



Smart Shrinkage
and Community
Resilience in
Coastal
Communities

Raufarhöfn
Case Study

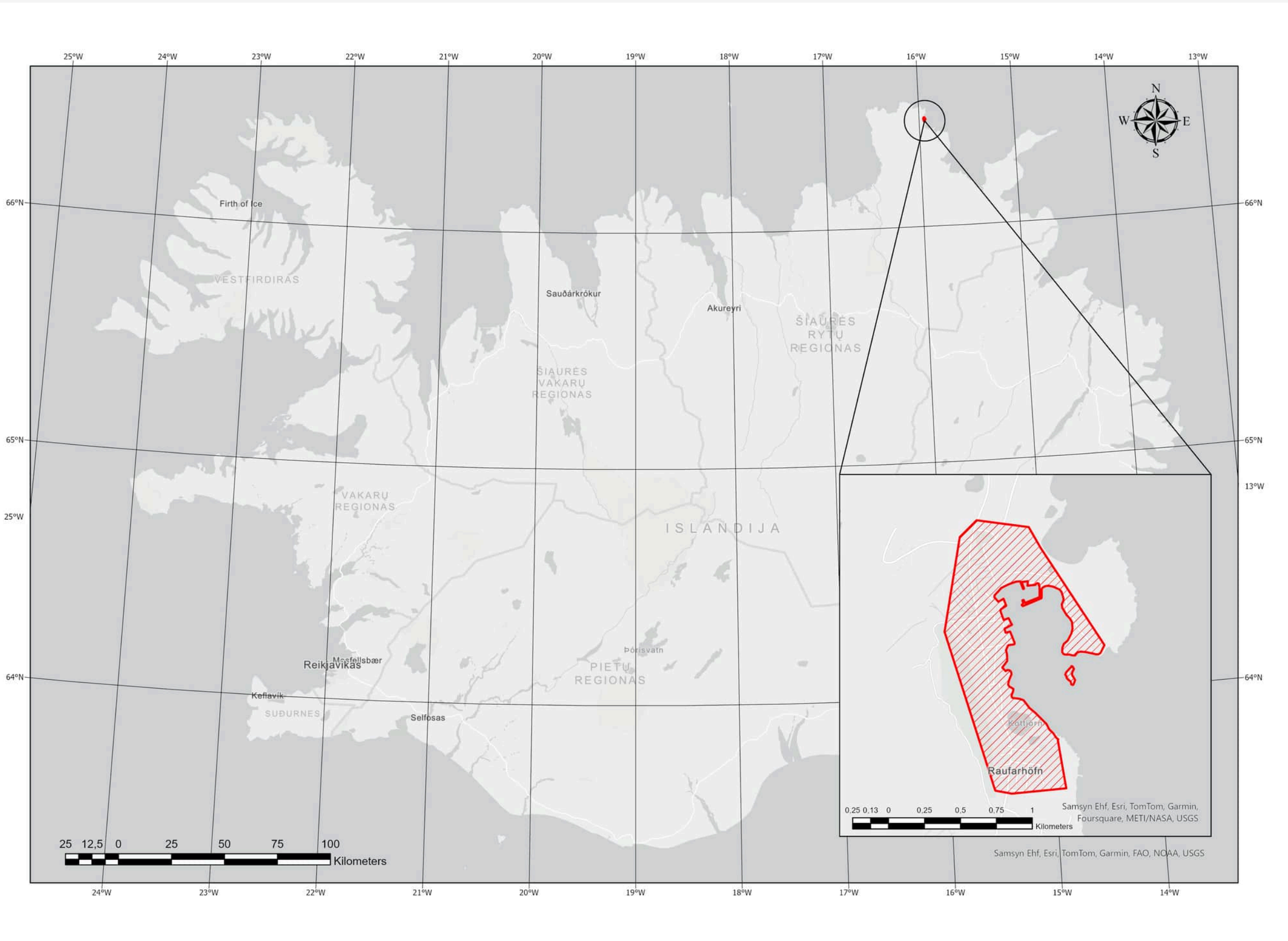
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RAUFARHÖFN CASE STUDY

PRESENTED BY

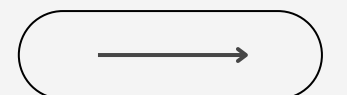
Linda, Karl, Nora, Riikka, Julius and Alex

CASE STUDY LOCATION



RESEARCH QUESTION

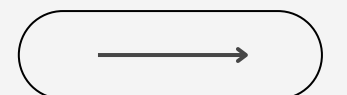
How has the Fragile Communities project impacted Raufarhöfn and what does this tell us about rural governance in Northern Iceland?



RESEARCH AIMS



- Assessing the impact of the Fragile Communities project.
- Identifying the disconnect between top-down management of rural development and realities of policy for residents.
- Identifying opportunities for improving community resilience in Raufarhöfn.



TERMINOLOGY

SMART SHRINKAGE

- Urban shrinkage = towns or regions population is in a decline
- Hard to plan for shrinkage: balance economic, social and environmental aspects

PLACE ATTACHMENT

- Social infrastructure has a purpose in creating spaces for socialising and strengthening the community spirit.
- Moral community - term used to describe a sense of belonging, obligations and caring about and for others.

(TOMANEY ET.AL. 2023)

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

The ability to adapt to changes such as economic, environmental, political and social, like urban shrinkage.

(AMUNDSEN 2012, KOKORSCH & BENEDIKTSSON 2018)

RESEARCH PROCESS

OBSERVATION

- GATHERING ACQUIRED EMOTIONS AND IMPRESSIONS ABOUT THE TERRITORY, WHICH HELPS TO DESCRIBE THE RESEARCH PLACE.

MAPPING

- IDENTIFYING KEY POINTS OF INTERESTS IN THROUGH OBSERVATIONAL DATA.
- CREATING MAPS USING GIS

AERIAL PHOTO ANALYSIS

- TO EXAMINE THE HISTORICAL CHANGES IN LAND COVER USING ARCHIVAL AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS.

INTERVIEWS

- THEMATIC LINES OF ENQUIRY IN LINE WITH RESEARCH AIMS.
- ITERATIVE CONVERSATIONS
- ACTIVE NOTE TAKING, DISCUSSION AND WRITE UP AFTER, REVISITING DISCUSSIONS

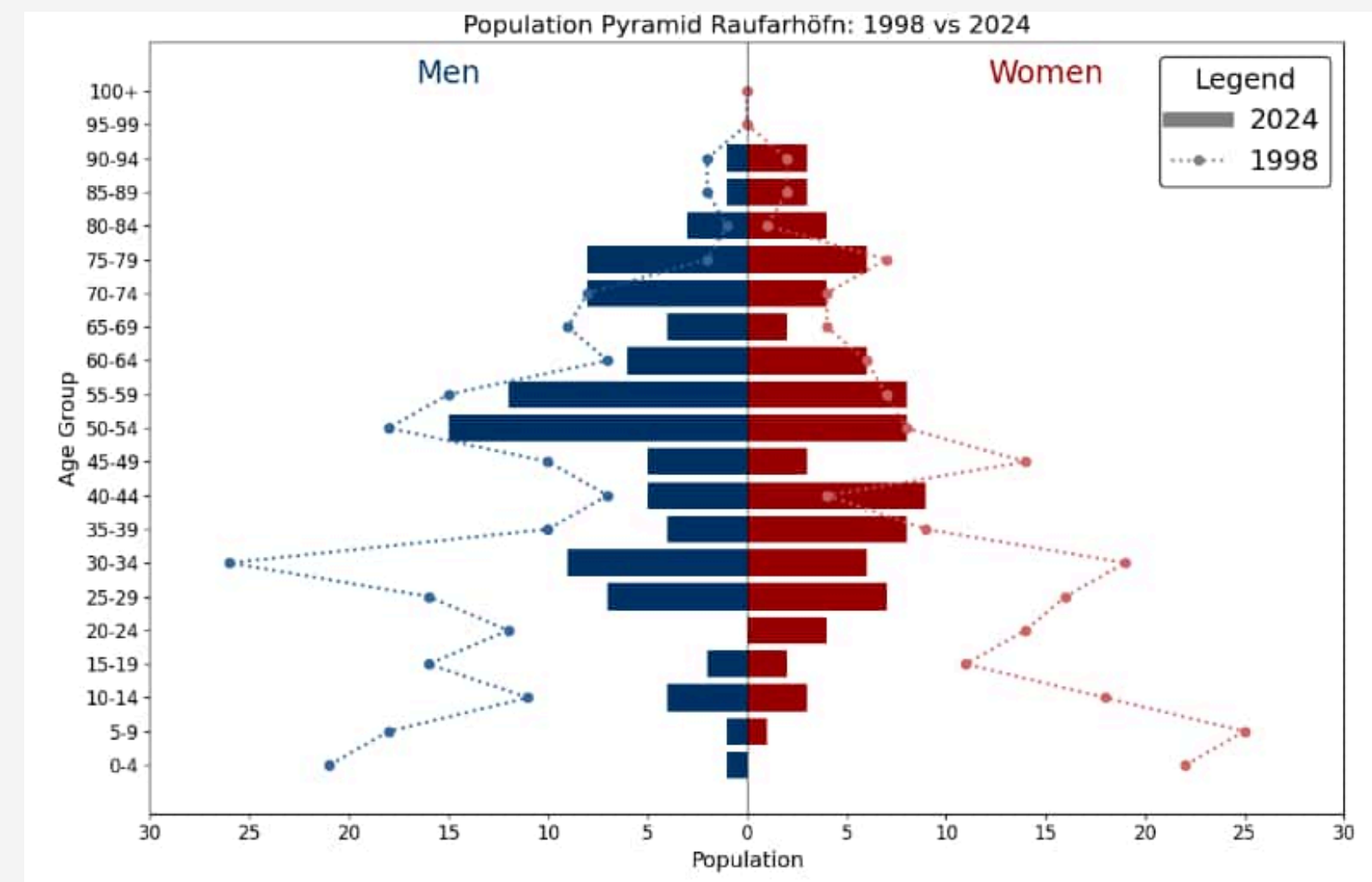
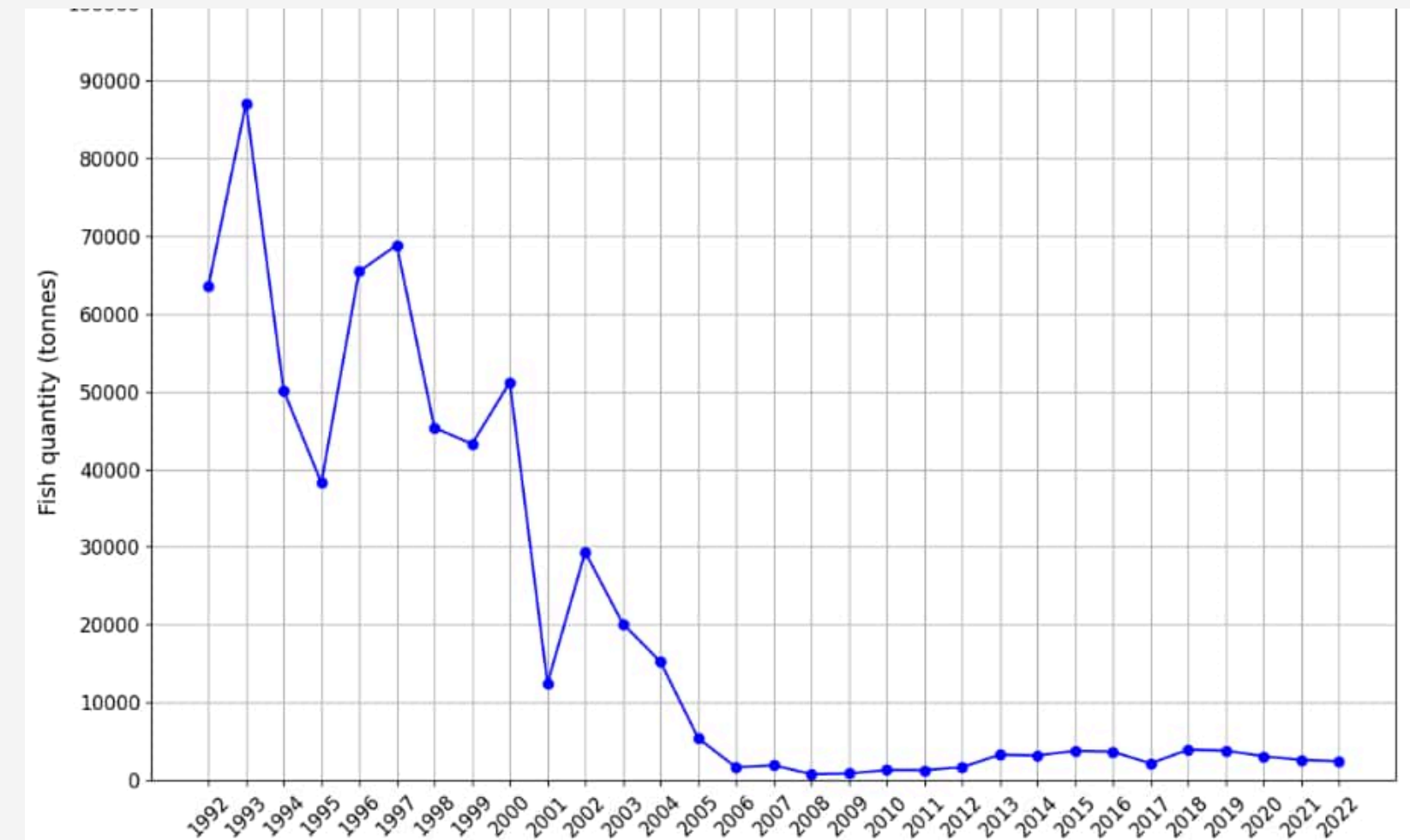
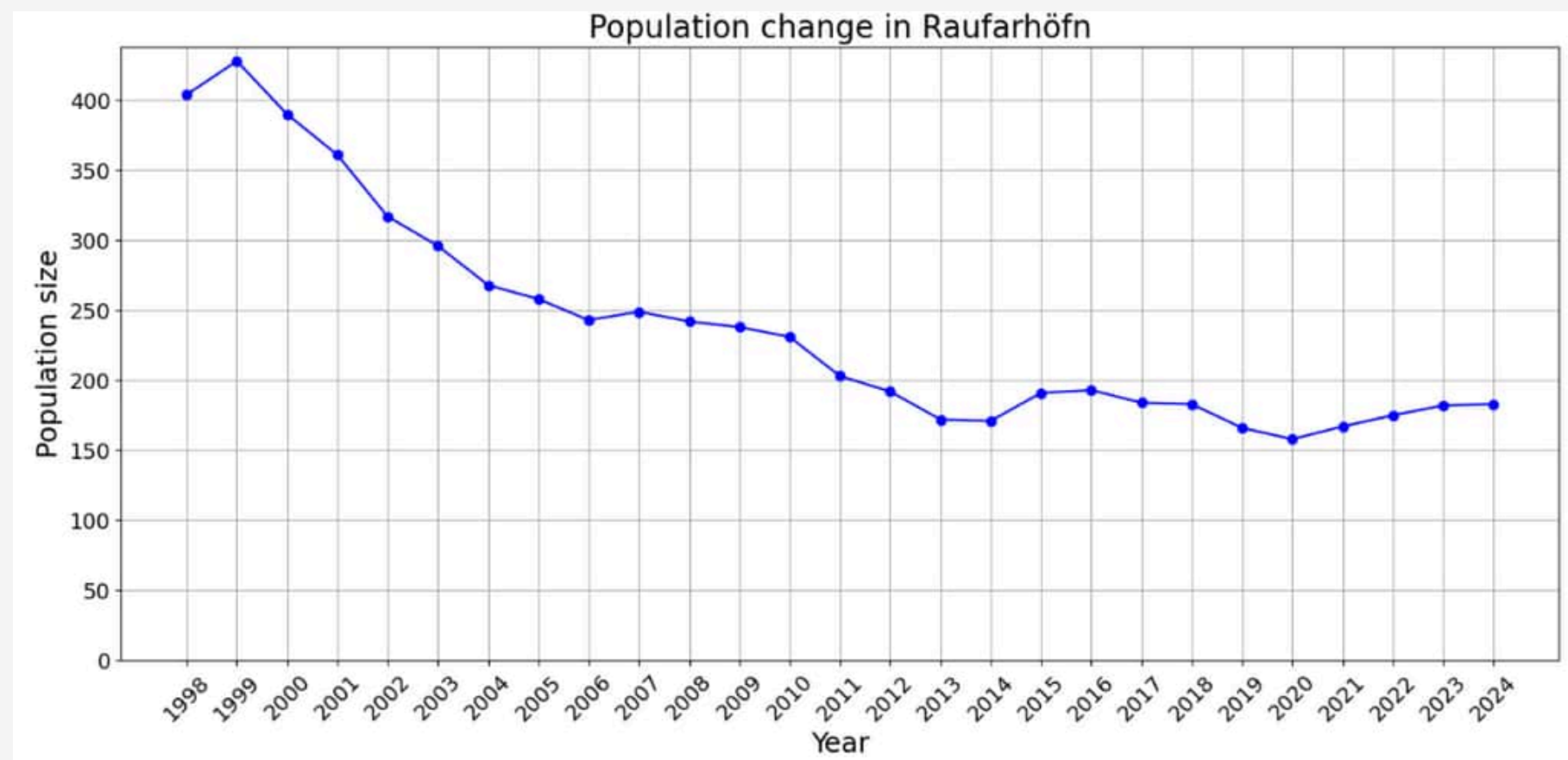
ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY

- EASY WAY TO UNDERSTAND INTERVIEWS' MAIN TOPIC AND TO COMPARE THE INTERPRETATIONS OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE'S OPINIONS.



RAUFARHÖFN

- The town reached its peak population in the 1960s during the herring adventure.
- With the loss of herring fishing major depopulation began.
- In 2005 town became a part of Norðurling municipality



RAUFARHÖFN SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tourism attractions• Ecological research• Strong community (community spirit)• Cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No public transport• Lack of fishing quotas• Lack of jobs• Lack of housing• Dilapidated infrastructure• Seasonal dependency
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expanding tourism• RIF research centre development• Whales, bird and seal watching tours• Digital connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Without local business place don't have growth opportunities• Depopulation• Lack of kids• Climate change• Competition• Economic uncertainty

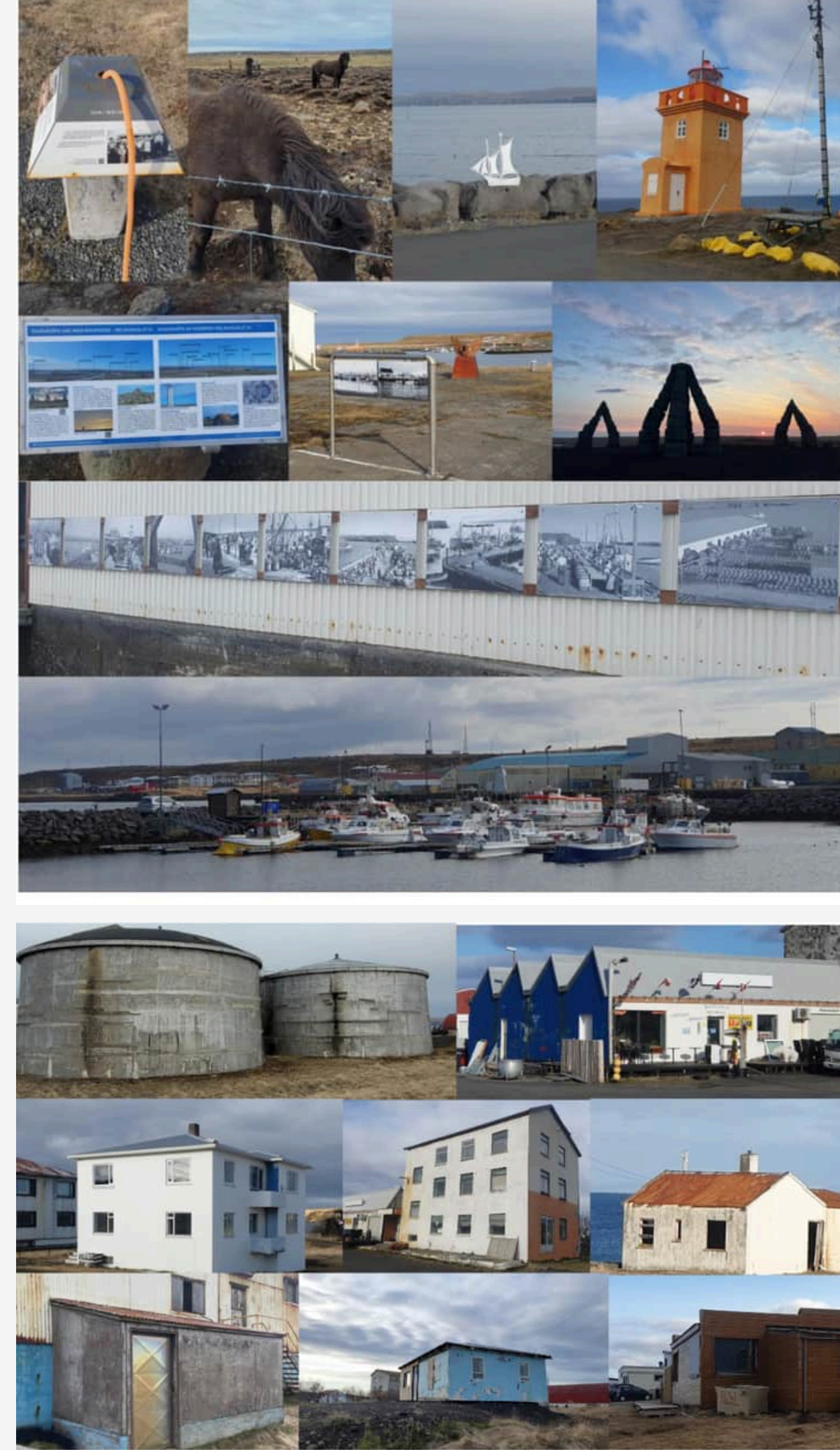
OBSERVATIONS

- Locally (being in the same place)
- Moving around (by walking or driving)

Group of buildings- many unhabited and abandoned
In the middle of the day big activity in the fishing and industrial buildings

Sport facilities- Spacious playground, Frisbee golf, Sports hall with pool

Tourism infrastructure- Recreational hiking trails without explanatory elements, Arctic Henge, lighthouse, no coffee shop. accommodations are needed



GIS MAPPING

- Understanding the place
- Distribution of infrastructure and services
- Field mapping application
- Identifying key points of interests in Raufarhöfn through observational data



1958



1974



1977



1979



1984



1987



1997



2003



2023



BYGGÐASTOFNUN

Fragile communities project



Raufarhöfn and the future/ Raufarhöfn og framtíðin

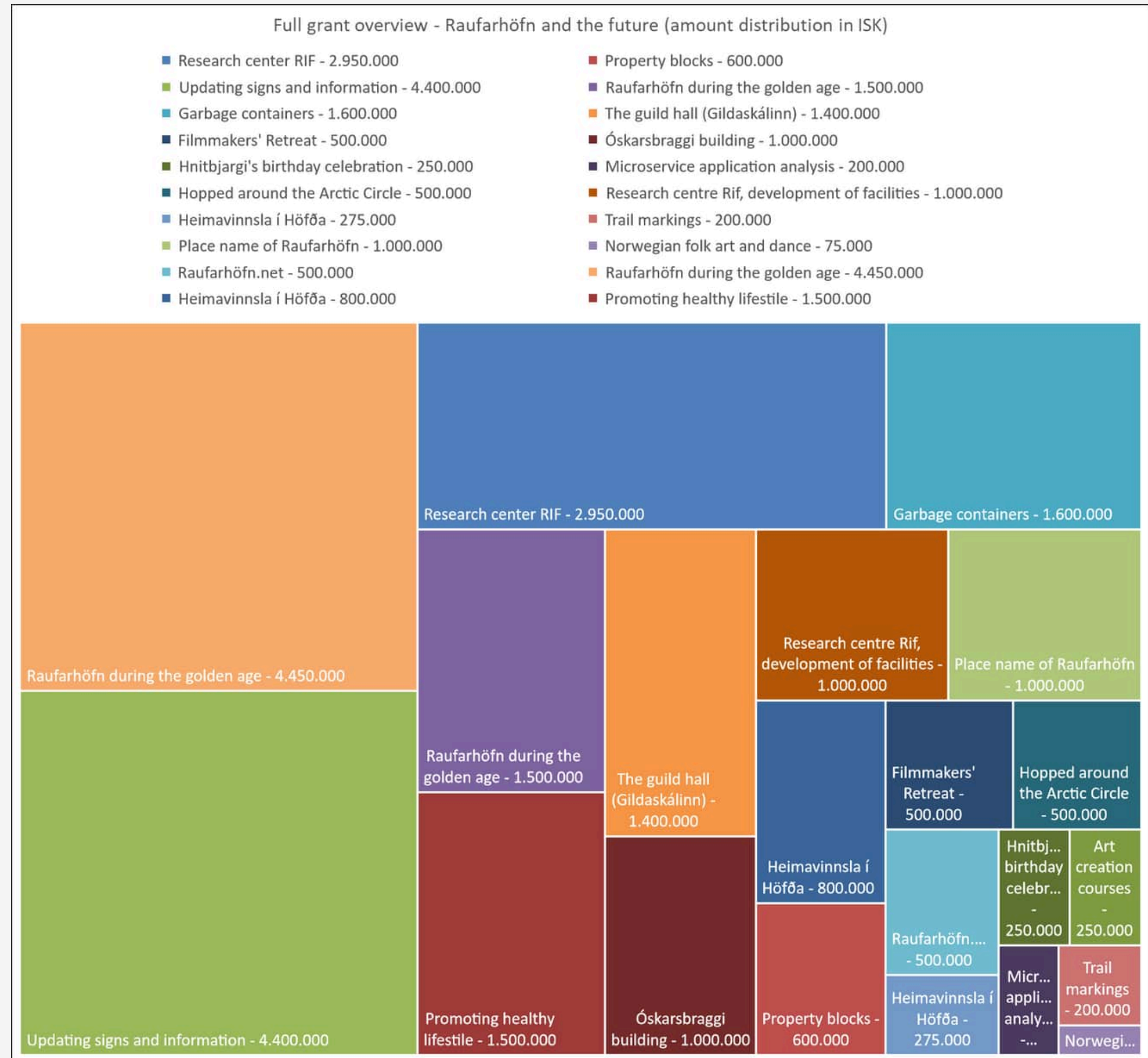
2014-2017

24.950.000 Íkr

- Successful projects like RIF research station and signage in town
- Projects still in the process like the Raufarhöfn museum of history
- Some projects had very little success, for example, there were no themed signs for each month of the year which was one of the projects

Fragile communities project

Grant money distribution over 21 applicants



RESULTS

INTERVIEWS

- 5 PLANNED INTERVIEWS
- SEVERAL INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS

INFORMANTS

- LOCAL AUTHOR
- DEVELOPMENT OFFICER/FARMER
- TOWN REP/COMMUNITY ORGANISER/PARAMEDIC/ADMINISTRATOR
- SCIENTIST AND RESEARCH DIRECTOR
- FORMER SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
- TOURISTS
- RESIDENTS

AIMS

- DISCOVERING THE FATE OF FRAGILE COMMUNITIES PROJECT.
- HOW THE COMMUNITY IS WORKING IN A PRACTICAL SENSE.
- WHAT MAKES RAUFARHÖFN THE COMMUNITY IT IS NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE.

INTERVIEWS

THE FISHERY

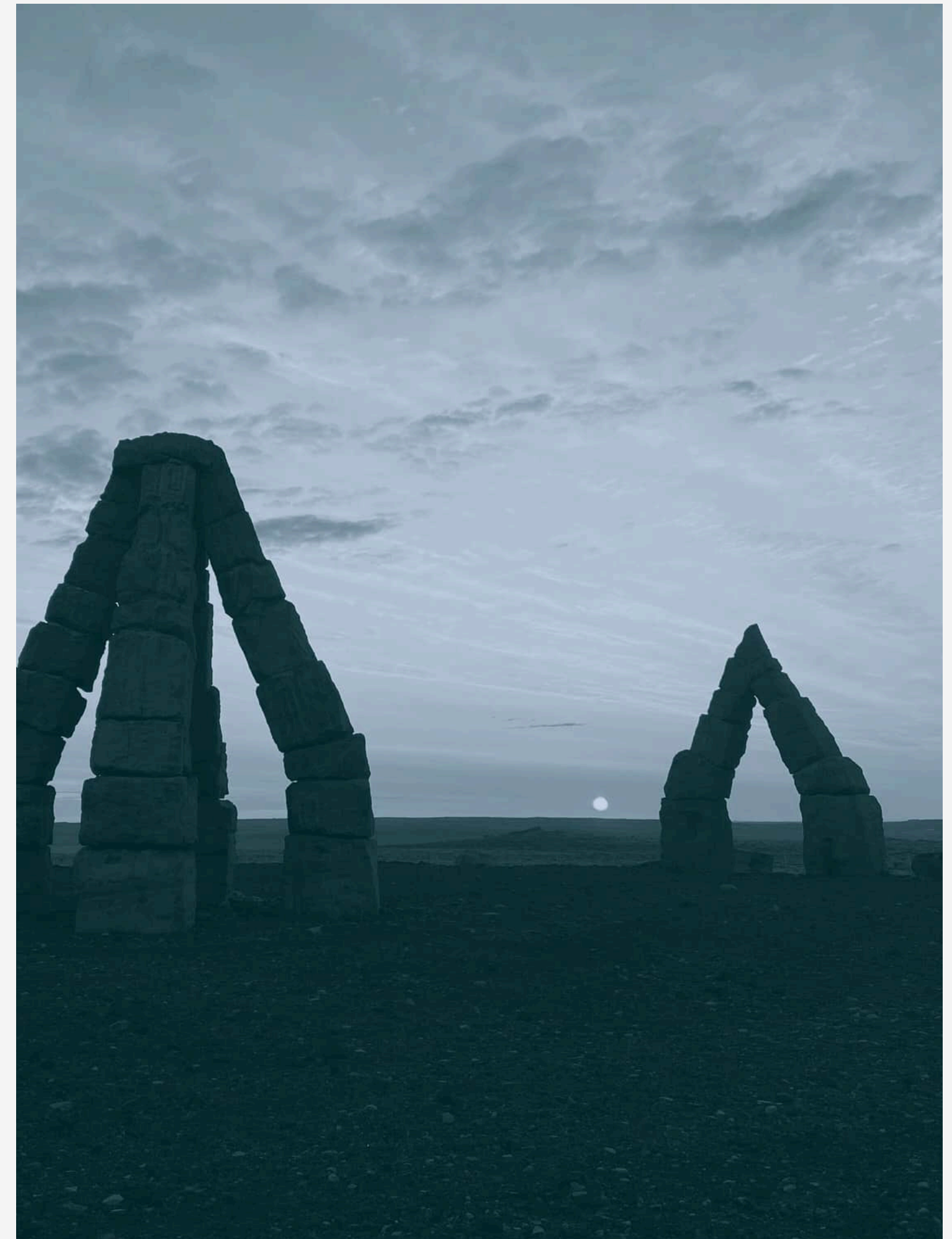
- Loss of ITQs was a huge hit for the town.
- Set up of fish factory is exploitative.
- Owner based in Húsavík but spends most of his time in Reykjavík
- Mostly employing migrant workers on low wages who live on site in dormitories.
- Most employees only stay for one year max.
- Almost no participation in community.
- Owner is exploiting Raufarhöfn to access community quota.
- Community quota needs reform to create a meaningful impact in the town.
- Fishing no longer a pillar of the community.



INTERVIEWS

TOURISM

- Late to the game in Iceland's tourism boom.
- Covid pandemic helped put Raufarhöfn on the map as domestic tourists visited.
- Connection to nature and unique ecology an asset.
- Arctic Henge as the main attraction.
- No services or businesses to capitalise on footfall.
- Lots of ideas to encourage longer stays.
- Plans to convert herring oil tanks into creative space.



INTERVIEWS

THE LANDSCAPE



- Landscape and sense of place important to residents.
- Unique ecology facilitates climate research and education for kids.
- Landscape provides resources for sheep farming and Eider down collecting.
- Tranquillity and safety contributes to place attachment.
- Surrounding beauty and closeness to nature a reason to move to Raufarhöfn.

INTERVIEWS

THE COMMUNITY

- All services needed are available.
- Limited in staffing to keep longer opening hours.
- Many residents fulfilling several different roles.
- A lot of pressure on individuals.
- Risk of collapse of services if one person is lost.
- Maintaining the school is key to stabilising population.
- Need for more housing and management of 2nd homes.
- Burden exacerbated by lack of support from government.
- Constant nagging to municipality to get anything done.
- Macro-trends of urbanisation sees Raufarhöfn as expense.
- Neglect from government creates a sense of solidarity.
- Close knit and supportive community optimistic about the future.



RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

- Time constraints
- Language barrier
- Research from outside perspective



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve the sense of community belonging for migrant workers
- Tourism - eco-tourism (hiking, bird watching, Northern Lights viewing)
- Science - RIF research station
- Community quota adaptation to encourage more support for the community
- Improve co-operation between residents and municipal government



CONCLUSIONS

- The relationship of hostility from governmental power structures needs to be reframed to support smaller communities.
- The Fragile Communities Project needed more time and funding to increase its success.
- It takes a community that has verged on collapse to teach us about what it takes to adapt to shrinkage.
- A community can recover from decline thanks to the resilience of individuals that believe it can.

Aknowledgements

With sincere thanks to the people of Raufarhöfn.

We were welcomed into living rooms, kitchens, community centres, service centres, guest houses, hotels, and farms by a number of incredibly kind and passionate people

It seems to take a community that has stood on the precipice of collapse to teach us about what it takes to keep running. To make sure the kids can go to school, learn to swim, and play, to make sure the elderly and sick are cared for, to make sure the bills can be paid, or packages shipped, to make sure the school gets painted, or the pavements repaired, and how to begin slowly but surely to correct the course of the ship.

**TÄNAN KUULAMAST
PALDIES PAR UZMANĪBU
AČIŪ UŽ DĒMESĪ
KIITOS KUUNTELEMISESTA
TAKK FYRIR AÐ HLUSTA**