



## *Too Small for a University?*

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### *What will be discussed*

- The three main activities of a university and their relation to population density
  - Undergraduate teaching
  - Postgraduate teaching
  - Research
- The University of Iceland Regional Research Centres
  - Structure
  - Aim

## *There are very few people in Iceland*

- About 320.000 altogether
- Of that about 200.000 in Reykjavík and neighbouring towns
- Next in size, Akureyri with about 17.500
- This means that there is only one region in Iceland that can expect to draw enough students from its own population to have a “full” university

## *The Three Activities of a University*

- Undergraduate teaching
- Graduate teaching (courses and research)
- Research (research students and staff)

*These activities have very different characteristics with respect to size*

### *Undergraduate teaching*

- Requires a reasonably large student population to be efficient
  - Usually not economical in small units
    - Payment systems in Iceland generally assume 15-30 students minimum per course
    - In some cases distance education can help to overcome the limitation of numbers
- Does not generally require specialized teaching environments and apparatus
- Limited contact with local environment

## *Graduate courses*

- Require a number of students to be economical
  - Similar to undergraduate courses
- Often require specialized environments or equipment
  - Gives certain possibilities for regions
- Need highly specialized teachers with current research experience

## *Graduate research*

- Can exist with a relatively small group of good students, teachers and researchers
  - Small groups can work well
  - Requires a strong administrative backbone
- Requires specialized environment and often specialized equipment
- With present day communication - does not have to be situated near collaborators

## *Conclusions*

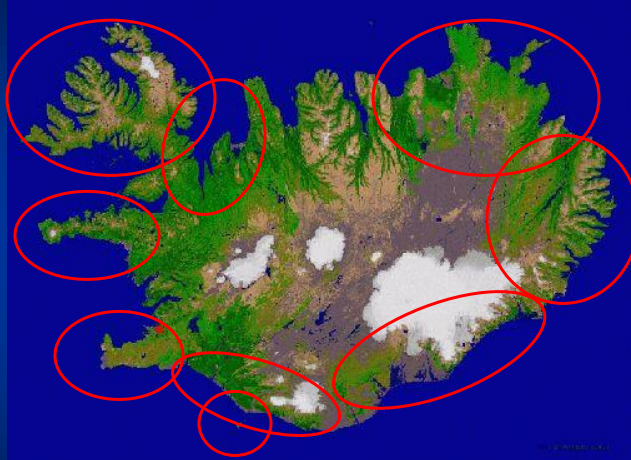
- Undergraduate teaching is very expensive to run in small units
- University research and research training can be done efficiently in small units if other conditions are favourable
- Postgraduate courses can benefit from favourable local conditions
  - it can be advantageous to run them away from campus

## *Relation to regional development*

- Undergraduate teaching
  - is expensive
  - has limited effect in the small local environment
- Graduate research can be
  - economical
  - run successfully in a small community
- Graduate research can
  - interact very well with the local community
  - have considerable effect there

*University of Iceland  
Regional Research Centres  
(i. Stofnun fræðasetra HÍ)*

- A university research institute
- Directly under the University Board
  - not a specific department as it interdisciplinary
- A number of small regional centres
- Centres have closed ties with the main campus
  - administration
  - quality systems



## *The Centres*

- Háskólasetrið á Hornafirði, Höfn og Kirkjubæjarklaustri
- Rannsókn- og fræðasetur HÍ Suðurlandi, Selfoss og Gunnarsholti
- Rannsókn- og fræðasetur í Vestmannaeyjum
- Háskólasetur Suðurnesja í Sandgerði
- Háskólasetur Snæfellsness, Stykkishólmi
- Rannsókn- og fræðasetur HÍ Vestfjörðum, Bolungarvík og Patreksfirði
- Rannsókn- og fræðasetur HÍ Norðvesturlandi, Skagaströnd
- Rannsókn- og fræðasetur HÍ Norðausturlandi, Húsavík
- Rannsókn- og fræðasetur HÍ Austurland, Egilsstöðum

## *Stofnun fræðasetra cont.*

- Centres make use of specific local conditions
- Work closely with the local communities
- Supported by local councils
- Have local steering boards

## *Selection of research fields*

- Those that benefit from special local conditions
  - Natural or man made
- Substantial interest and resources within the university
- Emphasize good high quality research
- Academic not applied research

## *Other considerations*

- If possible housed in same building as related activity
  - as “náttúrstofur”, “þekkingarsetur”
- Main research staff
  - selected after same criteria and process as university teaching staff
- Duties roughly divided:
  - 80% research
  - 20% work with the community



## *Why regional?*

- The conditions for research in many fields are more favourable outside Reykjavík
  - Research on birds in Snæfellsnes
    - Natural conditions
  - Whale research in Húsavík
    - Whale watching and museum
  - Environment and tourism around Vatnajökul National Park in Höfn

## *Finances*

- Special contribution from Parliament (Alþingi)
- University contribution
- Some contributions from local councils
- Grants from National Research Council
- Various other grants and contributions

## *Agreement between Ministry of Education and University of Iceland*

4. Að styrkja grundvöll kennslu, rannsókna og fræðiiðkana í landinu öllu og byggja með skipulegum hætti upp starfsemi sem miðar að því að nýta, afla og miðla þekkingu á landsbyggðinni. Efla skal sérstaklega samstarf við fræða- og þekkingarsetur á landsbyggðinni.

## *English*

- The University undertakes to strengthen the foundation of teaching and research in the whole of Iceland and establish activity that aims at using, obtaining, and distributing knowledge in the rural regions. It will especially strengthen cooperation with rural research centres

## *Non Academic Output*

- Strengthen
  - the knowledge part of the old industries
  - the “new” industries – the knowledge industries
- Create new knowledge based rural jobs
- Other indirect and often unforeseen effects

## *Final conclusions*

- Universities are required in rural areas
  - as well as in the population centres
- They have maximum effect
  - through their research activities and training
- The effect of local undergraduate teaching is limited
- It is both possible and economical to distribute many fields of academic research
  - and make use of special conditions in the regions, natural or man made