

# Growing sprouts & turning decay to promise - strongholds of living on the edge



Anna Karlsdóttir, Docent, University of Iceland

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# Sustainable economies on the remote and outskirts

- Young people needed but population decline in sparsely populated areas tell another story
- lot of quality of life exists in remote regions that has not been taken into account to an adequate extent in policy making
- EU Northern Arctic Periphery Project enabled collaboration focusing on counter narratives to dominant discourses
- Background the Covid Pandemic and restrictions limiting people to thrive in everyday life
- Fruitful collaboration with CoDel (Theona and Thomas)
- Various partners in the project (Iceland, Sweden, Finland, Faroe Islands, Scotland, Ireland, Prince Edward Island)
- Won the RSA Awards 2022



## In spite of many disruptive incidences – i.e. Increased unemployment

- Peripheral areas benefitted from their geography, including their remote and sparsely populated regions and also islands with their well-defined geographic boundaries. Vaccination rates were also higher in many peripheral areas.
- The responses of community organisations and networks were highly significant as well, with widespread evidence of rapid community engagement and participation, volunteering and generosity expressed in practical action to help the most vulnerable and at risk in particular. Rural responses to Covid-19 [have been] a collective, whole-community effort” (Scottish Rural Action).

Redefining Peripherality

## Why regional development policies do not always work?

- Factors often regarded as the challenges of peripherality became an advantage to the degree of being considered resilience factors.
- challenged many economic frameworks that have long dominated development policy for 'remote' regions.
- If the dominant narratives are wrong, if perspectives, policies and decisions are based on a misunderstanding of the actual conditions and characteristics of Arctic and other so-called 'peripheral' communities, then such policies and decisions will not achieve their desired outcomes.

## With challenges come responses

- Economic responses in peripheral regions to Covid-19 were most characterised by flexibility and adaptation, innovation and creativity, and not least collaboration.
- Over half of 62 entrepreneurs surveyed in Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands for the project considered Covid-19 to have brought about new business opportunities, and similar findings came from surveys of tourism entrepreneurs in Iceland and entrepreneurs in Atlantic Canada.

## The counter narratives what were they about

- A longing for a freedom realized in smaller places
- Better family life work balance
- New initiatives in various forms of agriculture, food production or creative industries often combined with opportunities to work from the remote
- In all areas seeds to new avenues of development
- With new people come often new ideas, new skills, and the manoeuvre space to realize it to greater extent than in consolidated urban areas
- Numerous interesting examples





# Helping communicate and disseminate these stories is crucial

- Rural Attractiveness (Nordregio) Spatial stories seeking to capture the reasons behind why people choose to leave sparsely populated / remote and urban adjacent rural areas, why they move there.
- Story Maps (migration patterns, demography and jobs)
- Indicator Set – What makes a region attractive
- Policy evaluation & future strategies – How to frame policies in order to create attractive localities
- CoDel emphasized Blog posts – Youth Rural Parliament, Podcasts and other initiatives



## But these are anecdotes from crisis driven conditions... what about normal times?

- Indicators of continued threats to normality
- Societal effects of natural phenomenon, climate change, increased political turbulence, and growing hybrid threats, the risk of blockades of energy, gas, food, and trade flows. Defence buildup and a vision of increased conflicts and even future wars.
- **Some researchers name this new era, after the pandemic, a time of permanent crisis, a 'perma-crisis'.**
- How is that affecting young people's reasonings about lifestyle, purpose and the future?
- Staying robust is crucial





# AI and what is moving young people's priorities

- A more deep seated transformation driver is Artificial intelligence and how it shapes possibilities but also erases need for certain job functions – entry level jobs vanish and established functions, lawyers and medical doctors included
- Will it affect the choice of education and hence the occupational trajectories favoured
- What indicators do we have already now?



# Gender and security threatens

- From talking about stemming demographic development trends with focus on gender – regions and communities need to make sure that living as a family there is safe within the region
- Cutbacks in birth services (prenatal, natal, postnatal) pronounced all across the sparsely populated areas and smaller communities across the Northern Hemisphere
- So why do you wonder about the reproduction rate decline
- Conditions for establishing families and securing next generation thriving need to be in place – otherwise all policy efforts fail

