is Keflavik. It is in itself an isolating organisation of aviation connectivity's. Which proved correct at the big eruption at Eyjafjallajökull, where international flights could be re-routed instead of totally shut off, between the three available internationally fit airstrips, depending on wind direction of the ashes. It can also be argued that having three internationally fit airstrips in the country of which only one is in use, is wastage of utilization. If demand, especially of international flights is there, which is at least true for now. So why not use the opportunity. The participants from East Iceland told the group about a contract in the making with one of the big travel whole sale agents, Clive Stacey and his company, discover the world, on flight connections from UK to Egilsstaðir, starting next year.

Domestic flight connections are generally not categorised as public transport, but should be according to the participants. This affects the population in East Iceland quite seriously, because it is heavily expensive to fly to Reykjavík, where service is specialised and maybe only available. To solve this problem, a system parallel to what was done in Scotland might be development, where the inhabitants got a flight pass, given that they fulfilled certain requirements.

### **Life conditions and access to service**

Improved settlement conditions were felt needed among the participants of the workshop. This would improve equity within Iceland. Several ideas were aired, on how to improve and increase the attraction momentum for the more remote areas, and the countryside as well as smaller settlements outside of the capital region.

Fiscal incentives were discussed, in terms of varying the tax depending on settlement and access to services. Discussants meant that the state authority would have to come forward with implementing ideas in that direction, and that state policies in general were quite influential in shaping whether living in the countryside had a positive or negative effect. However, some discussants also pointed out that where people decide to live also determines state and municipally derived income.



People discussed the incentives made to equalise cost burden of house heating in cold areas where geothermal heating is not provided as an example. They also discussed tentatively a possibility to implement dispensation on tax rates by settlement for paying back student loans. People felt there was to identified a will to look into these matters in the newest bill for byggðaáætlun/regional development plan. A couple of participants pinpointed that there was a positive perception to be found among politicians and clerical workers in the sectoral ministries, but that in the minister of finance and Economy there was a massive resistance against measures implemented of this type.

Lastly, but not least discussants expressed a strong wish that all of the country would be connected with fiber and emphasised that this would even be a precondition for working and living in the countryside. After all it turned out that people at the meeting perceived this issue (so-called byggðalína) to be the single most important and immediate political development move, that Iceland in its various communities and settlements were facing.

## **The regions visibility within Iceland**

**Which initiatives can strengthen and support distinctive characteristics and attractiveness? How can the coherence and solidarity within the region be improved? Marketing campaign or internal processes at work?**

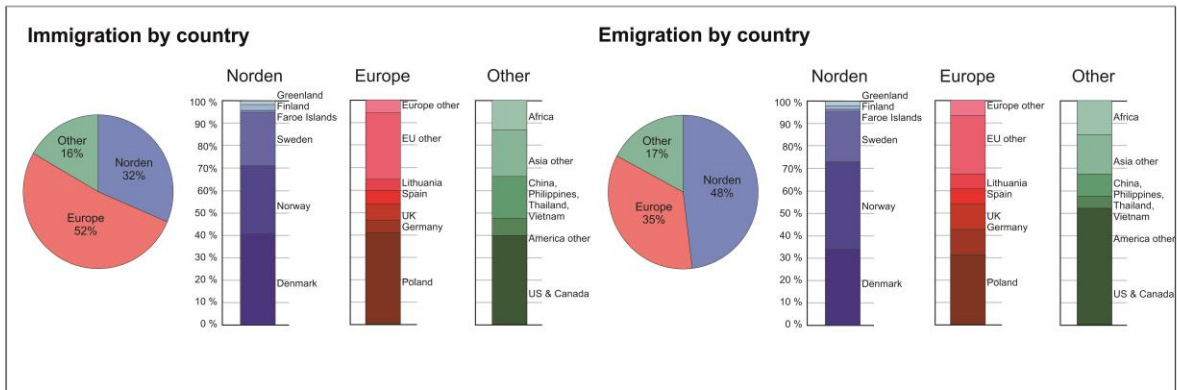
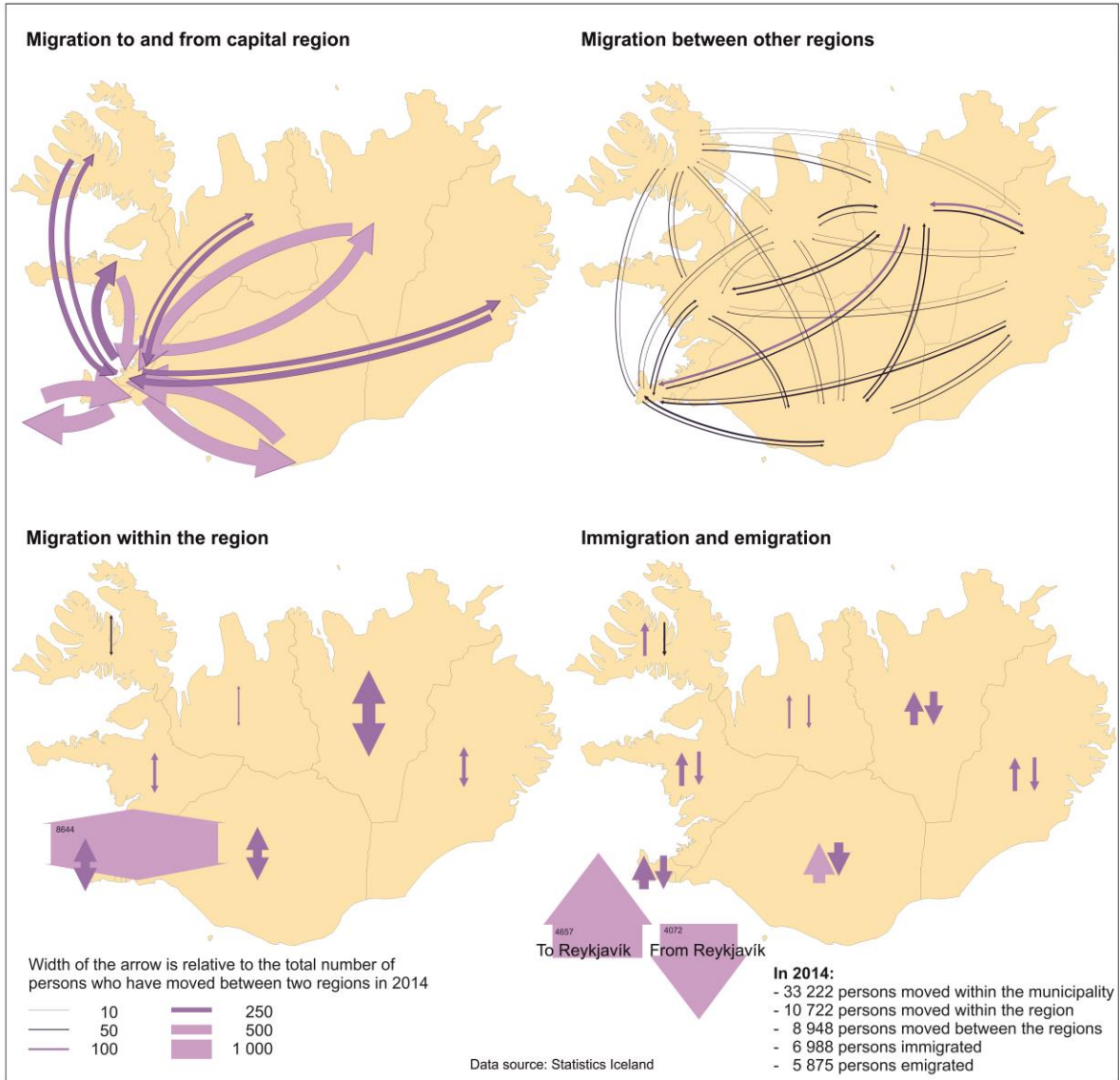
It was considered important to make use of the technological progress of current times, to increase visibility of the regions and municipalities in a national context. Participants also identified that regions with a coherent population and where solidarity was noticeable, appeared stronger and more resilient. This often proved true in amalgamations of municipalities – where the opposite turned out to be the case in areas where ingrained local patriotism and rivalry was more dominating. To secure conditions of successful municipal reforms and amalgamation, the transport linkages and infrastructure within and among communities involved must be improved. As part of this process young peoples increased possibilities through mobility should be emphasised.

Better self image was discussed from different angles. Also proudness over origin. These two were seen to be interconnected. Some participants mentioned mentality change as necessary to overcome the hindrance of bad and destructive self image in the smaller and more remote settlements.

One idea brought forward was the slogan „countryside in the city“ from one of the participants from South of Iceland who thought that bridging both, was a definitive benefit, even applicable for the whole of South Iceland, whom he thought should skip municipal borders and be united as a regional body in goal and function. By that coin, that idea was created, that Iceland outside the capital region is both a place for Hill Billies and Cosmopolitans alike.

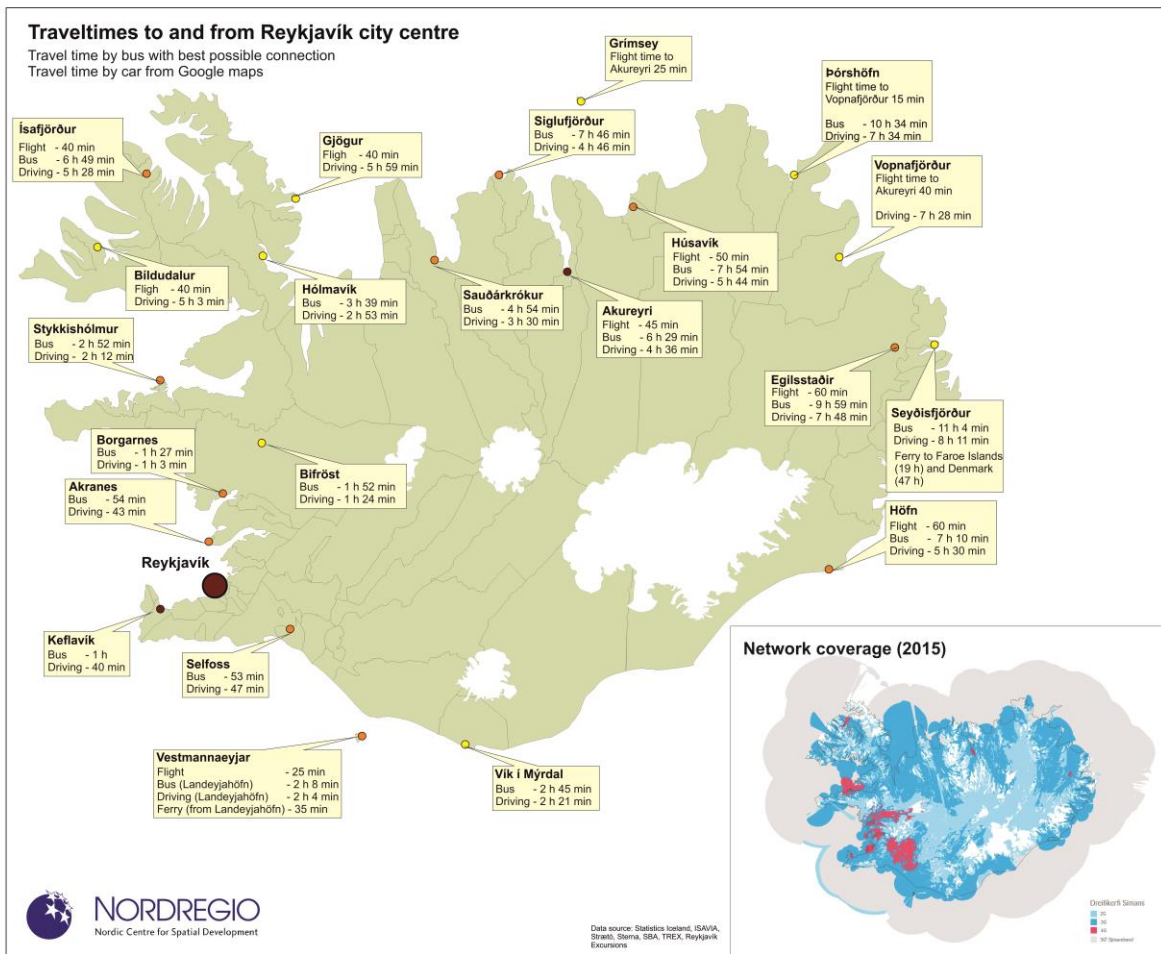
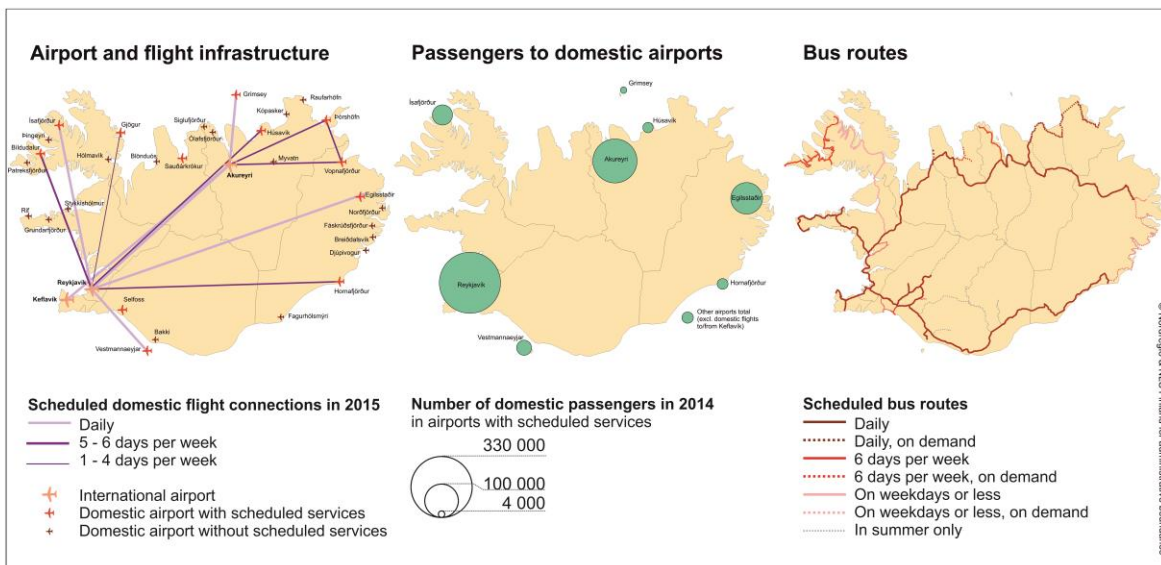
According to discussants, it was considered important to analyse specificities and distinctive characteristics of municipalities, and prioritize actions based on that.

# Domestic and international migration in 2014

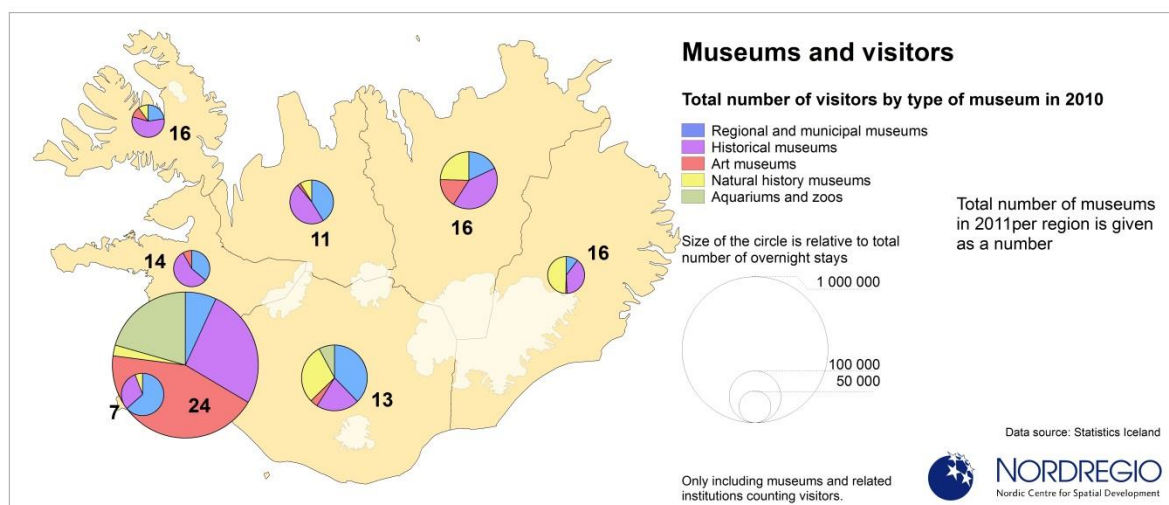
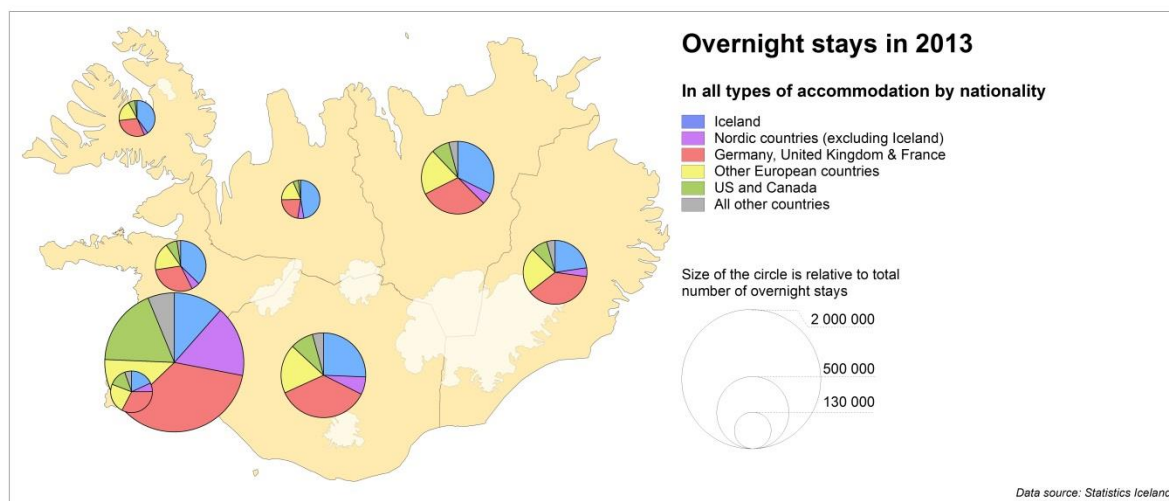
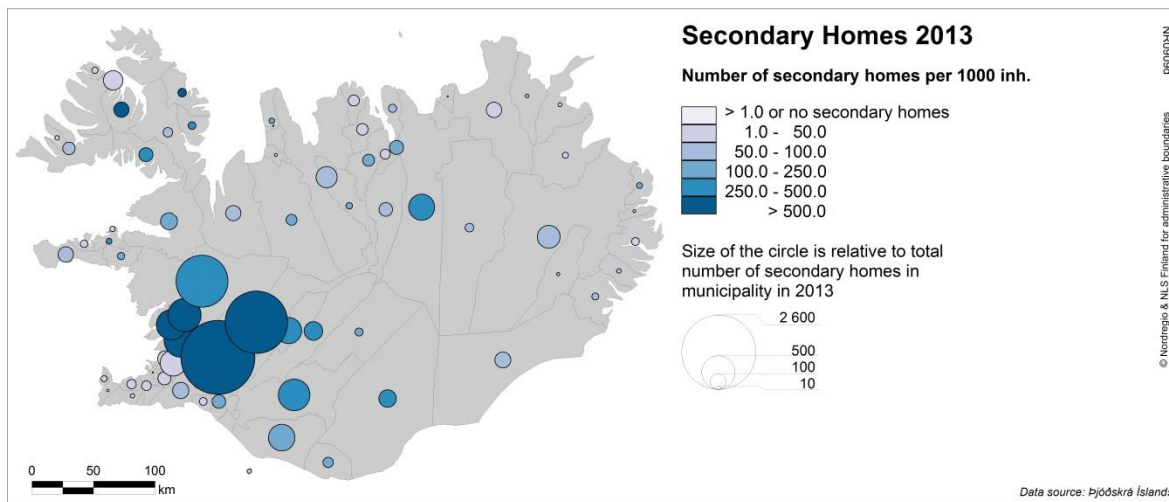


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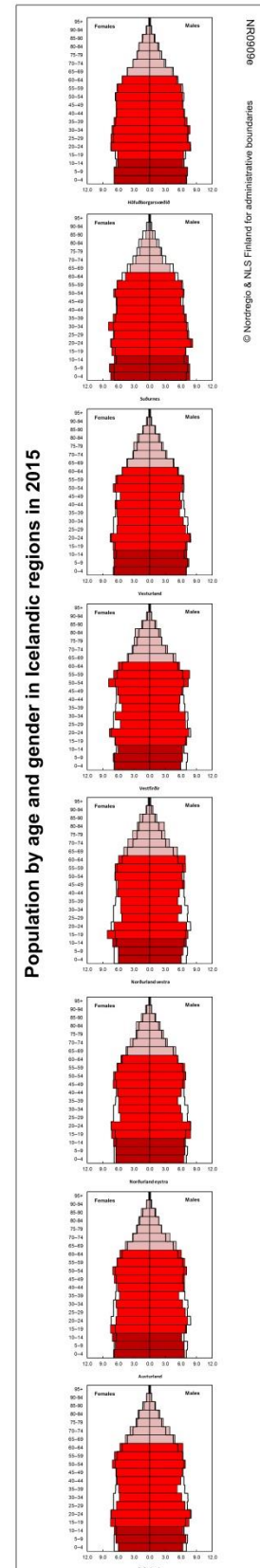
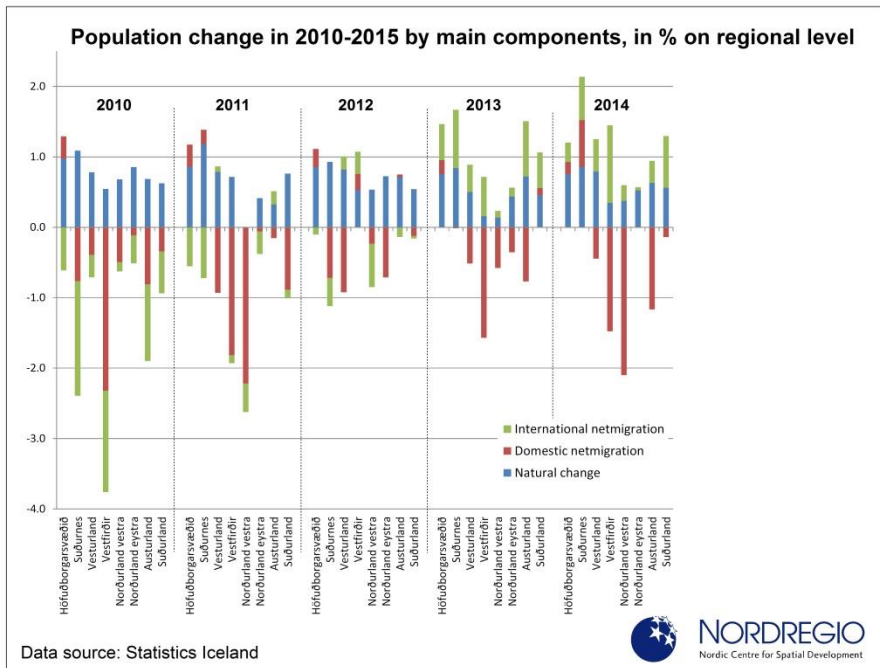
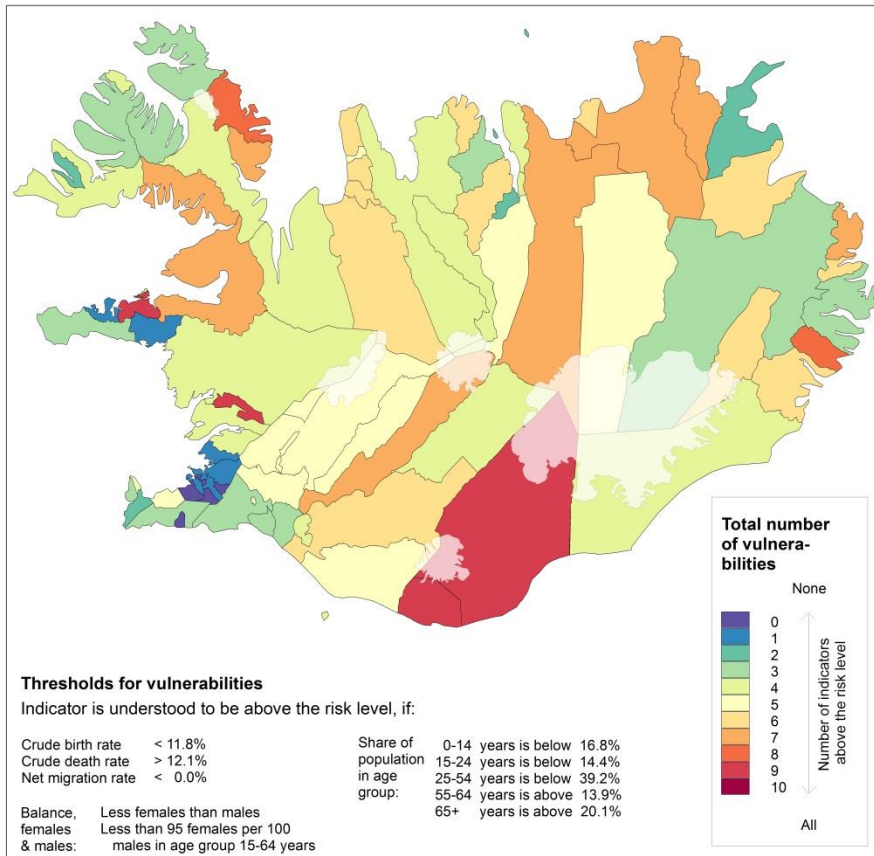
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# Leisure and culture



# Demographic vulnerabilities



## Participants

1.	Elfar Oliver Sigurðsson	Ungmennaráð Árborgar
2.	Ásta Kristín Sigurjónsdóttir	Fjarðabyggð sveitarfélag
3.	Ragnheiður Inga Sigurgeirsdóttir	Ungmennaráð Árborgar
4.	Sigurður Þór Sigurðsson	Árborg
5.	Magnús Hlynur Hreiðarsson	RÚV
6.	Hanna Dóra Hólm Másdóttir	Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti
7.	Snorri B. Sigurðsson	Byggðastofnun
8.	Guðmundur Guðmundsson	Byggðastofnun
9.	Stefanía Traustadóttir	Innanríkisráðuneyti
10.	Jóna Árný Þórðardóttir	Austurbrú
11.	Signý Ormarsdóttir	Austurbrú
12.	Ásta Snorradóttir	Fjarðabyggð
13.	Sigurður Árnason	Byggðastofnun
14.	Anna karlsdóttir	Nordregio
15.	Sigríður Þorgrímsdóttir	Byggðastofnun
16.	Þórarinn Sveinsson	SSA