

Urbanization

I often visit the small settlements in Greenland. The immediate impression is idyllic. A small safe society in balance with nature. Small wooden houses surrounded by a stunning landscape of mountains, fiords and rivers.

But behind this idyll hides another reality. The government statistics and surveys show that large parts of the population of the small settlements have poor living conditions without realistic prospects for future employment and earnings. The children often have unqualified learning and have difficulties when they move from primary to secondary education.

The situation in the small settlements is a serious dilemma that affects everyone in the Greenlandic society. A group of intellectuals are defending the small settlement and takes every opportunity to tell the world that the small settlements must be defended at any cost. As far as I know, not a single one of these intellectual people are planning to settle in one of the small settlements. These intellectuals are often highly paid civil servants with a hopeless romantic relationship for to be

living in a settlement with responsibility for the basic needs to a family.

Greenland is a society that has a natural coherence, and a society which exhibited a high degree of solidarity among the approximately one hundred remaining settlements along the coast of this enormous country. Via public finances funds are allocated in different ways to the weakest regions.

But people vote with their feet. The young people are leaving the small settlements to get an education in the towns, and usually they cannot use their education in the small settlement where they come from. This is a major reason why they choose a life in the towns. Other young people have to move because there is no longer employment to find in the settlement, where they were born.

Urbanization means that more and more settlements decline to a size, where they need to be closed and abandoned. The photograph is from the abandoned settlement Kangeq in the mouth of the Godthaabsfiord, close to the capital of Greenland, Nuuk.



*The abandoned settlement
Kangeq, August 2012*