



*The Regional Potential of Higher Education Institutions
Nordregio, Stockholm, December 12th 2011*

The Regional Research Center in Hornafjörður, Southeast Iceland

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Regional Research Center



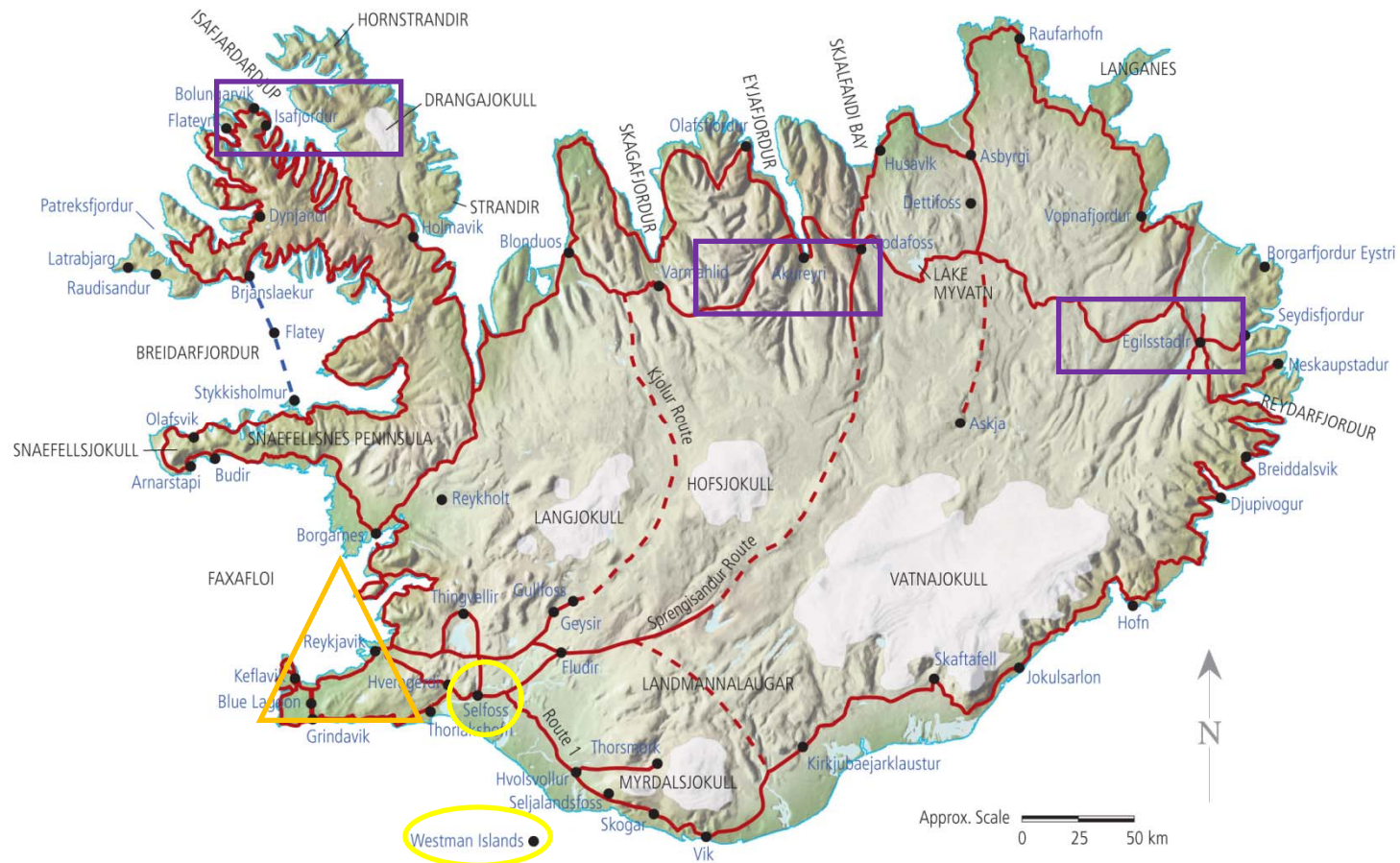
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KEYWORDS

- University of Iceland
- Regional Research Centres
- Nýheimar Knowledge Complex, Höfn
- Hornafjörður Municipality
- South-East Iceland
- Region of Vatnajökull tourism Cluster
- Vatnajökull National Park





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The Geography of Influence



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The Geography of Isolation



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**Hornafjörður – an *impossible* community
with *infinite* potential (!)**



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The University of Iceland

- Founded in 1911 - oldest, far largest and most diverse HEI in Iceland (5 schools & 25 faculties, ca. 14.000 students & ca. 1.400 permanent staff)
- In recent years has focussed more and more on the “universal” aspect of HEIs, i.e. increasing quality as defined by international standards
- Has had research “outposts” for several decades (e.g. in Mývatn), but activity was seasonal and solely for scientific purposes





UI Institute for RRCs

- The UI's *Institute for Regional Research Centres* is a research and service institution reporting to the University Council. The institute is organised around University of Iceland regional research centres in rural areas, which are independent organisational units. The institute is a venue for the university's collaboration with local authorities, institutions, businesses, associations and individuals based in rural areas. The objectives of the institute are furthermore to provide facilities for research in rural areas, increase the access of the general public to education and strengthen the relationship between the University of Iceland and the community and professional sector.

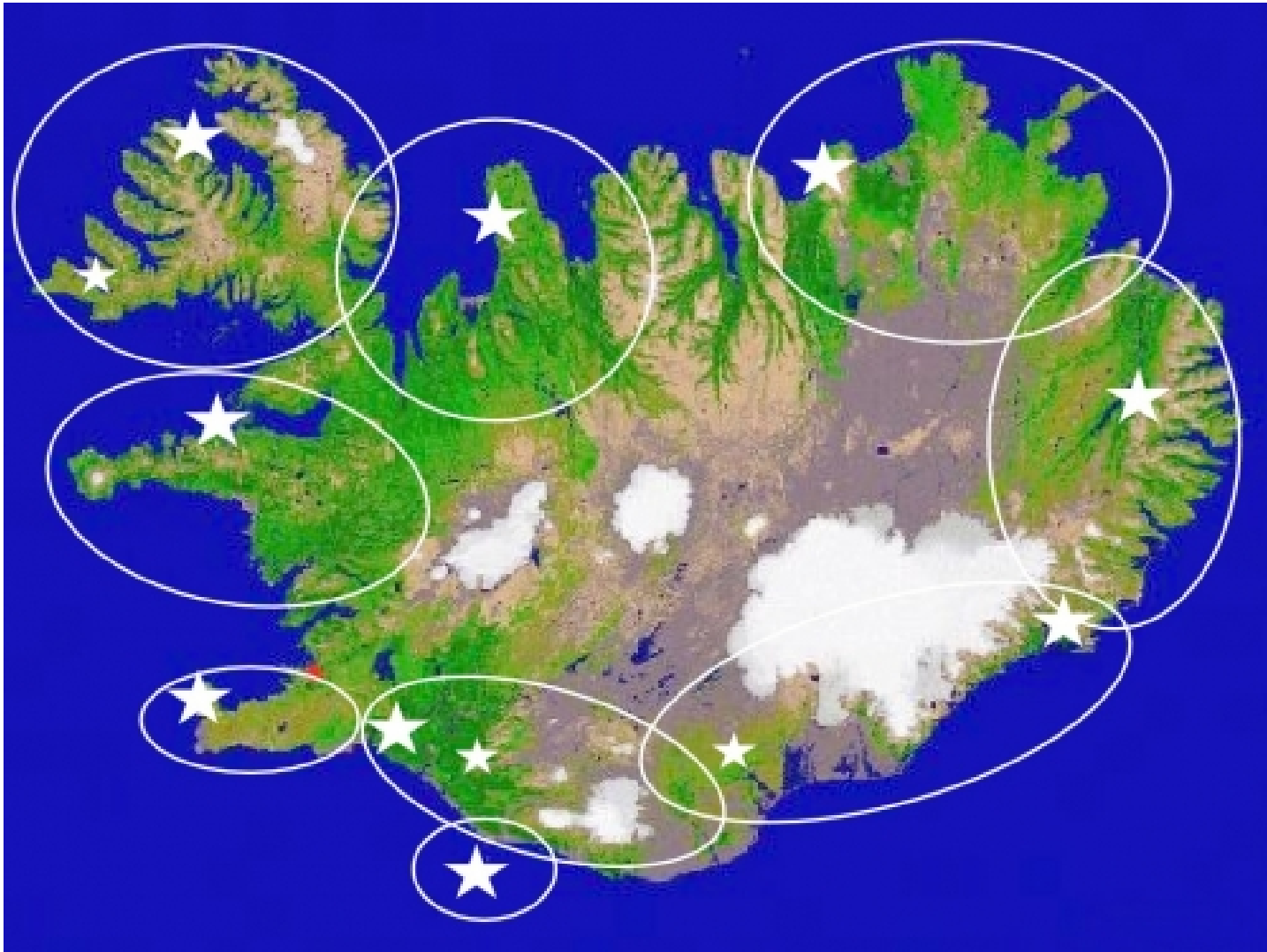




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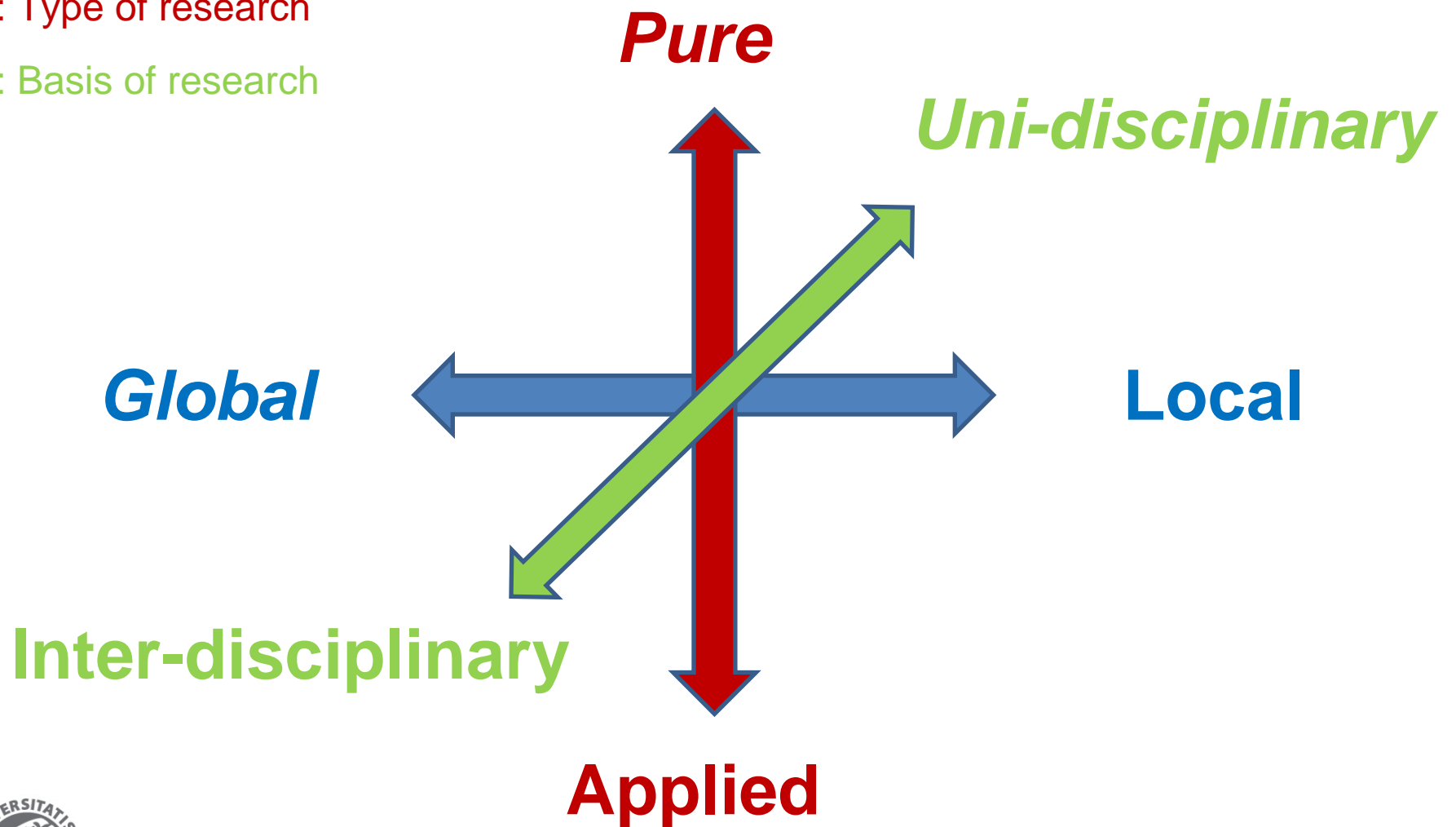
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1: Focus of research

2: Type of research

3: Basis of research

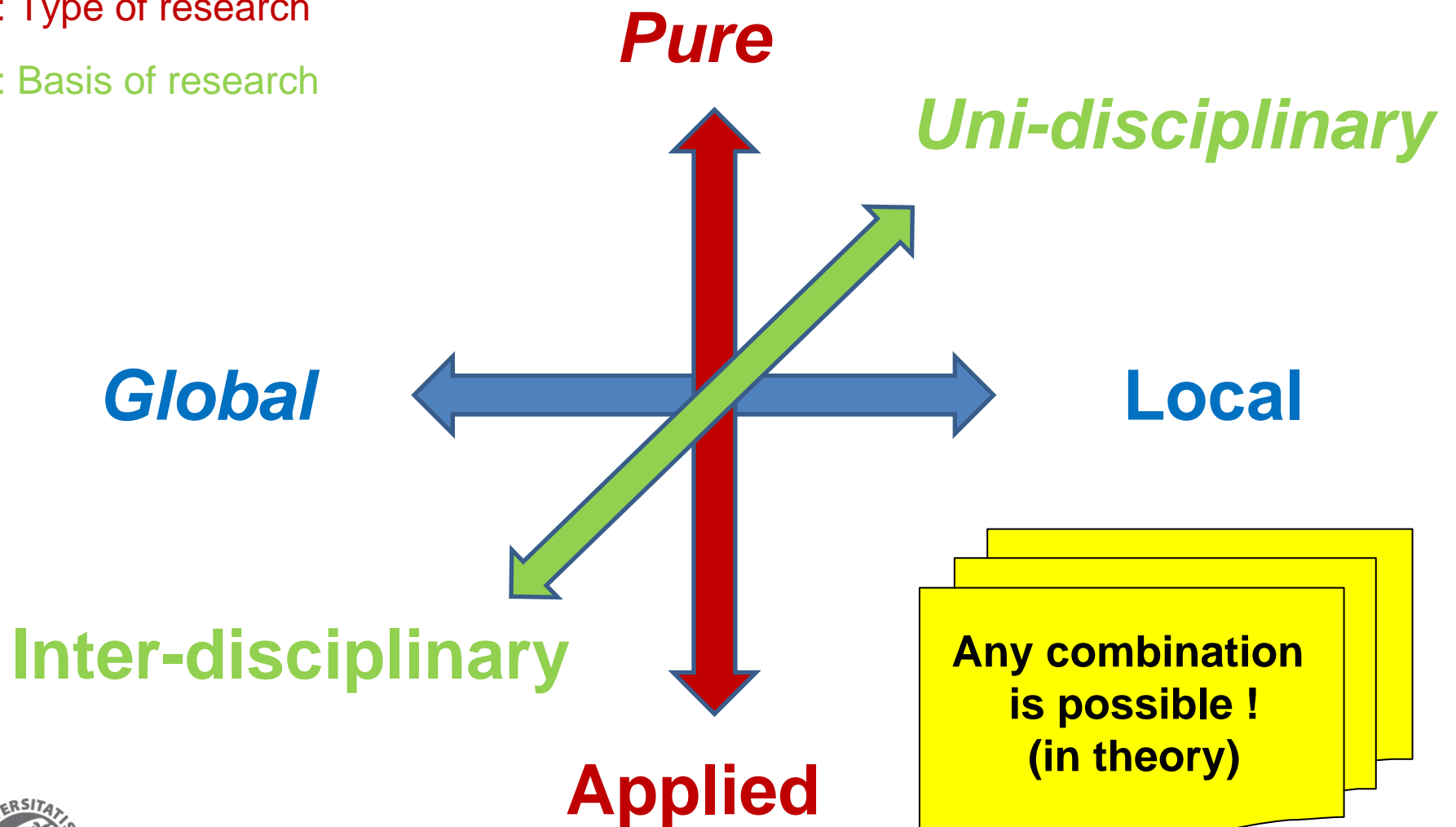




1: Focus of research

2: Type of research

3: Basis of research



Any combination
is possible !
(in theory)





The RRCs in essence

- Are the representatives and “responsible persons” for UI outside the capitol area
- Are a microcosm of the international academic community in countryside and fishing villages
- Work in close proximity to diverse actors in the local community
- Have the opportunity to forge connections with the local community and can thus play an active part in its social and cultural development





Hornafjörður RRC

- Formally established on November 30th, 2001
- The first “proper” RRC, i.e. based on the goals formulated for the Institute of RRCs
- Started up slowly, with only one staff member, but in 2007-08 grew rapidly and went up to six staff members, plus part-timers and students
- Since 2009-10, has been reduced in size again with only two permanent staff members in 2012





Hornafjörður RRC

- Has an unique “operating background” in the Nýheimar Knowledge Complex, which is its second “institutional home”
- Has enjoyed close relations with progressive and academically-minded community leaders
- Has gained the trust of many SMEs through work with the Region of Vatnajökull - tourism, food and cultural cluster of SE-Iceland





Examples of older projects

- Northern Environment for Sustainable Tourism (2005-08)
- Icelandic Landscape Project (2006-2009)
- SEA for new Ring road project near Höfn (2006-07)
- Vatnajökull National Park monitoring project (2007-09)
- Northern Environmental Education Developm. (2008-10)
- Draft Management Plan for South and West quadrants of Vatnajökull National Park (2008-2010)
- Internal survey and policy recommendations for the Vatnajökull Region (2010-11)





Main projects 2011

- Winter tourism in the Vatnajökull Region
- Food and sustainable tourism
- General public assembly for Hornafjörður
- Public assembly on Health issues
- Design of anniversary exhibition for Skinney-Þinganes
- SEA/Local spatial planning for Jökulsárlón area
- Developing Learning Society approach with Nýheimar
- Cooperation with Iceland Academy of the Arts (e.g. development of Creative Industries)





Preliminary conclusions

- Academic research essential for Triple-Helix collaboration & knowledge-driven innovation
- Academic institutions are a gateway to expertise in other countries & (big) funding
- Academic thinking is critical for future socio-economic development & social adaptability
- Regional development/innovation is an exciting new frontier for academics (!)





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“The New BRAVE World”



A space for creative collaboration



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INNOVATION

EDUCATION



CULTURE

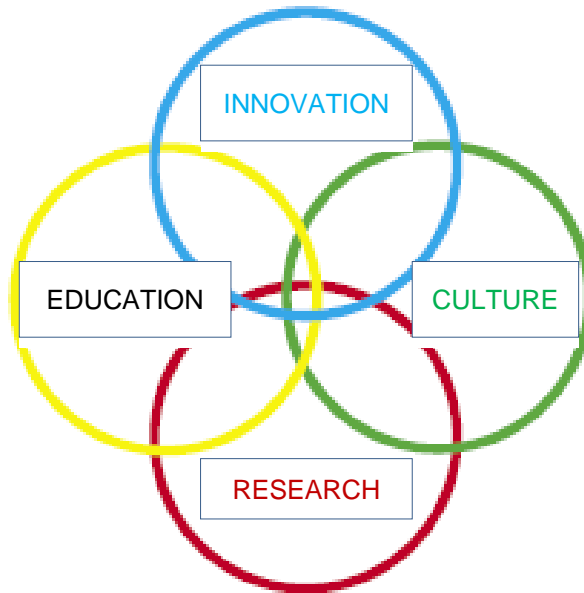
RESEARCH



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Nýsköpunarmiðstöð
Íslands



Pekkingarnet Austurlands



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Comment from Study Group

- “One lesson that emerged forcefully was the central importance of soft skills in processes of innovation and regeneration. This refers not to technical interventions and innovations but to open communication, trust, networking and problem solving skills, resilience, consensual decision making and absence of hierarchy.”





Comment from Study Group

- “Group members working in and with universities are conscious of internal tensions between the traditional (teaching and research) functions of universities and other functions which might be considered economically and socially desirable (as part of the broader civic role of a university) and specifically ways in which a university can make a relevant contribution to economic development and social regeneration (in this case in remote rural areas).”





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ECONOMIC & SOCIAL BASE

strong

VATNAJÖKULL
REGION

RESOURCE USE
unsustainable

RESOURCE USE
sustainable

“KRUMMASKUÐ”

weak



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Grunngerð

Náttúrufar
Samgöngur
Mannlíf
Menntun

Athafnalíf

Atvinnulíf
Sveitarfélög
Ríkið

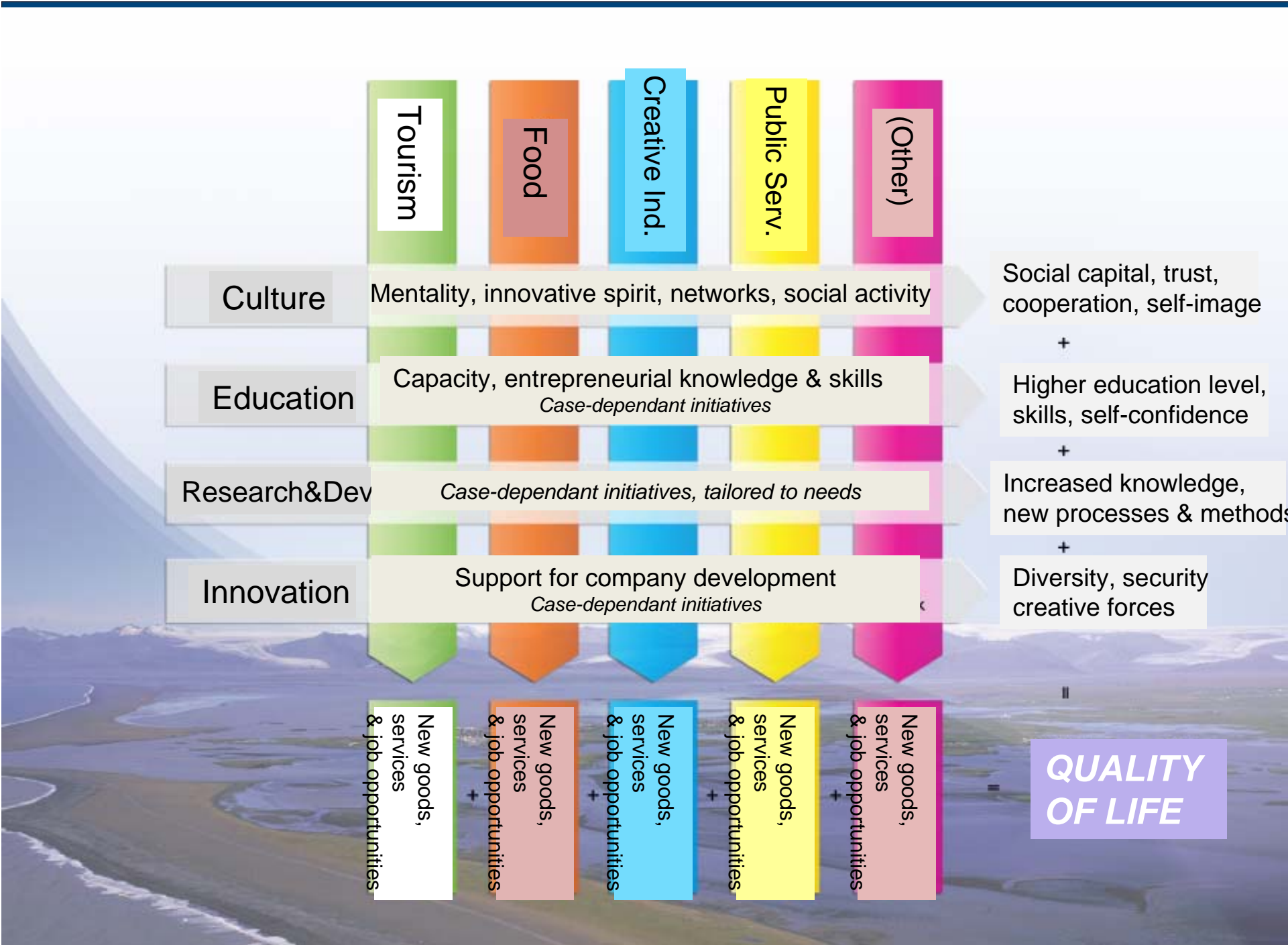


NÝHEIMAR
ÞEKINGARSETUR

Samfélagsþróun

Lífsgæði
Fjölbreytni
Samkeppnisstaða
Fólksfjöldi

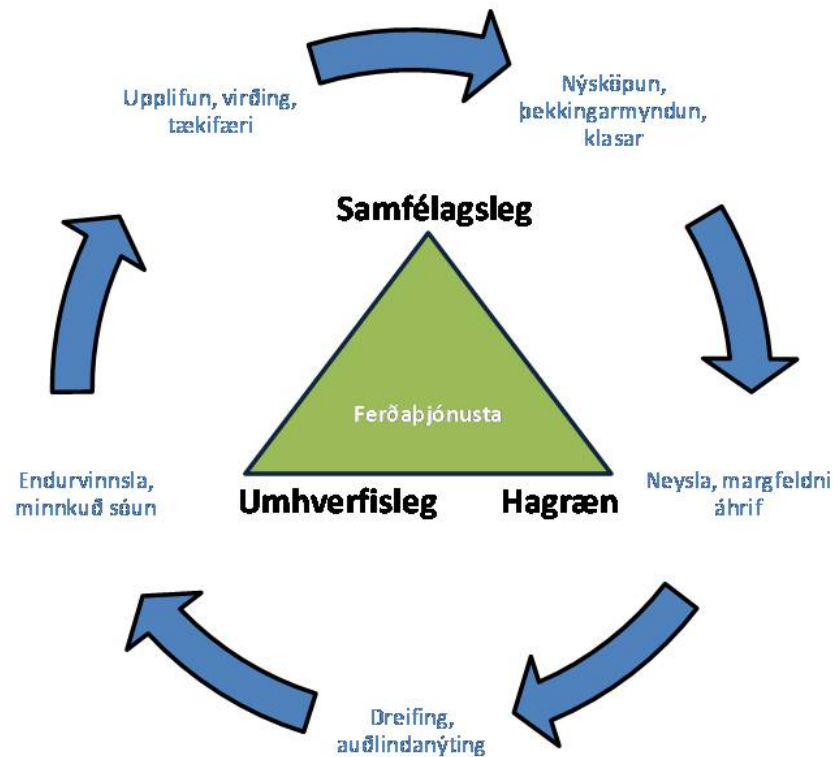


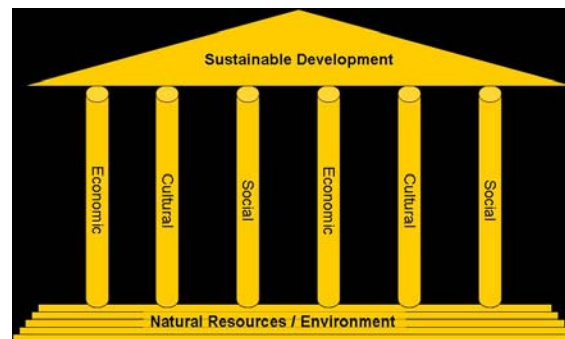
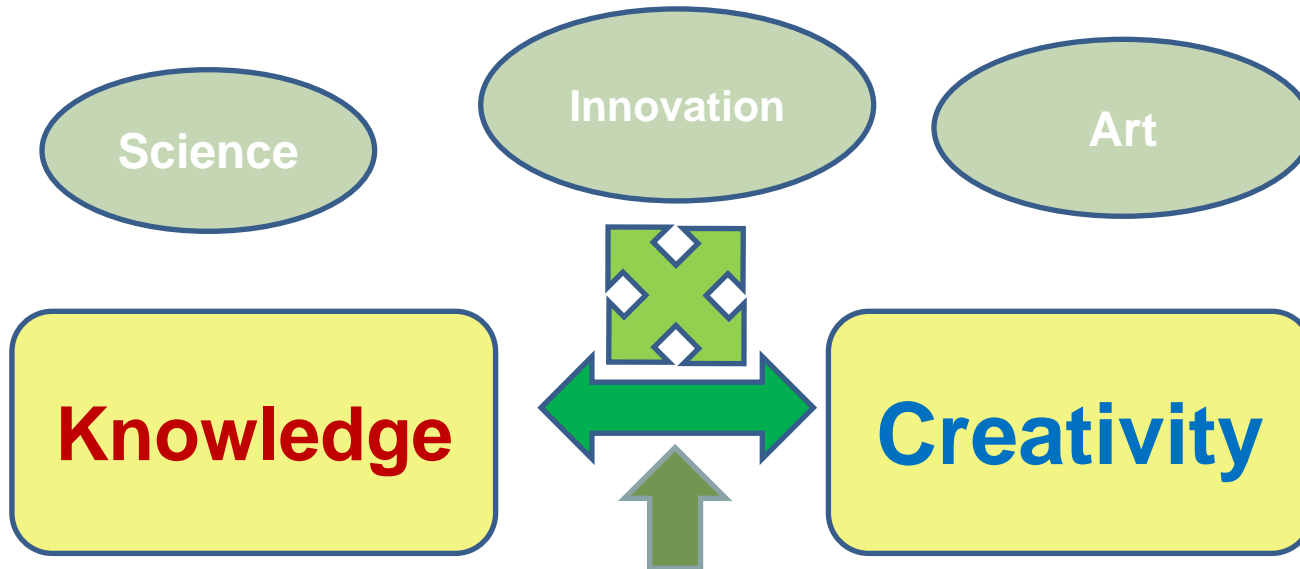




The virtuous circle

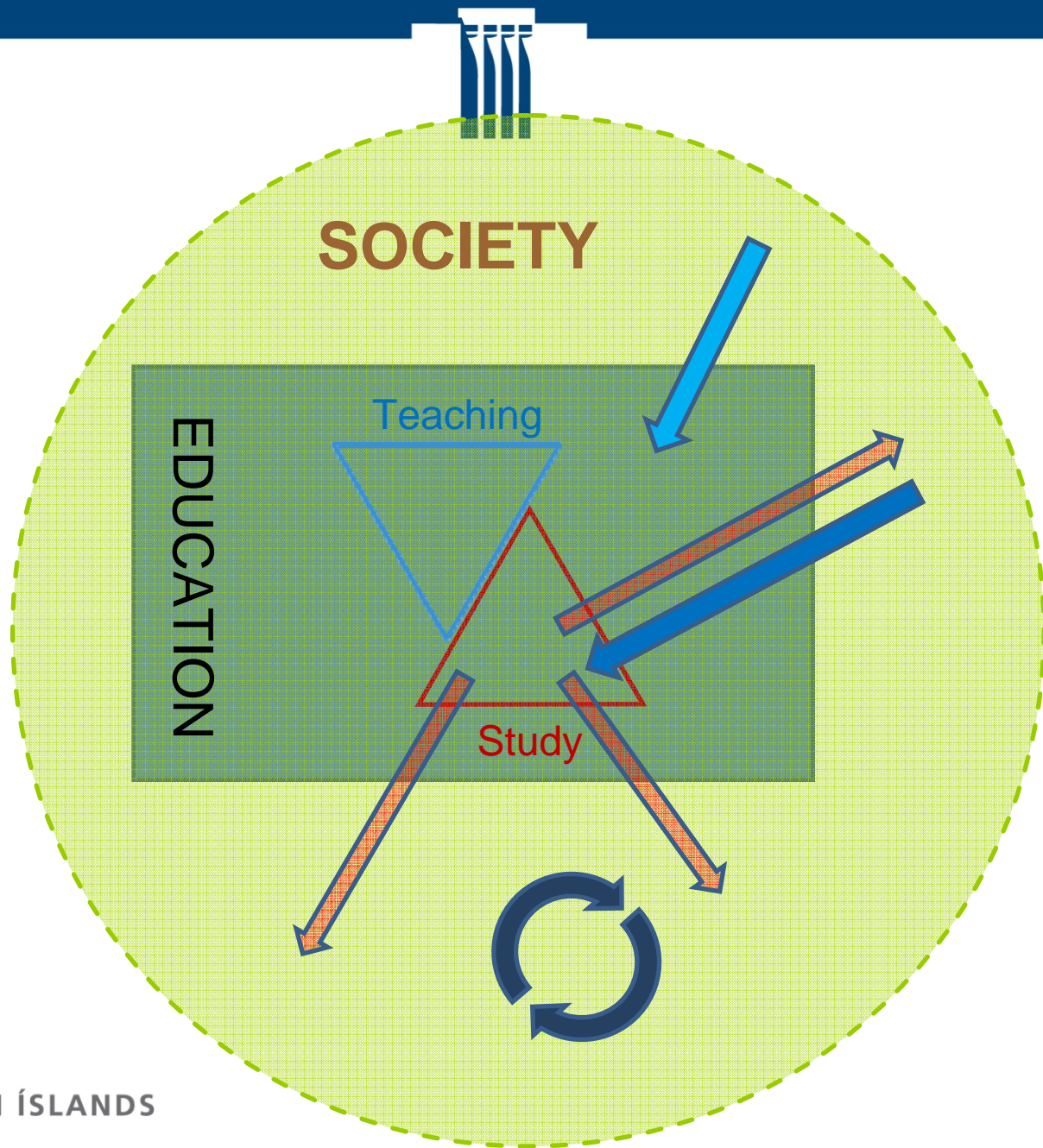
Sjálfbærni **matur** & **ferðaþjónusta**





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THE LEARNING SOCIETY



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Some lessons learned

- Close, open & cross-sectorial collaboration between local knowledge institutions is essential (and fun).
- Regional control over initiatives & funding is imperative
- Interactive, regional-based support for SMEs is vital
- Use pro-active approach to knowledge dissemination to SMES & other actors (including Direct Research)
- Promote new, hybrid projects & approaches
- Accept no external boundaries (!)
- Meet often together for coffee (preferably daily)





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