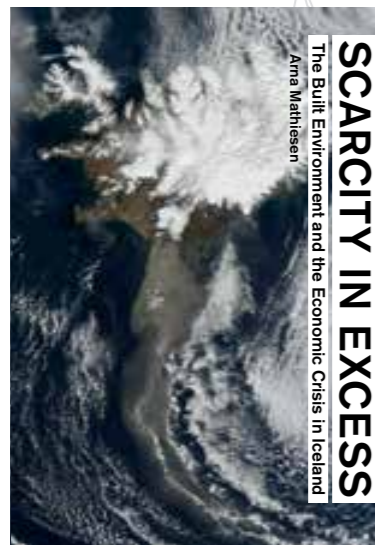


The built environment in Iceland has become a concretization of an exaggerated version of patterns belonging to capitalism; a cycle of boom and bust. Not only did Iceland experience an economic decline, its banks collapsed completely and needed to be reconstructed from scratch. October 2008 was the end of an era where the cooperation of these same banks and building companies (which also went bankrupt), with the help of engineers and architects, had created a construction bubble of unimaginable proportions, benefiting actors with financial clout but proving to be a burden for the general public. On these pages, guest editors from the Iceland Design Centre reveal how the far-flung European nation is slowly getting back on its feet. More humble, but also more sustainable, and with some difficult problems still to tackle.

Design as a tool to make a better world

TEXT: ARNA MATHIESEN



Arna Mathiesen is the editor-in-chief of *Scarcity in Excess – the Built Environment and the Economic Crisis in Iceland* (2014), a collective work of architects, artists, policymakers, scientists, and activists. With beautiful graphics and photographs, the publication analyses the past and explores possible futures for Iceland. It is an outstanding exploration of what factors led to the crisis, how it hit, and what (creative) engines are putting the country into motion again. For anyone who wants to understand contemporary Iceland, as well as architecture in the context of resource depletion and de-growth, it is a must-read.

It has been a while... for many, the global economic decline which started some eight years ago might be fading into a distant memory. For the generation now growing into adulthood, the crisis has become an integral part of the world they inherit, even if they have not heard all that much about it, or might think it doesn't really concern them. Icelandic households, however, do not have that option. Still immersed, living in the debris of the preceding building boom, they face the social, environmental, spatial, and economic consequences of the crash every single day.

After the crash, urban transformation came to a standstill. Coming to terms with what happened is by no means a matter of finding a new style, but an opportunity to reflect on where we come from, and we are heading – socially, economically, and environmentally. After the initial shock, smaller individual solutions are deciphered, with sensible use of local resources and benefitting those who live and reside there. The question is if architects can work as mediators and facilitators for small developments that prove to be most beneficial in the long run, and help to turn scattered initiatives into a transformative urban movement. When sprawl has already become a fact, it is urgent to address the half-built neighbourhoods and adapt them for changed needs in a more prosperous future. This is a challenge, however, since they represent a political taboo. Here, the architects' specialty – seeing opportunities where others only see obstacles – can be a useful resource. So might rational spatial thinking and contextualization also be, debunking political jargon which can lead to new catastrophes for the city, such as further densification of the historical, fine-grained city centre, which in this case caters for big actors building hotels, and threatens further damage to the old city fabric.

It has been speculated that the economic success of cities is tightly interwoven with their ability to attract creative workers (Florida, 2002). According to the theory that has globally infiltrated public policy, the 'creative class' would include, for instance, designers of infrastructures, buildings, and advertisement and 'innovative' finance products alike. In Iceland, this class contributed to, and legitimized, urban transformations that triggered the most rapid economic growth seen on the planet. This did not prevent economic problems, due to the very work these workers produced, and to the infrastructures built for attracting them, such as luxury housing that now only serve as investment objects on the international market. Retaining creative souls in the country after the crash proved too difficult when the ideas, however creative they seemed at the time, proved to be bad ideas.

The financial meltdown in Iceland forces a re-evaluation of the role of architecture and design in the making of society. Much of what was built during the building boom is beautiful to look at, and even receives prestigious international design and 'green' awards, despite environmental problems and bankruptcy. One wonders if the motivation for nominating these projects for such awards is to collect funds to cater for the hopeless economy they created, or if it is an expression of denial. Moreover, the question arises whether the nominations would have been possible if it wasn't for the inaccessible Icelandic language hiding away some inconvenient truths. In any case, the scenario touches upon the fundamentals of what design is, and the morals of aesthetics. If architects are in it to make something beautiful, do they care if that beauty is limited to that which meets the eye? ◀



Iceland Design Centre

A long-cherished dream of Icelandic designers and architects has become a reality with the foundation of the Iceland Design Centre in 2008. This is largely attributable to the establishment of the Iceland Academy of the Arts in 1998, and its Faculty of Architecture and Design, shortly afterwards in 2001. Ever since, Icelandic design has been developing a clearer identity and establishing a unique character. The nation now has an abundance of promising young Icelandic designers, who have imbued the design environment with new life, characterized by curiosity, optimism, and daring.

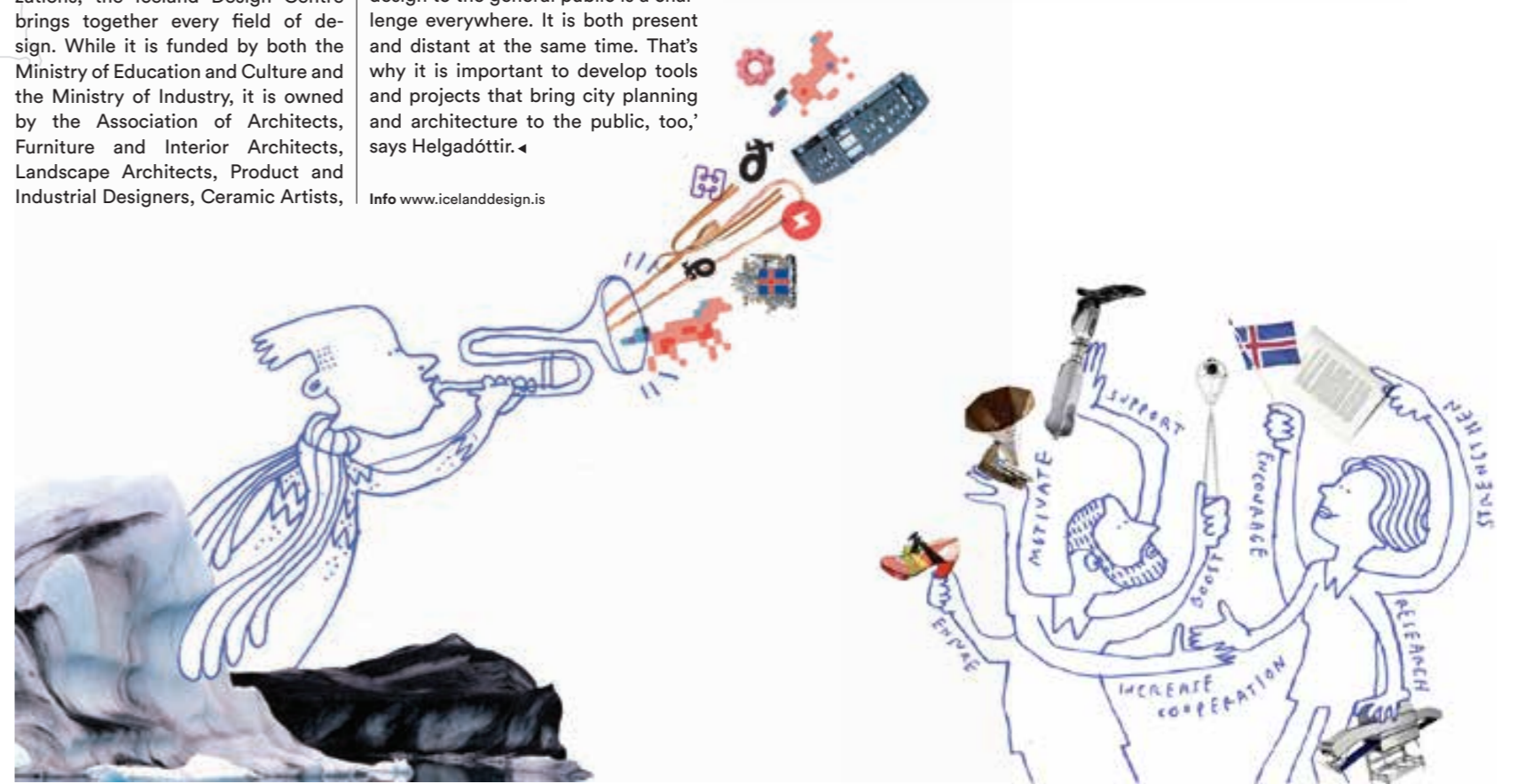
Accordingly, one of the principal objectives of the Iceland Design Centre is to create an image and a unique status for Icelandic design, to nurture innovation and promote development in Icelandic design. The success of both the centre and the academy has largely contributed to the instalment of the *Icelandic Design Policy 2014–2018*. The first national design strategy for Iceland will enhance the importance of design in the conception, development, and manufacture of products, with the aim of strengthening Icelandic companies' competitive position and increasing value creation.

Unlike most other similar organizations, the Iceland Design Centre brings together every field of design. While it is funded by both the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Industry, it is owned by the Association of Architects, Furniture and Interior Architects, Landscape Architects, Product and Industrial Designers, Ceramic Artists,

Fashion Designers, the Textile Guild, the Goldsmith's Association, and the Association of Icelandic Graphic Designers. According to managing director Halla Helgadóttir, what seemed like a complicated structure turned out to be a strength. 'We have a direct link to the grass roots, but also to the policy makers and the government. For a young industry such as ours, this role is vitally important. Besides, the different fields learn from each other's problems and methods, which sometimes are very similar,' explains Helgadóttir.

Currently, the centre partners with Aurora Design Fund for 'Wind of Change', a conceptual project that explores the possibilities for developing Reykjavik in the future. In this project, the City Council of Reykjavik, Federation of Icelandic Industries, Iceland Design Centre, four major Icelandic Housing Associations, and the Iceland Academy of the Arts together aim to define innovative housing options for the future development of high-density living areas in the far north. The results should include ideas that bring about environmentally friendly, socially aware, economic, and progressive solutions to the traditional challenges of urban development. 'Promoting architecture and design to the general public is a challenge everywhere. It is both present and distant at the same time. That's why it is important to develop tools and projects that bring city planning and architecture to the public, too,' says Helgadóttir. ◀

Info www.icelanddesign.is





↑ Once largely a service port, the downtown Reykjavik harbour is blossoming as a creative hot spot.

↑ Reykjavik is the tiniest of capital cities, and combines village and city life.

Tipping point

TEXT: SARI PELTONEN

The collapse of the Icelandic banking system in 2008 also marked a standstill in architecture. The pause has given the local industry the opportunity to reinvent itself. Where does it find itself now, six years later?

'The mindset of the community has changed a lot,' says Kristján Örn Kjartansson, a partner at KRADS, a Danish-Icelandic architecture practice located in Reykjavik and Aarhus, and a member of the board of directors at Iceland Design Centre. 'The key word is respect,' he continues. 'There is more respect for other people, for nature, our urban spaces, as well as the historic and cultural aspects of our cities. The overall ideology has changed towards more sustainable living in all ways, be it denser cities, less commuting, or greener planning.'

Steps in that direction were taken with Reykjavik's new master plan for 2010–2030. A binding policy for the decision-makers, the master plan both looks at how Reykjavik will be built in the future, as well as introduces new working methods – be it within the city structure, as part of the inhabitants' neighbourhood meetings, or in the improved accessibility for Reykjavik's citizens. The plan introduces the 90/10 principle, meaning that 90 per cent of the new buildings will be built in the densely built areas, while the

remaining ten per cent focus on half-built areas. In addition, the city plan addresses the public transport and the environment, from the possibilities for outdoors activities to walking paths and urban farming, for which it was already awarded the Nordic Council Nature and Environment Prize 2014. What's more, all political parties agree on the solution – a first in the local city politics according to Pall Hjaltason, former head of the city planning department in the City of Reykjavik.

'The axes were buried, and the decision-makers really stopped for a while to listen to one another to reach the optimal solution. A final city plan is of course an impossibility. This is an eternity project – but it does build on a lot of research and information, and to completely change direction would require a lot.'

One such research project, 'Wind of Change', is a collaboration between the city of Reykjavik, the Iceland Design Centre, Aurora Design Fund, Iceland Academy of the Arts, Ministry of Welfare,

Major Housing Associations, and the Federation of Icelandic Industries. The aim was to define innovative housing options for future development of high-density living areas and to present ideas that bring about environmentally friendly, socially aware, economic and progressive solutions to the classical challenges of urban development. One of the participants was philosopher Andri Snaer Magnason, who along with a cross-disciplinary team of architects, a landscape architect, and a web designer, contemplated how to develop a suburb into a sharing community. Their solution: more greenery and an app that allows the inhabitants to use their spaces and resources flexibly. While speculative by nature, 'Wind of Change' will hopefully prove influential in defining the directions of the future of the city. It also illustrates Kjartansson's view that 'while the financial crisis was a knockout for the architecture profession, it was very good for architecture itself. Now, architects have the opportunity to participate in redeveloping the community both in terms of urbanism and building design. The need for rethinking is a great opportunity for young, up-and-coming architects and firms to have influence at this tipping point in our nations culture. It is very important for architects to aim for quality and set the standard for the future.'

It has not just been a walk in the park. Steve Christer, partner at Studio Granda, gives a pointed summary on the developmental stages of opportunity for the local architects since the crisis: 1. Nothing; 2. Competitions (but only a few of the winning proposals were built); 3. Projects from before the crash that were restarted or finished off; 4. Speculative feasibility studies; 5. Planning projects



↑ H71a, designed by Studio Granda, is a studio, office, and archive for a photographer.



↑ In H71a, new elements are set within the structure's existing walls.

for the city and private bodies; 6. Private domestic projects; 7. Tourism-driven projects. And, while 'this may look like a lot of opportunity but the reality, for us at least, has been that we start each week with a plan of work and finish it having done something completely different.'

Yet there are more dark clouds in the horizon. 'The apparent boom in low-cost housing and tourist hotels and destinations doesn't look at all sustainable,' Christer says, a worry that Magnason also shares. Developers pursuing maximum profit for investment within minimum public regulations, often at the expense of design thinking, are powerful players in the small community. The architectural focus has mostly been on the central areas of Reykjavik, which means that suburbs – not to mention the countryside – continue to receive less attention. 'In the smaller communities, any building opportunity is considered a success after years of stagnation,' Magnason explains.

The rapidly growing travel industry poses additional demands. With visitor numbers almost tripling since 2000, reaching 807,000 in 2013 (Iceland Tourism Board report 2014), the increased pressure to develop hotels and services to the sector is a hot potato in the local discussion. The unique natural attractions are in dire need of infrastructure, as the fragile landscape cannot manage the increased visitor numbers. And, as Magnason points out, 'if we want the travel industry to enrich our society, we need to find ways to create connections between Iceland and the other parts of the world, versus creating "tourist zones" on which the locals feel unwelcomed and alienated.'

Furthermore, there are the projects that show how travel could be dealt with in a sustainable way. The Blue Lagoon is the most visited destination in Iceland, and has cleverly incorporated architecture and design thinking into its strategy from early on. Sigríður Sigbórsdóttir of Basalt Architects wanted to emphasize the relationship between nature and the man-made, be it via a 200-metre walkway cutting through lava or the building's soft lines that blend with the surroundings. A new five-star hotel is expected to open at the premises in the spring of 2017.

A seafaring nation with a history of fluctuating fishing stocks and volcanic eruptions, the Icelanders are by nature quick to adapt and take up opportunities. Be it the growing tourist industry or city planning, the challenge remains to make choices that are sustainable in the longer term versus pursuing short-term profit. According to Kjartansson, 'the biggest threat is that we take up from where we left off before the crisis. Going back to working too fast, focusing on quantity instead of quality. As architects, our obligation is to incorporate into our design a respect for the environment, nature, urban space, the local culture, and our fellow beings.'

A case in point is H71a, a shop adjacent to a timber house at Hverfisgata 71 converted into a studio, office, and archive for photographer Sigurgeir Sigurjónsson. The project, nominated for the Icelandic Design Award 2014 and shortlisted for the Mies van der Rohe Award 2014, is by Studio Granda, an architecture practice founded in 1987 by wife and husband team Margrét Hardardóttir and Steve Christer, also known for the Reykjavik City Hall, the Supreme Court of Iceland, and the Reykjavik Art Museum.

For H71a, they used existing surfaces and finishes wherever possible, and to accommodate a full-height garage loading bay for the publishing side of the business the lower floor was dug down to the level of the basement of the timber house. On the upper floor is a gallery, while the roof is an urban terrace accessed from the attic. The corrugated steel cladding and timber details mimic those of the house and the former shop.

The project uses the smallest possible building volume. Material from the demolition of the existing building was reused or given away for reuse elsewhere; existing walls were reused wherever possible, and as always, all electricity and heating in Reykjavik is from hydroelectric and geothermal sources. 'Hverfisgata started long before the crisis with the renovation of the adjacent timber house for Sigurgeir in 2001. Many proposals were made before the crash, and then it was put on hold. After the project was revived in 2010, many more proposals were made before the final version. This pattern of work, the principles of reuse, respect for context, and economy, are common to the vast majority of work produced by our studio,' says Christer.

Just next door, there are several major hotel developments underway, representing the other end of the scale in Icelandic post-financial crisis architecture. Magnason points out that 'consensus suffocates creativity, and perhaps we need these dynamics – the greedy contractors and the art scene to react to it.' Perhaps, indeed, the unique magic of Icelandic society is in the creative disrupt of these two powers constantly overlapping. ◀

↓ Commissioned by the National Museum of Iceland, Pétur Thomsen's Ásfjall portrays a new neighborhood in the making in Hafnarfjörður. Within six months of its start, the Icelandic economy collapsed.



↓ The Blue Lagoon stands in the midst of a rugged and mossy lava field.



↓ Basalt Architects used raw materials like glass, wood, lava, and concrete in its creation.



Mixing architecture and design

TEXT: ICELAND DESIGN CENTRE

Four days long, with over a hundred events all over Reykjavik, from the fishing harbour to the lava fields surrounding the city: welcome to *DesignMarch*, Iceland's annual design festival.



← Bryndis Bolladóttir custom makes sound absorbers from Icelandic wool. At *DesignMarch* 2015, she will collaborate with a photographer to create imaginary worlds that set her highly functional designs into entirely new contexts.

The Icelandic design industry provides a strong identity, with droves of promising graduates coming from the Iceland Academy of the Arts. Unlike the Architecture Faculty, the Design Faculty offers a Masters degree, which has led to a generation of designers that better reflect their national identity than those previous, whose only option was to study abroad. The annual *DesignMarch* event is the prime

showcase for Icelandic design and, like the rest of the design industry, it happily mixes all fields. From architecture to product design, fashion to graphics, the festival offers a cheerful smorgasbord of the local creative talent.

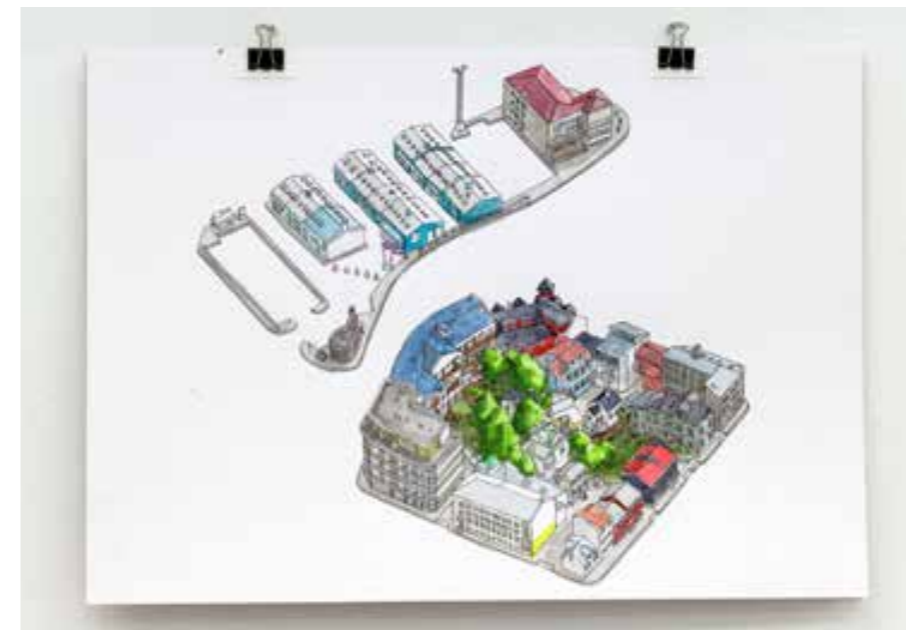
Festival director Sara Jónsdóttir says that the 2015 programme will feature architecture seen from various different points of view. 'Think doll houses

in Spark Design Space; design thinking applied to dream up futures for urban life in Reykjavik in the Wind of Change project, and sound absorbers tailor-made from Icelandic wool by Bryndis Bolladóttir.'

Bolladóttir's project is another chapter of intensive research into the one material that there is plenty of in Iceland: wool. The lack of available materials is challenging, urging designers to think creatively



← Snorri Þór Tryggvason, Pétur Stefánsson, and Snorri Eldjárn Snorrason made these drawings of Reykjavik's Thingholt residential area (top) and old harbour area (bottom). They are based on a very accurate 3D model of Reykjavik's city centre. The project has been three years in the making. One year was spent on aerial photography and 3D modelling, and another two on drawing and watercoloring 143 A3-size sheets, which were then assembled in Photoshop.



→ One by Eighteen is a doll's house project that product designers Halla Kristín Hannesdóttir and Auður Ösp Guðmundsdóttir will exhibit at *DesignMarch* 2015. According to the designers, 'the dollhouses open up possibilities to create worlds that do not have space in reality; worlds in which people can travel in time and space, according to one's own imagination only.'



and seek new possibilities. Eco-consciousness also plays a fundamental role in Icelandic design, as manifested in the recycling and repurposing of objects, as well as the utilization of remnant materials.

Snorri Þór Tryggvason, Pétur Stefánsson, and Snorri Eldjárn Snorrason studied architecture and graphic design together at the Iceland Academy of the Arts, and started working together on maps while still in

school. At a time when there were no job opportunities for architects in Iceland, they decided to hand-draw and watercolour a detailed map of Reykjavik's city centre. The map took 3000 hours to draw, colour, and assemble, resulting in a very charming city map. The project would become the basis for their company, Borgarmynd, which specializes in illustrated maps (now available for tourists, and including various other

European cities), event branding, infographics, web design, and 3D modelling, among other things.

Like Borgarmynd, many designers initiate their eventual claim to fame at Spark Design Space. The gallery was founded in 2010 by Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir, who at the time was a professor of product design at the Iceland Academy of Arts, but has switched to focusing on Spark full-time since 2012. ◀



The eerie past of Icelandic rural life

TEXT: ÁSTRÍÐUR MAGNÚSDÓTTIR

The Abandoned Houses Student Research Project, led by Gláma•Kím Architects, R3-Consultants, and Stapi Geology Engineers, maps and documents the built manifestations in rural areas of Iceland through preternatural photographs.

Abandoned Houses is an ongoing student research project that began in 2011. The project has succeeded in mapping over 700 abandoned houses in Iceland in an impressive seven-volume encyclopaedia including evaluations and descriptions of individual buildings and short summaries of the history of the various rural areas. An expected eighth volume will represent chosen examples from different areas and provide further discussions on the background of the buildings, history, and typology.

The abandoned houses evince the hard work and perseverance needed by farmers to survive in an inclement region. The physical condition of the structures varies, but the majority can still be restored, reinvigorated, and put to good use. But what to do

with all of them? 'The population in the countryside has decreased considerably, but by restoring selected houses and redefining their use for a changing economy – for example, using them as workshops for retaining craftsmanship, or renovating for use as hostels or accommodations for a growing tourist industry – thinly populated areas can regain a foothold and be brought back to life. We inherit this history; we are its guardians, and we must cherish the lessons it teaches us and pass these on to future generations.

Some of the houses are full of old, wonderful things and furniture. They have been abandoned fully equipped, and are not just the shells of empty houses. Documenting these conditions must be done with consideration and delicacy. The Viðborðssel

farm building, for instance, shows the construction methods of the early concrete houses in Iceland, using corrugated iron for a concrete mould.

The project should be the genesis of a new Icelandic architectural identity. We should learn from our shared past, and transform and adapt those lessons to contemporary needs.

The project leaders look to similar work done in Norway and Scotland for examples on how to further develop the project. The landscape of the Scottish Highlands and its islands has strong similarities to Iceland, and the vernacular architecture is manifested in similar ways. Human habitation of unearthly landscapes defines them, as opposed to shaping the landscape to their needs. ◀



Mapping: Iceland's young architecture scene

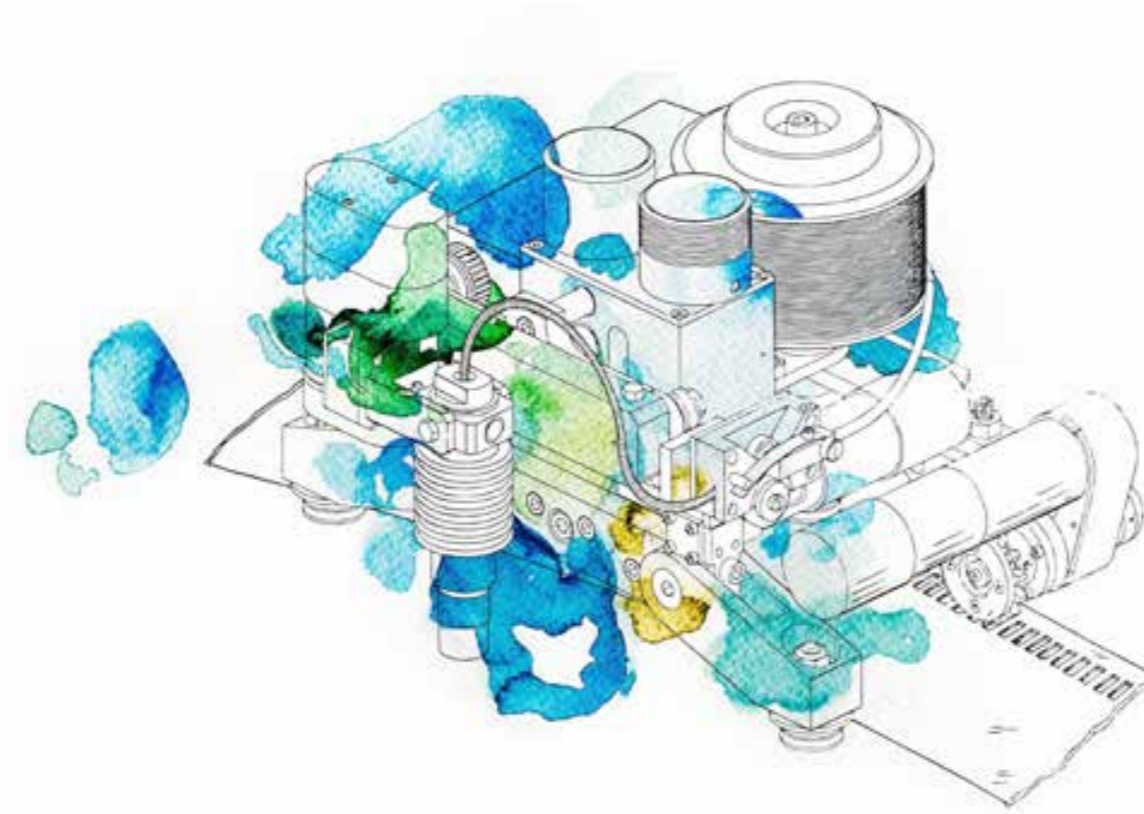
TEXT: GUJA DÖGG HAUKSÓTTIR

The lack of construction projects has shifted the focus of the building authorities from large private enterprises of uninventive housing developments to a more introverted consideration of public space, small-scale infill, and caretaking of the existing city structure. Together with new blood in the political landscape, especially in the capital area of Reykjavik, new initiatives have been launched to spark fresh ideas.



SVAVA ÞORLEIFSDÓTTIR, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
XLAND is an information platform that invites its users to explore Icelandic landscape architecture. Projects are located on a digital map of Iceland. By clicking on the individual work of art, the viewer can access further information, including photographs and drawings. Eventually, XLAND will become an important historical source for the development of landscape architecture in Iceland that should provoke interest both in the country and abroad.

Info xland.is



STEINUNN EIK EGILSDÓTTIR, ARCHITECT
Water Gateway is designed to address a number of issues faced by the residents of Beit Iksa in Palestine: availability of clean water, disposal of waste water, and access to agricultural land (which will soon be cut off from the farmers by a separation wall). The system facilitates farmers maintaining crops and ownership of important parcels of agricultural land.

Info www.eydibyli.is



HELGI STEINAR HELGASON, ARCHITECT
A single-family home for an elderly couple in the countryside of Kjós in South Iceland. The simple shape is inspired by the surrounding landscape: barren mountains and typical heather vegetation. The main building material is traditional Icelandic concrete, cast *in situ* and clad with local spruce panels. Construction is scheduled to be finished autumn 2015.

Info www.tvihorf.is



KRISTJÁN EGGERTSSON, ARCHITECT
Together with Rotterdam-based The Why Factory, KRADS set up a semester-long, master-level design studio. The theme 'Euro High' was set up in order to draw attention to the differences between the various cultures of the high-rise. One of its objectives was to introduce and utilize quick and creative ways of applying LEGO bricks as a new modelling material within the studio.

Info www.krads.info

Reactivate Iceland

Reactivate Iceland

Let it be no secret that Iceland, the hard-to-grasp volcanic island far up north in the Atlantic Ocean, has come close to sinking in the aftermath of the financial collapse, commonly referred to as the 'bank crisis', that occurred in autumn 2008. Local authorities have been spreading rumours that all is up and blooming again, but in reality this is a far cry from the actual situation. The more optimistic among us had hoped for this catharsis to be a kind of 'phoenix': an opportunity to leave behind the mad habits of the pre-crisis period and take up more sensible and socially sustainable structures to build upon. This has not been the case. While the majority of activities and transactions remain in permafrost, the field of architecture has almost been wiped out, and many established offices struggle to keep their heads above water. In many cases, they have been stripped down to just the owners, and often subsist on overseas projects. To make things worse, young and newly graduated

architects find themselves in a catch-22, as official rules have been tightened and now demand a minimum of three years' experience at an architecture office before they can start their own practice.

The modest means, often restricted to the cost of materials, has worked as acupuncture, so to speak, giving young people help in starting projects that, in many cases, have grown and/or given birth to other projects, as well as ignite new public awareness of the built environment. This has been the case for Helgi Steinar Helgason and his partner at Tvihorf, Gunnar Sigurðarson, who graduated in 2009 and 2008. They joyously tell me that they are currently hiring their first 'employee' to meet the needs of the growing company. They started off in a bigger group of newly graduated, unemployed architects under the name Skyggni Frábært ('Great Visibility'), with an open workshop for Reykjavik's annual culture night themed *Húsin í borginni* ('The Houses in

the City'), which involved ordinary citizens in ideas on public space. They took this concept further in Fellastigur, a workshop for grammar school students that took to mapping the possibilities in the local neighbourhood, resulting in a much needed renewal of the place. This has since cast off a number of initiatives in the area, and also inspired new projects supported by the city, such as Torg í biðstöðu ('Standby Squares'), a temporary design for leftover spaces and parking lots to function as city squares.

Svava Þorleifsdóttir, a young landscape architect who graduated in 2009, mentions a growing number of ideas competitions, such as Óðinstorg, Laugavegur, as well as Geysir and Landmannalaugar national park, triggered by the booming tourist industry, that demand consideration of run-down spots, especially in the fragile landscape, and give young architects the possibility to try their luck. Yet these also end up awaiting further financing for realization.

She took a chance, along with three others, in creating the pioneer project Xland (www.xland.is), an interactive mapping of landscape architecture in Iceland, supported by the Association of Icelandic Landscape Architects and Aurora Design Fund for the Iceland Design Centre's annual *DesignMarch*, and inspired by the growing interest of the public for accessible information on the built environment.

Mapping and social consideration in architecture have also contributed to a mind-bending shift for architect Steinunn Eik Egilsdóttir, who graduated in 2014. Lacking a traditional summer job while studying, she signed up as a project leader for an ambitious pioneer research project on abandoned farms in Iceland, initiated by GlámaKim architecture office and others (www.eydibyli.is). Later, she has put her heart into architecture as aid in developing countries like Ghana and Palestine. The farm project has received a number of recognitions, such as

the Innovation Prize of the Icelandic President, the DV Culture Prize, and the Industry Minister's Prize of Encouragement, for its impressive publication of deserted places, capturing precious links to the fading roots of cultural history, as well as inspiring the restoration of the old farm houses. She agrees with the other young architects here, speaking of 'less ego and more architecture' as the way to go.

Kristján Eggertsson, who graduated 2003, is one of the few young architects that got a foot in the field before the crisis struck, founding KRADS architects along with three partners in 2006. The young office started off by winning proposals for competitions, and escaped the worst of the turbulent times by dividing their time and work between Iceland and Denmark. Despite its short existence, the office's work has attracted a number of recognitions, including two nominations for the Mies van der Rohe Award: Stöðin Roadside Stop in Borgarnes, and the

Automotive Showroom in Herning, Denmark. They were selected to participate in Hæg breytileg átt ('Breeze'), an interdisciplinary initiative on research, mapping, and ideas for contemporary housing, resulting in the Bær 2,5x5 project for homes instead of parking spaces (www.haegbreytilegatt.is). Another, more playful, project by the office derives from a coincidental acquaintance with the LEGO Concept Lab in Denmark, which evolved into an open *DesignMarch* workshop at the Reykjavik Art Museum. It subsequently travelled to TU Delft, in the Netherlands, where it formed the basis of the office's master class research on high-rise housing.

These young architects are only a few among many, but they prove to have managed – with an eye for opportunities, dedication, and hard work – to succeed in gaining new territories, despite the difficult atmosphere of Iceland's post-crisis architectural environment. ◀