

Tradition and identity

There is a frequently recurring debate in Greenland on the pattern of settlement. On the one hand, as in the rest of the Arctic and the World a megatrend that means migration to the towns. On the other hand, a lot of people wish to maintain the status quo.

The debate on the patterns of settlement often shares the politicians and the debaters into two camps. One camp believes that the right thing to do is to follow the economic rational, and therefore provide the residents of the small settlements assistance and incentive to move to the larger towns.

The other camp believes that it is important to maintain the small settlements and constantly optimize the settlements the opportunity to develop local industries and thus give these settlements greater survivability. These politicians and debaters point out that the settlements and the way of life that still exists in the settlements, with traditional industries such as small scale fishing and hunting, is an important part of the history of Greenland. The Inuit culture is jeopardized if these settlements disappear.

In principle, it is a free choice for the people

of Greenland. In a small settlement the level of service will be lower than in a big town. The citizens can choose freely. The problem is that the children, who grow up in small settlements, often have difficulty in getting an education than children who have grown up in a major town. The difference seems to be caused by the quality of teaching, cultural issues and language obstacles. Should a young person complete his education, he in addition to his Greenlandic language also has to master the Danish language.

While the often heated debate takes place, the great wheel of history turns round: When the Greenland Home Rule was introduced in 1980, the small settlements consists of 10,853 inhabitants. This figure has now dropped to 7,678 inhabitants. The removal from the small settlements will continue in the future. Some day, the settlements may disappear or become holiday villages for the urban population. In the meantime, we visit the often remote settlements and admire the adaptation of these small habitats to the surrounding nature.



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