



1106-2006

Developing knowledge societies in rural coastal communities

Skúli Skúlason, rector
Hólar University College

Overview

- Importance of knowledge society
- Values and the development of knowledge society
- Case study: Hólar University College in North-Iceland



Knowledge and society

- **Building knowledge is a key in sustaining and developing culture, community and industries**
- This is not debated but we can ask:
 - what is happening today?
 - how is it happening?
 - what methods are most successful ?
 - what about coastal and rural areas?



Development of universities, educational/research centers and knowledge industry

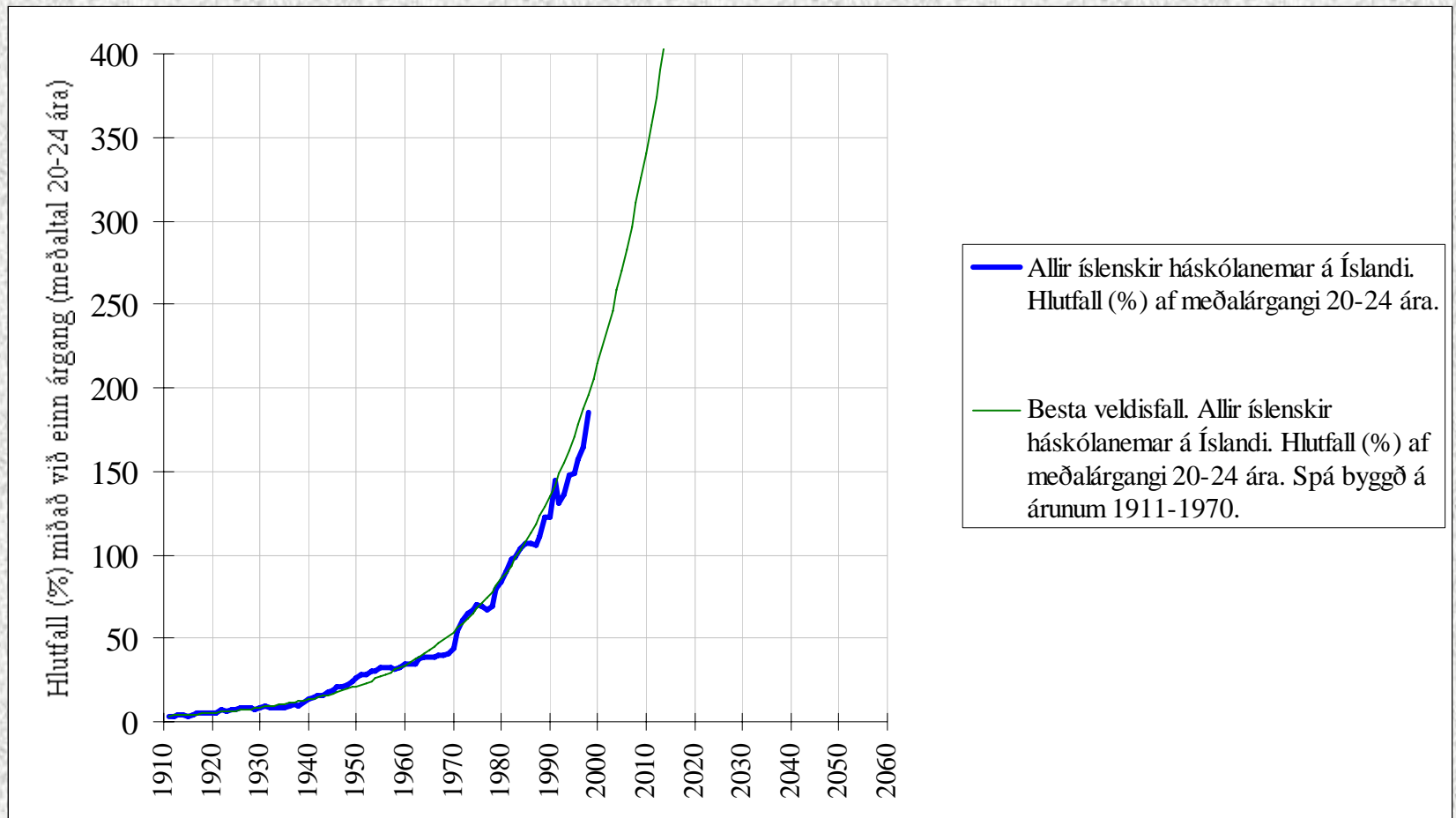
- **Growth of such institutions is both fast and exciting and is happening in many countries**
- **This is in accordance with growing need and demand for professionalism and technical know-how in the modern world – knowledge societies**
- **Building knowledge and knowledge based activities is a key factor in rural and coastal community development**



The knowledge society

- Today industries are knowledge-based to a greater degree than ever before
 - numerous examples
- The competitive scenario has changed and become more complex
- Knowledge society is global which increases the need for diverse knowledge – location not critical
- Great increases in the numbers of university students is the best example of this process
 - 83% in Iceland during 1995-2003
 - (8 institutions)





Gögn fyrir árin 1911-1998. Ekki getur þetta haldið endalaust svona áfram!



Knowledge supports the infrastructure of societies

- Interests of individuals: increased independence, stronger self-identity, more initiative and creativity
- Interests of communities and societies: more choices to develop, increased social stability and stronger community identity
- Interests of industries: higher diversity, more innovation, better resource use and greater value of products
- Key words: identity and diversity



Diversity and identity

- Diversity is a basic concept of human and social development – it is both a *means* to change and an *end* in itself– process and progress
- Diversity and identity point at basic values in society and nature – e.g. diversity suggest *creativity* and identity implies critical *self-evaluation*
- Thus individual and social development is both conciously motivated and value driven
- Community development through knowledge and education builds culture



Building culture and independence

- **Culture is what we think and do both as individuals and in societies**
- Basic objective of scholarly activity and education is to sustain and build culture
- Thinking, willing and doing is the core of this process
- Building culture makes communities, relations and industries fertile, powerful and diverse



Connection between education, culture and industry

- Education at all levels and in diverse forms is the force that drives culture and thus industries
- We must use this force systematically and have a clear vision for the future, e.g with regard to the values we want to foster or protect in our communities
- Communities need to have collective vision regarding their specialities, strengths and opportunities
- **Og láta verkin tala!**



For example...

- Companies need to take knowledge into account in their business- and profit plans
- Universities, research institutions, companies and communities need to actively connect: e.g. business-, research – and science-parks
- Promote diverse culture and industries which are both based on local resources as innovative developments originating from the outside



...for example:

- Build strong infrastructure in communities and make them attractive for living
- Increase the proportion of people with university education in rural/coastal areas – build strong local education- and research institutions and other means that attract people with strong academic skills
- Small communities must systematically increase jobs for educated people, otherwise they will settle elsewhere



Examples of influence of universities on communities

- Success of N-America compared to Europe
- Umeå in N-Sweden – population growth
- The importance of University of Iceland
- Effects of higher education institutes in rural-Iceland

- Clear examples of how education promotes diverse and innovative developments – “freedom of knowing”
- Researchers, scholars and students settle in communities that emphasize knowledge, become active and participate in progressive development



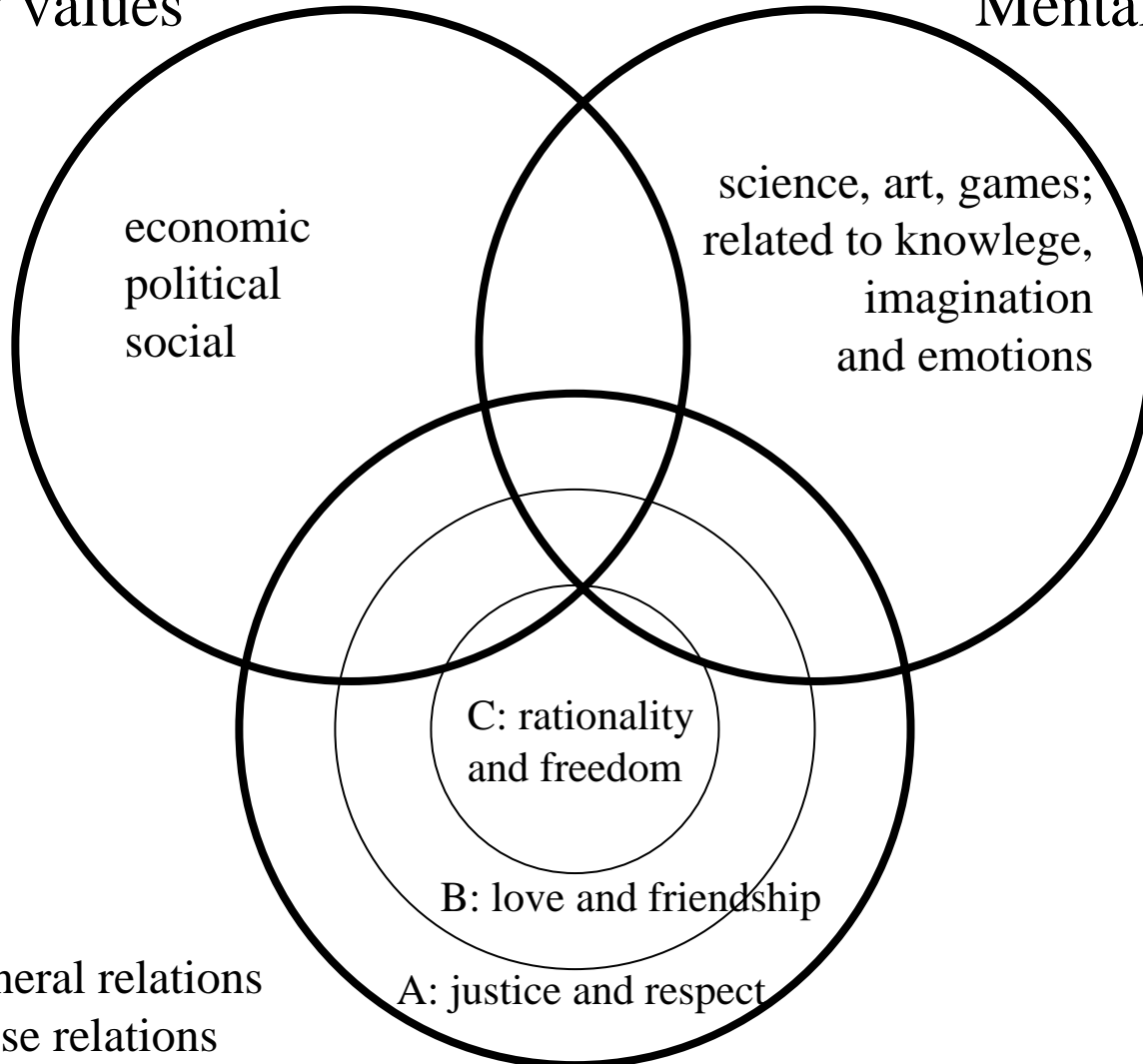
How does this happen?

- The drive behind progressive development can be examined in relation to the underlying values
- I will attempt to do this in relation to developing knowledge societies in coastal rural areas



Worldly values

Mental values



A: general relations

B: close relations

C: relation with oneself

Ethical values



Worldly values

- As they relate to building knowledge societies in coastal rural areas:
 - relatively few people – e.g. less competition
 - space and open access to resources
 - low complexity - simplicity - flexibility
 - special resources
 - living conditions and facilities to work
 - simple governance structure
 - individuals have influence
 - technology / communication / transportation



Mental values

- As they relate to building knowledge societies in coastal rural areas:
 - special culture and history
 - relations with nature
 - closeness to roots of community
 - proximity to industries
 - room for creativeness
 - stimulating environments



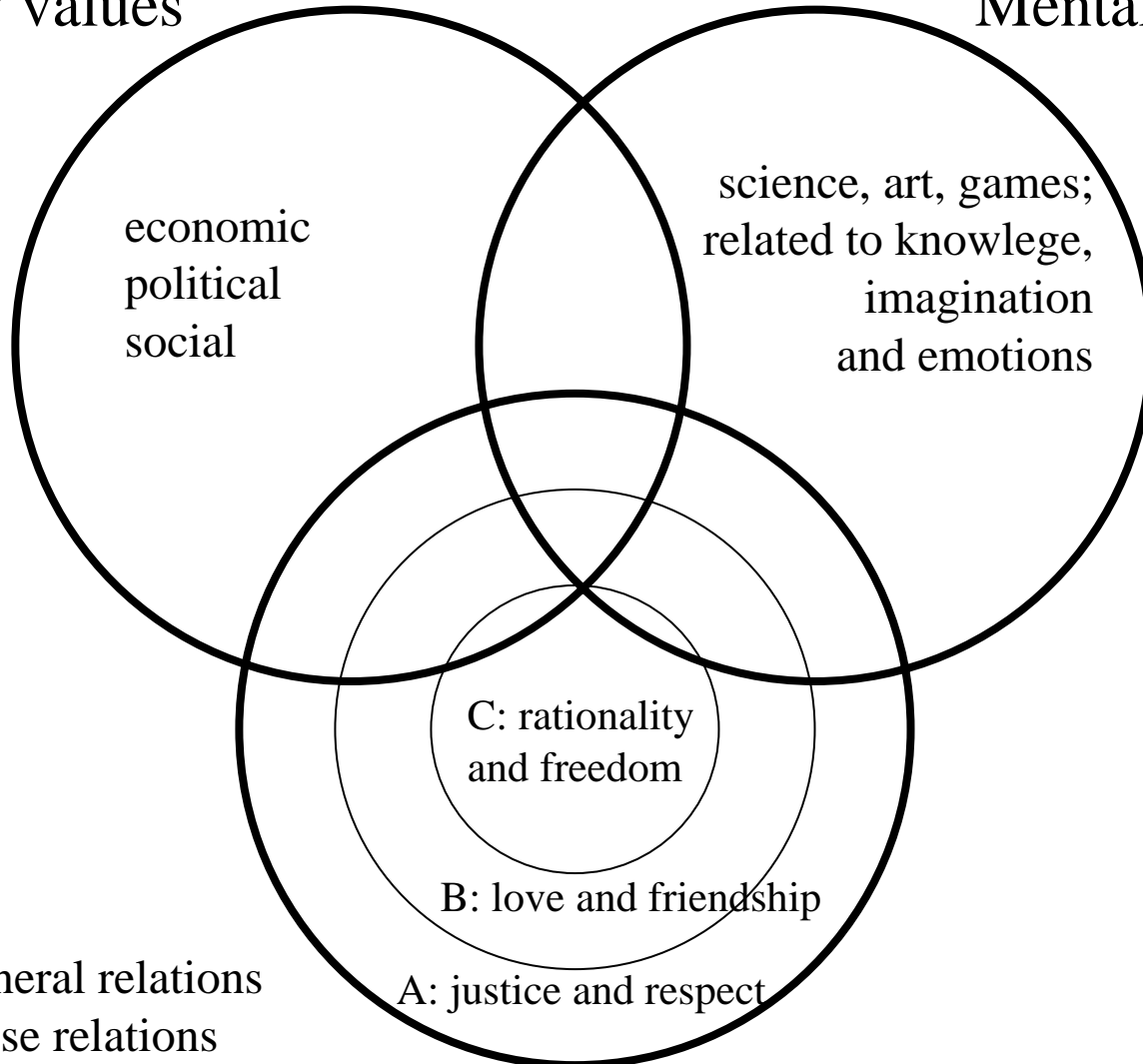
Ethical values

- As they relate to building knowledge societies in coastal rural areas:
 - connections between people
 - importance of trust: building relations inside community and outside
 - closeness
 - individuals play a significant role
 - connection with resources in culture and nature
 - observe and experience intrinsic values



Worldly values

Mental values



A: general relations

B: close relations

C: relation with oneself

Ethical values





3.11.2006

Skúli Skúlason
NORA conference



Hólaskóli

- Bishop's seat and a school established in 1106
- Agricultural college established in 1882
- Specialization after 1980 – aquaculture and fish biology, equine studies and tourism
- University education and research develops after 1990 – degree-granting status in 2003 – now being confirmed by law
- Increased emphasis on various cultural aspects
- Collaboration with the church and other activities at Hólar – including growing tourism business
- The school has been responsible for running the community at Hólar



Hólar University College

- Number of students has trippled in the past 5 years – now 165 students, estimated > 300 in 2010
- Citizens at Hólar have increased by 55% during the same period – also effect on the surrounding district
- The knowledge-center at Hólar provides ca. 80 jobs for the area (jobs related to service and construction not included)
- The school is also developing activities in the nearby town Sauðárkrókur
- One of the primary aims of the school is to contribute to local community development





3.11.2006

Skúli Skúlason
NORA conference



Direct relations with advancement of knowledge based industries

- Advancements in fisheries and aquatic resource use depend on more knowledge and education
- Tourism is an extremely important and rapidly growing industry – education and research is still far from satisfying the need
- New opportunities in “traditional” agriculture – e.g. industries with horses are diverse and growing and they are very much knowledge based
- Cultural-, heritage- and archaeology studies – relate to a wider concept of agriculture
- Studies on community development
- Science parks – innovation centers - incubators



What are the strengths that drive the development of the school ?

- **900 years of history – and a powerful location!**
- Strong community, good services and general living conditions in the district
- Specialization and emphasis on growing industries, both locally and on a broader scale
- A clear focus on creating good facilities for teaching, research and development work
- Emphasis on rural community needs and development



What are the strengths that drive the development of the school ?

- Emphasis on research and development (40% of annual budget is self-earned)
- Priority placed on collaboration with other schools, institutions and industries
- International connections and community
- **Broad support by the home community**
- **Strong ties with rural development plans**



Hólaskóli Science Park

- The school is developing a science park with primary location at the harbour area in Sauðárkrókur – in collaboration with local municipality, industries, research institutions and universities
- This is a well known strategy to build up knowledge societies and a successful way of many universities to contribute to community building (see e.g. OECD report)
- A key factor is that support and facilities are provided by local fishing industry – FISK Seafood - the company is already experiencing positive development because of this relationship





3.11.2006

Skúli Skúlason
NORA conference





3.11.2006

Skúli Skúlason
NORA conference



Major opportunity for considerable growth of Hólar University College

- To use these opportunities we need e.g. :
 - clear future vision 10, 20, 50, 100 years !
 - continued effort to build and provide good facilities, high quality of teaching and research and good community infrastructure
 - to emphasize diverse relations and collaborative efforts – build trust!
 - secure funding
- **Then**, new projects, good faculty and students, stronger local community and industries will be inevitable
 - **a strong united will exists to make this happen**



www.holar.is

3.11.2006

Skúli Skúlason
NORA conference



AÐ ÞORA!!

3.11.2006

Skúli Skúlason
NORA conference

