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SPECIAL FEATURE: ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Leverage Points for Sustainability Transformations

Revising Reykjavík: changing narratives of skeletons, structures, and imagined futures

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Abstract
In Reykjavík, Iceland, the city's oldest cemetery was exhumed in favor of yet another tourist hotel despite local cultural leaders' objections and existing concerns that new hotels already exceeded projected demand. For Icelanders, cemeteries are important material and symbolic markers of the nation's history and heritage and cherished contributors to Icelandic cultural identity. The anomalous destruction of this particular, historically significant cemetery suggested the question, "What is going on here?" and launched a comparison of Icelandic cemeteries as material, symbolic narratives to the narratives underlying the imagined future of the external consultancy's recommendations. The narratives expressed in the cemeteries differed substantially from those identified in the consultancy proposals and suggested that one culture's values can replace unintentionally another's rather quickly in lasting ways. This repeats globally and diminishes diversity and human–human and human–nature relationships. This investigation explored the substantial differences between the two narratives, vulnerabilities to such external influences, and considerations for efforts toward change that protects cultural and geographic diversity. These changes, the associated processes and histories were identified and discussed in global context with attention to identity formation, resilient and sustainable futures, spreading global homogeneity, and efforts toward more sustainable futures. While destruction of cultural markers is sometimes necessary, this exploration highlights the need to identify and consider these decisions carefully and to attend to a diversity of voices.

Keywords Narratives · Metaphors · Transitions · Culture · Identity · Imagined futures

Introduction

On Friday, April 22, 2016, a headline in the online English language news magazine, the Iceland Monitor, stated: "Skeletons removed in city centre to make room for a new hotel" (Iceland Monitor 2016). Photographs showed the careful excavation of human remains as they lie surrounded by soil and plant roots in their graves. A temporary metal shelter surrounded the worksite. The text of the article (quoted below) raised objection to the relocation, which was underway in order to free the space for a new hotel in the heart of an area variously known as 101 Reykjavik, Old Reykjavik and City Centre. The burial site was surrounded already by commercial buildings.

Many modern high rise hotels were either under construction or newly completed in this area to attract and cater to growing numbers of tourists. Tower cranes populated a skyline that had changed markedly over each of my many trips since 2011. Adjacent to one construction site, a large, hand-lettered sign on the side of one of the city's colorful old buildings objected to "the destruction of art and culture." Visual reminders of the island location, fishing heritage, and natural history of the city were removed, obstructed, or dwarfed by new buildings of drastically different scale and design.

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From the Iceland monitor:

> Former director of the National Museum of Iceland, Þór Magnússon has sent an op-ed to Morgunblaðið (Morning News) today calling for the protection of Reykjavik's oldest cemetary [*sic*] just near Austurvöllur square. Skeletons are already being dug up and removed to make way for a new hotel building there.
> "The city should be spared from a hotel at the site of the churchyard. Instead it could be turned into a beautiful and peaceful place in memory of past generations instead of a drop-off point where tourists drag their luggage."
> The old cemetary is called Víkurkirkjugarður at the Iceland telecom building, Landssíminn in teh [*sic*] centre of Reykjavik. The cemetary reaches into a building site where a new hotel is being constructed.
> City councellors from the independence party have put forward a proposal to the Reykjavik city council to abandon the hotel plans.
> "We are talking about the oldest cemetary of Reykjavik, where thirty generations of Icelanders have been laid to rest, and countless skeletons have been dug up recently and transported elsewhere. This goes completely against the demands of the Iceland Cultural Heritage Centre," says Kjartan Magnússon of the Independence party speaking to today's Morgunblaðið (Iceland Monitor 2016).

As I read this article, I recalled discussions with Icelanders and visitors to the country about the nation's history that is tightly interwoven with both its nature and meaningful spaces (referred to here as places) and Icelandic cemeteries that I had visited around the country. Also quick to mind was a commissioned report by a consulting firm in Boston (US) about ways to maximize economic gains from tourism in Iceland. The juxtaposition of news article, cemeteries, and report suggested foundational differences between the assumptions, motivations, values, and relationships (human–human and human–nature) underlying the report and those that I had witnessed across 5 years of ethnographic research in the country.[1] These differences were embedded in narratives and reframed central elements of Iceland's cultural underpinnings. The cemetery-high rise confrontation provided a material example, a starting place, to explore processes by which cultural and economic homogeneity expand to potentially harmful effect globally.

The ongoing hotel vs cemetery issue became a focal point for investigating underlying belief systems, the foundational narratives, expressed in the cemeteries as material and symbolic places, and the Northern Sights consultants' report (Boston Consulting Group 2013) that refers to an imagined, symbolic place of the future that is being enacted now in material changes to Reykjavik. Four cemeteries from across Iceland reflected contextual differences and were selected for inclusion. Close analysis of the narratives expressed in the cemeteries and the Northern Sights report identified deep belief structures that guided and shaped the two points of view. Rarely acknowledged overtly, such cultural structures guide expectations and actions and define desirable outcomes. Although initially subtle, their influence helps shape the future (Beckert 2016).

Importantly, this investigation did not attempt to establish the correctness of belief systems, the desirability of increased tourism in Iceland or the importance of any cemetery. Such decisions belong to the nation or region about which they are made. With its exceptionally literate populace, active democracy, environmental commitments, and global orientation, Iceland is fully capable of making informed decisions. This investigation does seek understandings of what processes may be at work in such situations that are also occurring worldwide and that have relevance for resilient, sustainable futures, and continuing global heterogeneity (Ghosh 2005, 2016).

Narrative research and the structure of this article

Decades ago, Bateson (1972) recognized a need for research approaches that are compatible with the complexities of human experience and social systems. Reason and Rowan (1981) followed with a detailed look at characteristics required in such approaches that seek to make explicit what is implicit in situations before us. Further, these approaches, while recognizing the value of empirical research's details and separated facts, recognize also the importance of understanding these facts in the broad context of ever-changing human phenomenology and daily experience. Their work calls for holist approaches that seek insider understandings of individual and collective human experiences within the historical and contemporary contexts in which they occur. Subsequent work in complex adaptive systems (e.g., Meadows 2008) continues and refines this thinking and the associated research approaches. Beckert (2016) demonstrated the

[1] In 2013, I initiated ethnographic research on human affinity with natural place in Iceland's West Fjords. That research expanded quickly to include nested complex systems in the region and beyond that affected the three primary study participants' relationship with local settings and nature and other local settings of personal significance to each individual. Subsequent trips to Iceland were related most directly to this work and increased my appreciation for associated complexities and developments in the broader, national context. By 2013, the tourism boom that was merely a hint during my first visit in 2011 had begun its rapid growth primarily in south Iceland. As I write this account, tourism may be leveling off around 2.1 million visitors a year, and these visitors are exploring more of Iceland. Many of the report recommendations appear to be in progress.

additional need for holist approaches to consider expectation for the future.

Narrative research is among the holist approaches to understanding people within their social systems. Narratives represent the contextual frames within which human beings act, feel, plan, etc., and they comprise cognitive, emotional and material content in multidimensional Gestalts that connect experiences. Additionally, multiple narratives may be linked in expanded narrative networks (van der Leeuw 2019). Due to this multidimensionality and the importance of context, reports of narrative research findings differ in format from those of quantitative, empirical studies. Unlike positivist approaches that identify a proposition followed by supporting evidence, the narrative approach used here identifies and describes processes in progress and makes that information available for decision-makers' consideration. Sufficient information must be provided for readers to understand and verify the ideas and conclusions presented.

Consistent with that necessity, this article presents, in order, the origin of my early attention to Icelandic cemeteries, description of four representative cemeteries, review of the consultancy report, and subtle differences between cemetery and report narratives that instigated changes in culture. This is followed by a review of historical events that may create vulnerabilities to such unintended culture change. Finally, related leverage points are suggested. Discussion of these various topics is included throughout the article to avoid both redundancies and implied separation of elements that are actually intimately connected.

Findings and discussion

The cemetery narratives

Early attention to Iceland's cemeteries In early September 2012, I was in Reykjavik heading home from the West Fjords after 5 weeks of language study and a conference on borders, perimeters, and marginality in northern Europe. With an autumnal drizzle in progress outside, a busy coffee house provided refuge for updating notes. There were no free tables when an older Finnish couple, coffee and cake in hand, sought a place to sit. I invited them to join me at my table. They told me that they visit Iceland often and found it a gracious and welcoming country. They listed several places in Reykjavik that they were sure I would want to see.

At the top of this list was a beautiful old cemetery, Hólavallagarður, near the center of 101 Reykjavik, an easily walkable distance from the coffee house. As a team, this couple described the cemetery: so well maintained, planted with colorful flowers, graced with decorative headstones and shaded by aging, and lichen-decorated trees. My tablemates commented on what is said about a culture when ancestors' resting places are located and tended with care across generations. This had become an interest of theirs, and they reported visiting cemeteries wherever they travel. They noted that most of the cemeteries they had visited in Iceland reflected pride in heritage and appreciation of the hardships and triumphs of ancestors.

I recalled the cemeteries that I had happened upon already in my own travels around Iceland, one at Búðir in South Iceland and the other at Siglufjörður, in the northern part of the country. Both were strikingly beautiful and evoked a strong sense of place and history. Since then, many Icelanders have advised, "If you want to understand Iceland, start in the cemeteries," and my collection of cemetery visits has expanded considerably. Two from that collection (at Hesteyri and Ísafjörður, both in the West Fjords) are included for comparison. Each of these cemeteries communicated clear symbolic messages about Iceland's cultural identity and reflected their importance to their communities, thereby supporting further the use of cemeteries as markers of foundational values and identity in this investigation.

Búðir, July 2011 Sea lyme grass, shell sand beach, and black volcanic rock, unique in combination within Iceland, extended from the isolated south Iceland church and cemetery at Budir. The small black structure blended with surrounding rocks scattered centuries earlier by volcanic eruptions and arranged later to construct a waist high wall marking church and cemetery grounds. Window frames, the central front door, and gates at openings in the wall were painted white, stark in contrast to the black church and stones but also harmonious with distant snow-capped mountains.

Human constructions appeared continuous with this singular place, connected to it, enfolded by it. From one view, mountains were the backdrop; from another, rolling, grass-covered sand dunes led to the blue North Atlantic Sea. Long grasses surrounded the cemetery wall and rippled in the wind. The windswept land was softly beautiful and harshly vulnerable to Iceland's weather.

Ancestors' farms and stories were written on the landscape. The once commercially active bay held memories of ships' return from the sea and of sailors that the sea had claimed. All were recalled by those who tended and attended this place, honored as part of an evolving identity of people and place. The nation's histories—human, geological, and meteorological—were inescapable. I was aware of the passage of time; human power, fragility, and placement within the natural world; and the mortality of people, their places, and plans.

At Budir, two symbolic messages were especially noteworthy: Nature and human activity enfold each other, and each is valued as an independent contributor to life in place.

Siglufjörður, June 2012 Partially concealed by a wall and tall evergreens and discovered by chance, the mountainside

cemetery at Siglufjordur seemed a secret garden. At the entrance, a wide, lockable gate spanned a corner of the wall. Scattered bits of rust dotted the metal gate's white paint, revealing its age and proximity to the sea. The paint, thick from decades of care, introduced the seriousness with which this community attended to its human heritage.

Burial plots varied in character, reflected the histories of the individuals interred and the preferences and financial circumstances of the associated families. Some graves lie alone; others were grouped, surrounded by stone or concrete edging or, less commonly, by iron fencing reminiscent of antique iron beds. Genealogy was clear in the groupings—Jón Davíðsson next to his son, Haukur Jónsson, next to his daughter, Auður Hauksdóttir, to use pseudonyms, for example. Vines, grass, and flowers wove the iron frames, connecting and dissolving them to place.

From the top shaded row, the narrow fjord appeared distant, gleaming, and blue. The fishing and arts heritage of the community below were visible. The fishing fleet, sea, and weather could be seen in their coming and going. A harmony of past-and-present, individual-and-community dominated. People exchanged quiet greetings and went about their grave-tending business matter-of-factly with clear purpose and care in understated acknowledgment of one's humanity, place, and activity.

A particularly clear symbolic message at Siglufjordur was this: Individuals are respected as individuals and as members of their various communities.

Hesteyri, Summers of 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2016 Once a thriving community built around, first, a whaling station and, then, a herring processing factory, Hesteyri is now a handful of houses occupied only in summer by former residents and their descendants. For many, it serves as a gateway to Hornstandir Nature Preserve on which it is located. With no roads in the preserve, the approach to Hesteyri is on foot or by boat. Depending on the tide, boat passengers disembark on either a narrow dock or the beach.

Easily overlooked by visitors today, the graves of Hesteyri's early residents remain on a gentle slope safely above the sea and with wide views onto the fjord, boat landings, ocean beyond, and mountains behind. Tall lupine and angelica and low-growing Arctic thyme, blueberries, and crowberries spread over and around the grave markers, masking their presence. Descendants and friends of Hesteyri's original families are much aware of this little cemetery, though, and share stories of the community of people who depended on each other and nature to survive and thrive. The storytellers value their West Fjords' heritage and the significance of the cemetery in preserving the history of this particular place. The stories highlight the unique and enduring character of Iceland across centuries and generations, and they communicate the importance of the nation to its citizens, their justifiable pride in their history.

At Hesteyri, setting threatens to overtake cemetery, but this testament to heritage and people holds tight to place and stories that hand down in spirit if not in precise, impartial detail from generation to generation and from locals to visitors. This history grew from and with nature and now dissolves back into land and sea even as it remains written in old houses, long-used pathways, shared stories, the old whaling station turned herring factory down the beach, and the simple boat landing sites that admit the next stage of evolution for this community of people and place. Modernization comes more slowly to Hesteyri than to cities, but as it progresses, it is woven through with a nation's history and respect for individuals, community, and nature.

Symbolic messages at Hesteyri include: communities and the nation pull together in times of need, and stories embedded in place continue as place evolves in purpose.

Ísafjörður, Multiple trips in varied seasons from 2012 to 2017 The original cemetery in Isafjordur sits side-by-side with a notably modern church just a few blocks off the town's center of government and commerce, Silfurtorg (Silver Square). There during a colonial period, Danish traders controlled regional commerce and the associated exchange of money. Beyond Silfurtorg is Háskólasetter Vestfjarða (the University Centre of the West Fjords) that offers international graduate programs and an on-going schedule of conferences and symposia on topics central to heritage, economic development, environmental quality, and quality of life in the region, Northern Europe and the Arctic.

Church and cemetery are on flat ground only slightly above sea level. In two directions, they are a short block from the sea that is easily visible. Surrounded by low fencing, the cemetery is on a main thoroughfare; residents, tourists, and school children stream past all day and into the evening on foot, strollers, scooters and bicycles, and in varied motorized vehicles. As elsewhere, grave markers show the patina of age. The cemetery is full; a new cemetery at the bottom of the fjord is used now. Still, maintenance of the site continues as time, season, and resources allow. Flowers and other decorations are added to graves on appropriate occasions by friends, descendants, and church members.

Prominent in a large grass-covered space adjacent to the cemetery is a larger-than-life monument to the seamen and fish that helped establish Isafjordur as a center of commerce and government. It is a statement of the solid determination and perseverance of generations of fishermen and fish who helped provide for families and a nation. The statue's presence and the town's high regard for it speak also to the resilience of this community and all of Iceland. In this area, nearly every long-term resident has lost someone to the sea—if not a close relative, then a friend or classmate. Life continues with appreciation for lives and livelihoods that were and also for the nature that both provides and takes away.

Rather than a hushed and secluded space, this old cemetery is central in everyday village life, unremarkable as background but acknowledged tacitly as a lasting marker of place. Its location between the centers of daily commerce, government and higher education in one direction and in the other direction, elementary and secondary schools, and the hospital where babies are born and lives come to a close, suggests subtly continuity in life, living and dying—the cycles and fullness of a village community where all of life is played out across the town square. The community's unique identity remains as its evolution continues.

Several symbolic messages are clear in the setting of the old cemetery in Isafjordur. There is continuity in life and death. All of life plays out across the town square and in memory. This is a resilient nation, and people and nature work in partnership and mutuality to keep it that way. As a group, this collection of cemeteries is among material narratives that recall much of Iceland's and Icelanders' history and identity.

A note about spaces and places

Spaces become places as they are lived in and worked on by people and thereby become imbued with the meanings of daily life and materiality (Goodbody 2011; Ryle 2011; Tuan 2001). Places are both symbolic and material (Goodbody 2011). As symbols, they foster affective ties important to individual and collective identity formation and serve political, social, and cultural functions. Their meanings are fluid, constantly reconstructed as communities' founding myths and legends adjust to changing circumstances. The subject of oral history and generational memory, places as symbols are part of social memory and respond to evolving cultural interpretation. Materially, places are more stable and longer lived. They are the collective practices, images, and physical objects that represent cultural knowledge inherent in patterns of thought and narratives.

The cemeteries described here are examples of this symbolic-material duality. As figurations of memory, they give meaning to the past and help convert past experience to a basis for individual and collective identity in the present. They are important also in the communication and redefinition of human relationship with the natural environment. In their combined symbolic and material roles, places possess an indexical relationship with their meaning; they locate individual and collective meanings in material place. In such sites, individual and collective memories reinforce each other, thereby contributing to individual and collective identity construction (Goodbody 2011; Jager 1985; Wohlforth 2010). As in other settings, cemeteries across Iceland demonstrate this function in part because the cemeteries themselves exist in relationship to other places and histories and form, thereby, an extended narrative network.

Narrative of an imagined future

Northern Sights: The Future of Tourism in Iceland (The Boston Consulting Group [BCG] 2013) I found this consultants' report by chance in 2015 as I prepared an Icelandic language class presentation about burgeoning tourism in Iceland. The cover was dominated by a blue and green image of the Northern Lights above what appeared to be Jökulsárlón, the glacial lagoon. Curtains of green light hung in the night sky and seemed to brush the glacier in the background. Behind these, a brightly lit sky ranged in color from bright to dark blues. Blue-white icebergs floated on a calm lagoon that reflected the Aurora Borealis.

The image and its blurred frame implied an ethereal character for Iceland´s winter spaces, enhanced the mystique that had developed already around one heavily used marketing slogan, "Land of Fire and Ice," and hinted at another, "Inspired by Iceland." An exotic, seductive land of mysteries, tales, and magic was suggested. All were consistent with ongoing advertising campaigns that promoted also the blue and green of Iceland in summer. In format and language, the report supported rapid cohesion building and demonstrated skill in persuasion.

The report authors were thorough and included multiple comparisons to tourism development and management in other nations [e.g., Finland (identified as a benchmark country for Iceland), Australia, Singapore, New Zealand, the Netherlands, UK, and USA]. They interviewed varied stakeholders in Iceland's tourism sectors, surveyed tourists, and inventoried Iceland's existing tourism infrastructure, including various national and regional decision-making agencies. Absent from the list were earth scientists, botanists, heritage scholars, social scientists, and Icelandic residents of tourist areas who were not involved directly with tourism.

I received emailed tourist surveys after at least two of my early visits. They queried respondents about what was lacking in Iceland, what they enjoyed, and what would improve their experience. At the time, I found the questions concerning in their implication that Reykjavik and Iceland would need to meet external expectations in order to attract tourists. What I most appreciated about both city and country was opportunity to understand better a way of living that respected individuals and the earth. This respect and the associated openness to information from diverse sources are critical to the evolution of resilient, self-renewing societies (Gardner 1981; Jantsch 1975; Meadows 2008; Wohlforth 2010) and democracies (Irigaray 2011; Klein 2014). The only change I hoped for was an increase in Iceland's confidence that this way of living could provide critical information to a world that must address both climate change and escalating violence.

Findings were analyzed by the consulting firm using methods the firm developed. One of these methods, BCG

Analysis, was developed in the 1970s and is known for its simple, readily communicated matrix. The approach divides a portfolio of activities into four quadrants (stars, question marks, dogs, and cash cows) to assist identification and development of areas with the greatest potential for economic gain. Appropriate use of this matrix requires detailed and careful review of multiple factors that are likely to influence long-term performance of each activity noted.[2]

Professionally executed graphs displayed findings in attractive, complex summary form and carried throughout the report the nature-based color scheme of the cover. Diagrams used the same color palette to highlight the authors' "Vision for Destination Iceland:" "Maximise tourism's *contribution to the whole of Iceland* via *managed, sustainable, year-round* growth of visitors *inspired* by Iceland's distinctive nature, unique culture and warmhearted welcome" (emphasis in original) (Boston Consulting Group 2013: 19). I struggled to stay open to this vision as I recalled Meadows' (2008) observation that growth cannot be continuously sustainable. The authors' stated goal was "for this vision, or a variation of it, to be adopted by the full range of Icelandic tourism players, with one entity responsible for 'owning' it and driving the translation of high level aspirations into tangible actions" (Boston Consulting Group 2013: 19–20).

Although the Northern Sights report did not acknowledge dissenting opinions nationally regarding the desirability of rapidly expanded tourism, it did note ongoing disagreement about how the growth should be managed. To address this, report writers called on the authority of rationality to support their recommendations and avoid sorting out local conflicts. They noted that "a structured, logical, evidence-based approach" (Boston Consulting Group 2013: 43) was employed to reach their conclusion that only a public–private Tourism Task Force "could set the pace required to execute the extraordinary breadth of activity needed to achieve Iceland's ambitious goals" (Boston Consulting Group 2013: 7). The task force would determine the vision and target goals, oversee their implementation, celebrate successes, and highlight the risks of delay. Unclear was whether the task force would include representation from groups that had no financial stake in tourism.

While the scope of the consultants' work did not include discussion of potential drawbacks of such centralized decision-making and implementation task forces, several authors have detailed related concerns. In his close look at Alaskan history, Wohlforth (2010) demonstrated the complex dynamics of interactive human and natural systems that enabled successful, long-term community development among residents there. Once interrupted by policy decisions of centralized groups with agendas of their own, these communities and their ecosystems collapsed. There was no ill intent on either side, just lack of familiarity with the locale on the part of the decision makers combined with a desire to establish economic security quickly. Ryle (2011) identified vulnerabilities of peripheral and often marginalized regions to domination by the culturally distant metropolis and the resultant exposure to destructive impacts over which the distant residents have no control. Environmental and cultural degradations are common results.

Both Loftsdóttir (2014) and Magnason (2008) noted the vulnerability of such power groups to external influence when that influence presents compelling images for future gains. Other authors have found similar outcomes worldwide. Irigaray (2011) addressed the devaluation of the individual that often accompanies decisions by centralized groups whose primary focus is on economic gain. This devaluation works eventually to undermine democracy. Protections against such unintended consequences were not evident to me in the Northern Sights report.

The report language was urgent, high energy, authoritative throughout and characterized by words and phrases like "build the destination," "exponential expansion," "generating substantial products," "new mechanism," "key nature schemes," "capture visitors' wallets," "decisive action," and "a critical juncture" (Boston Consulting Group 2013). Compared to the Icelandic culture of inclusion and welcome that I had experienced, such language and motivations seemed manipulative, extractive, acquisitional, and impersonal. Recommendations, including suggestions for implementation and expansion across the country, followed and were true to the report's singular vision.

The root metaphors underlying the report differed markedly from those expressed materially in the cemeteries described above. The report suggested metaphors of control and consumption, while the cemeteries demonstrated mutuality or fellowship between people and nature as described by my research participants. Woven through background assumptions and easily overlooked, these metaphors can be profoundly influential in framing or reframing experience and directing future action—often without intention.

Hornborg (1996: 55) explored metaphor as "a mode of knowing that incorporates the very conditions of knowledge." These conditions include not only the structuring of objective information in memory and communication but also the cultural underpinnings of that structuring—the ways in which events are understood in context. In addition, metaphor carries forward emotional and active responses from past events and connects them to similar current and anticipated events. As a result, metaphor not only structures thought but also has motivational power, an important

[2] Several scholars have noted the limitations of this matrix of analysis, and its use has declined in recent years. See, for example, Armstrong and Brodie (1994) and Duică et al. (2014).

quality too of imagined futures (Beckert 2016), and potential for reorienting a culture.

The report suggested that if handled properly and quickly, tourism would provide a strong economic base for the country far into the future. There was no time to lose; to delay for further discussion would endanger the nation's future. In the presentation of this imagined future, the consultants handled the politics of expectation (Beckert 2016) skillfully; who could object to such a forward-looking, high-energy scheme—especially as the country recovered from the 2008 banking collapse, saw declines in its fishing industry, sought a larger share of the international stage, and grappled with conflicts over multinational corporations' expansion of aluminum production in Iceland?

Report readers were encouraged to think of Iceland's natural beauty as a portfolio of tourist sites-some developed and some underutilized in advancing the ambitious goals of Icelanders who had been surveyed or interviewed. From this perspective, nature was a commodity for packaging and sale rather than a respected partner in life and living. In addition, it was separated from the culture that it helped shape and from the histories that gave meaning to nature as a whole and to natural places individually.

To attract tourists with money to spend, upgraded amenities were suggested, e.g., high-end tourist hotels near major waterfalls, unique geologies, and bird and whale watching areas. Also suggested were additional entertainment options near these sites to help people engage in multiple ways with nature and customs—perhaps heritage-themed parks or helicopter flights over major waterfalls. Memories flashed in my mind of "heritage sites" reified and turned into shallow stereotypes around the world and also conflicts and hazards associated with helicopter flights over Grand Canyon in the US. I wondered if visitors and Icelanders alike might confront still nature's silence and know their own smallness in wide, wild, and majestic space.

Data were collected on tourists entering the country and visiting the regions. Drawing on these data, five "target groups" were identified [older relaxers, affluent adventurers, emerging market explorers, city breakers, and MICE (those attending meetings, incentives, conferences and events)]. People in these groups were more attractive to Iceland due to the size and potential growth of their tourist segment, their "spend per day" habits and length of stay, how likely they were to travel outside of the heavily visited Golden Circle area and to visit in winter. Tourists, too, were considered commodities from which economic resources could be extracted.

The report noted that tourists to whom the country had intrinsic appeal were motivated to discover the country's nature, experience its culture and enjoy its "authentic, warm-hearted welcome" (Boston Consulting Group 2013: 24). Icelanders' gracious culture and generous hospitality, both grown across generations of living where life itself can depend on pulling together in times of need, became an additional commodity for promotion and sale. This changes motivation to welcome, educate, and learn from visitors, distances these acts from human connection, and introduces an element of manipulation for profit that, while present many places worldwide, was less prevalent in Iceland when I first visited.

Suggestions for preserving Iceland's fragile environments viewed the country's natural beauty as an environmental service (toward human gain) whose use (consumption) should be maximized only to the point that its marketability would be damaged beyond repair and its value thereby diminished. To encourage wider distribution of visitors and distribute their environmental impacts, an "Environment Card" was recommended to "bundle" admission to a few popular sites with admission to lesser known locations. The card would also maximize revenues, "incentivize site owner/operators' quality product development," and provide opportunity for them to "up-sell" local value-added options to tourists. For tourism service providers, the card could be "a very interesting selling product…through commissions or other incentives" (Boston Consulting Group 2013: 47). Nature and culture had become, it seemed, fully commercialized and readied for market. Tourists and service providers were positioned for manipulation by a central, elite, decision-making tourism board.

History instructs that the perception of mutuality between people and earth diminishes when nature becomes object for packaging and sale—exploited in this way for economic gain. Over time and around the world, this process has led to increasing environmental destruction and to disruption of relationships critical to resilient societies and their contexts (Gardner 1981; Ghosh 2016; Ryle 2011; Wohlforth 2010). Loftsdóttir (2014) recognized in Iceland the transformation of daily realities and environments into marketable valuables and the accompanying reification of difference, stereotyping of culture and place. Ryle (2011) noted the deleterious effects of commercial priorities on human relationships, and several writers have established links between both commercial exploitation of peoples and places and democracies weakened by a resultant loss of respect for difference and individualization (Ghosh 2005, 2016; Irigaray 2011; Ryle 2011). Wohlforth (2010) demonstrated long-term undermining of individual and cultural identity formation when systems of relationships between people and places are interrupted. Meadows (2008) noted that outcomes are written into systems ahead of their actual appearance. A quick look at the global superpowers today underscores the accuracy of her insight as it relates to capitalism as practiced in those countries.

Including appendices, the Northern Sights report is 112 pages long. On page 70, the last page of text, the authors

referenced Iceland's expansive natural resources that have supported its inhabitants for centuries. They noted "Today, a relatively new resource is ripe for development… Tourism is one of Iceland's gifts to the world. Let's make it even better." In my mind, I see the cemeteries surrounded by open spaces or community life but situated always with respect for the unique people, heritage, and nature with which both cemetery and surrounding place evolved. I picture also the expanding construction that replaces Reykjavik's oldest cemetery, which once had visual proximity to the old, weather-vulnerable harbor and linked visually and spatially that harbor with the Alþingi (Parliament) building nearby and Dómkirkjan (Reykjavik Cathedral, the capital's oldest church) just beyond the Parliament. Nature, religion, and public participation in government are foundational in Iceland's history. Loss of such lasting visual and spatial proximity affects individual and collective identity formation (Basso 1996; Goodbody 2011).

In this new approach to bringing people to Iceland, and Reykjavik especially, where is consideration of such things and the long-standing emotional connections of old to ever-evolving new and nation to sea and the world beyond? I struggle to see that their absence is making tourism better, that bowing to visitors' preference rather than standing strong beside Iceland's many lessons in living, improves tourists' experience, or serves the global need for diversity in an increasingly homogenous world. I am not alone. (See Magnason 2008).

Rather than fostering the ongoing evolution of a singular but not isolated country with much more than natural beauty to offer the world, the recommended schemes seem to lay a new foundation like concrete over the country's heritage and history. Subsequent evolution could well be from this new, more exploitive foundation, especially as material heritage markers are either eliminated or dominated by new constructions (Goodbody 2011; Magnason 2008; Ryle 2011) and people change what they do to fit a modified context.

My argument is not with tourism or with change itself, which have been good in many ways to Iceland and visitors alike, and it may be that the removal of Víkurkirkjugarður was necessary despite the quickly dismissed objections from citizens and cultural leaders (including a former director of the National Museum of Iceland and a former national president) and mounting fears that the city already had more new hotel rooms than could be filled. Although the removal of this cemetery of historical significance is a decision for Iceland alone to make, the cemetery-high rise confrontation reveals for everyone processes behind the continuing intrusion of a system of consumption, objectification, commoditization, and exploitation that is already creating problems worldwide (Ghosh 2005, 2016; Irigaray 2011; Loftsdóttir 2014; Magnason 2008).

Concerns include not only the continued homogenization of cultures-in-place but also the probable loss of landscapes only lightly touched by human action. If we lose examples of what can be, how will we remember what might be still, what we might work to attain, retain, or regain, and what might be brought forward and woven in modern form through evolving places? If we drive off their land and fisheries and out of their communities those who practice traditions for living with their settings while people and setting co-evolve, who will remain to teach the lessons that made Iceland and other locations strong, resilient, self-organizing systems? All cultures and spaces will necessarily lose some markers of heritage over time; space is limited, decisions need to be made, and nature intervenes with hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and similar events. Human decisions to destroy such sites must attend with intention to diverse and dissenting voices and to the values and processes that have contributed to their contexts' resilience.

Through a Wider Lens: History and Leverage Points

Iceland took similar paths at least twice in recent decades: the establishment of multinational aluminum smelters and the implementation of banking reforms. Neither scheme led to the future as presented in the original imaginary. In both cases, organizations external to Iceland presented imagined futures of increasing economic security and prosperity for the country and its citizens. Employment opportunities would expand, the standard of living would improve, and Iceland would be recognized as an important contributor to global development and world affairs. Then like now, the need for action was urgent; to linger would be an opportunity lost. The best course was for a small group of influential Icelanders to drive the necessary action in consultation with outside interests. The politics of persuasion were brought to bear against objections to the schemes and the pace at which they were implemented.

Vulnerability to such external influence was written without intent early in Iceland's history. Although always independent in attitude, the nation was a colony first of Norway (1260–1380) and then of Denmark (1380–1918) followed by functional independence until 1944, when it became a fully independent nation. During World War II, a strong US military presence resulted in a significant boost to the Icelandic economy and standard of living and created a rapid "lurch into the future" (Magnason 2008: 157). As a result, Iceland essentially skipped the Industrial Age and missed the opportunity for a gradual evolution of culture on the way to the Knowledge Age. Centuries as a colony in combination with rapid, externally instigated advances helped both to establish habits of seeking and accepting external guidance and to undermine the nation's confidence in its ability to

create from its unique past and traditions a future of its own (Loftsdóttir 2014; Magnason 2008).

For Iceland to demonstrate this vulnerability is particularly noteworthy. It is today a modern, exceptionally resourceful and literate nation characterized by an ability to respond effectively as a group or individually to the many situations generated by geographic location and political past. The standard of living compares favorably to any other nation. The multi-lingual populace participate in national decision-making and follow international news that is readily available. Still as Loftsdóttir and Magnason discussed, it was possible for power groups within Iceland to join an external scheme and push through both aluminum smelting and banking reform over the objection of other informed citizens. These and similar results globally are no-fault outcomes of system structures as explained by Meadows (2008) and Senge (2006). No one is to blame and everyone—from individuals to nations, multinational corporations to family businesses, consultants to their employers, learners to educators, and tourists to those seeking profits from tourism—bears the burden for change.

Clearly, this is a global story that continues. Rather than draw firm conclusions or prove a point, findings suggest close attention to subtle, underlying values and metaphors inherent in planned change. Many leverage points for change are also apparent. Some of the more significant follow. A responsible position for consultants is to explore with clients ways to define prosperity or progress based on qualities, values, and processes that have supported host nations and their citizens across generations and then, to carry those qualities forward in support of each nation's unique and continuing evolution from within. As part of this exploration, consultants should require consideration of multiple voices and many perspectives in a consensus-building process that, as Meadows (2008) noted, supports systems evolution without destructive fluctuation. Sufficient time must be allowed for this and for the introduction and evolution of changes as existent systems adjust.

Within this orientation, consultants are facilitators and information sources for their hosts' decision-making process rather than experts in establishing known models of predefined progress. Similarly, tourists might visit with curiosity about the on-going, global experiment of humans living together with the earth, each other, and non-human others who share a diversity of spaces and places. Each contributor to this grand experiment, this hard-earned knowledge in many forms, can inform the other if attention is paid to contexts and underlying structures of knowledge and culture.

Such approaches to consultation and tourism will require humility, imagination, a well-developed ability to see and hear what is there, and respect for local diversity and knowledge of place. With the exercise of these qualities, the outside perspective can be valuable and, later, helpful also to consultants, tourists, and global superpowers as they reflect on their own lives in context and seek solutions at home to climate change and escalating violence. Demonstrated respect for long term, local knowledge overlaps another leverage point: support growing confidence in the knowledge, creativity and voices of peoples of place. Only they have intimate and historical knowledge of their significant spaces and the values, processes, and relationships that are important within them. Similar suggestions apply to super powers and corporations who establish a presence in smaller or less powerful nations and regions.

Many places distributed around the world have shown remarkable environmental and social resilience and evolution across centuries. Whether nations, regions within nations, or single communities, these places are often small and remote. Although their voices and the questioning voices among their constituents are too often marginalized and ignored, attentive listeners and observers will find processes and practices that are central to resilience and evolution in a changing world. A more central role for these voices is suggested in efforts toward system redesign that supports change, diversity, and sustainable life on Earth. While much is known already about common characteristics of these systems, there is more to learn. Relatedly, another leverage point is found in the inclusion and evaluation of not only data but also multiple forms of knowing in discussions about the future of places.

In education, place-based, collaborative, and discovery orientations are strongly suggested by these findings along with the intentional development of community, respect, humility, and confidence among and within learners. Narratives, material and symbolic, play an important role in carrying forward heritage and identity. Efforts to record stories of place, foster the oral tradition, and maintain significant material markers of heritage support narratives' contemporary presence and identity-shaping roles even as peoples and places evolve. Finally, an imagined future of a global community working toward the common goal of resilient ecological and social systems and comprising a diversity of individuals and nations in their unique and ever-changing places is critical—even if it is not immediately attainable.

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