

# The Breiðholt Projects

A summary of project development from 2012 - 2020

*Óskar Dýrmundur Ólafsson*  
District Manager of Breiðholt.

## Introduction

The projects being discussed here have been given the name “The Breiðholt Projects” and begin with a ruling from the City of Reykjavík’s government in 2011. The projects rest on the foundation of service centers that have been in operation since 1997, especially the Breiðholt Service Center that has been in operation since 2005. The Breiðholt Projects took bigger steps towards the goals of “making the City of Reykjavík’s services in Breiðholt more holistic, willful, and integrated so as to benefit the neighborhood’s residents”. It also comes forth in a proposal regarding the projects that there is “emphasis put on service to Breiðholt residents being strengthened by...developing new solutions in services.”<sup>1</sup> As such, emphasis has been put on the evolution of service that can be seen in numerous projects that will be discussed in more detail. There will also be discussion on how it has fared going about achieving these goals with the Breiðholt Projects that ran for five years and have evolved into the project called “A Better City for Children” (Icelandic: *Betri borg fyrir börn*).<sup>2</sup>

The author has worked as District Manager of Breiðholt since 2012 and has helped reform the neighborhood. He had a role in the founding of the Miðgarður family and service Center in 1997 and was Executive Director of the Vesturbær Service Center from 2015-2012 in which he oversaw operations in West Reykjavík. One must keep all of this in mind whilst reading these summaries, although this report will be well-supported by data and sources. The main purpose of this summary is to collect sources and present them in an organized fashion so as to support further use of said sources in the development of knowledge and services of this kind.

## Existing data

Studies, reports, and articles will be referenced alongside official and unofficial data. As it pertains to older holistic studies preceding the projects, one may learn about the study conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers on the Miðgarður Family and service Center in 2000.<sup>3</sup> The first five years of the service centers’ operations, in which changes were made to the

---

<sup>1</sup> Accessed July 25th, 2018:

[https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/sam\\_ykkt\\_tillaga\\_um\\_brei\\_holtsverkefni\\_1.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/sam_ykkt_tillaga_um_brei_holtsverkefni_1.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Accessed July 14th, 2018: [https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/betri\\_borg\\_fyrir\\_born.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/betri_borg_fyrir_born.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Accessed July 25th, 2018: <https://www.stjornarradid.is/media/velferdarraduneyti-media/media/acrobat-skjol/uttek2001.pdf>

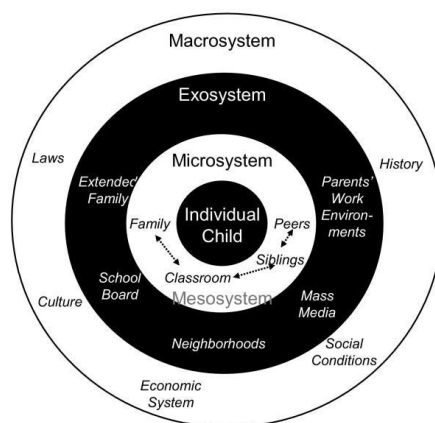
organization of the City of Reykjavík and its services and projects that went from being the responsibility of the government to the responsibility of the city, are also referenced.<sup>4</sup>

Assessments of Breiðholt Projects are included in this report as well as references to results of particular projects and data that is available about them. The Institute of Public Administration and Politics did a status assessment on the project from 2013 - 2014 that came out in 2015. That same year, Expectus did an assessment on the project. Also, the projects have been discussed in a service group's assessment as well as in the inner review of the service centers.<sup>56</sup>

## Theories

In order to better understand this topic, we will refer to social ecological theory, theories on social capital, and systems theory with a reference to quality control.

In Bronfenbrenner's social-ecological model from 1979 are descriptions of the systems that impact an individual's life. The systems are split into multiple layers. Innermost is the microsystem that pertains to the individual. Next comes the mesosystem that encompasses the individual's immediate environment, such as their friends, family, school, and leisure activities. Then comes the exosystem which has more outward connections to institutions and how they have an impact. Outermost is the macrosystem that pertains to laws, values, and societal norms. Upon review of social ecological theory, one can observe and better understand the impact of different factors on people's lives and put prevention in the right context. Therefore, one can better learn how to advocate for prevention and how one can best foster development and learning amongst children and adolescents.<sup>7</sup>



---

<sup>4</sup> Accessed July 25th, 2018:

[https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/ymis\\_skjol/skjol\\_utgefid\\_efni/throunognyskopun.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/ymis_skjol/skjol_utgefid_efni/throunognyskopun.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Accessed July 15th, 2020: [https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/skyrsla\\_starfshops\\_thjonustuveit.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/skyrsla_starfshops_thjonustuveit.pdf) and

[https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/ymis\\_skjol/skjol\\_utgefid\\_efni/uttekt\\_innri\\_endurskodunar\\_reykjavikurborgar\\_a\\_thjonustumidstodvum\\_og\\_hverfisradum\\_2016.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/ymis_skjol/skjol_utgefid_efni/uttekt_innri_endurskodunar_reykjavikurborgar_a_thjonustumidstodvum_og_hverfisradum_2016.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Bronfenbrenner, 1979

Theories that have been built on Bronfenbrenner's social ecological model have stressed that cultural influence is localized and dependent on the community's culture.<sup>8</sup> What is being discussed here is sociological constructivism that builds on the idea that an individual's position in society can change through development and learning that is dependent on the social influences that impact them. It is also crucial to respond to negative influences and build on the individual's strengths so as to prevent future problems.<sup>9</sup> Long-term studies on neighborhoods in the city of Chicago have revealed that where an individual lives within a city can have an impact on their health and lifespan. In essence, a child that is born in the eastern part of the city can expect to have a shorter lifespan than a child born in the western part of the city. Relocation across neighborhoods has impacted these factors and it appears that one's social environment also has a considerable impact on health and lifespan.<sup>10</sup> This has been observed using theories on social capital.

The fundamentals of social capital build on social connections between people as well as how trust is built with positive results for everyone, also those that don't have direct connections. Social capital is crucial in prevention in which one's position in the community can serve as indication of how children and adolescents will fare at work and play. The more social capital one has, the better equipped everyone is to develop and attain success, including the children that live in difficult family circumstances or are otherwise having personal difficulties. The theory explains how the whole can compensate for the weaknesses of the individual. The definition of social capital builds on connections that are bonding, bridging, and linking. Bonding social capital builds on permanent and multifaceted connections between people such as friends and family. Bridging social capital is established between people that have less in common but could have common interests. This includes neighbors, co-workers, and different groups within a particular community. Linking social capital is created between people or associations that go further than through peer relationships and gives people the ability to have an impact and access resources that cannot be found in one's immediate environment.<sup>11</sup> Connecting associations and volunteer work with service has been a positive experience and strengthened the social capital of communities.<sup>12</sup> Upon further investigation of social capital, there are indications that if such actions are taken purposefully and if results are measured, then these actions can have an impact on the people and community in question. The results of such work get discussed in the community and, therefore, become an active part in community development.<sup>13</sup> When social capital is investigated on the local level, it is revealed that its impact manifests in children's and adolescents' social and cognitive development. Theories on social capital are connected to theories on human capital and, as such, it is believed that these factors have an impact on each other. The difference lies in that it is easier to invest in human capital as social capital is built more on the will of the people to work together without expecting something in return. This indicates that prevention

---

<sup>8</sup> Allison, 1997

<sup>9</sup> Rogoff, 2003

<sup>10</sup> Sampson, 2012

<sup>11</sup> Putnam, 2000; Kristinsson, 2001; Henderson & Thomas, 2013; Gilchrist & Taylor, 2016

<sup>12</sup> Ómar H. Kristmundsson, Steinunn Hrafnisdóttir (2008). *Stjórnun og rekstur félagasamtaka*

<sup>13</sup> Macgillivray & Walker, 2000

that is founded on, among other things, social capital and that social capital is dependent on whether or not people are prepared to work in favor of the collective without demanding direct compensation in return. This has especially been observed in relation to formal education and how students perform. Parents' social activity also benefits children that have socially inactive parents. Therefore, the positive effects of social capital benefits many more than those that directly participate.<sup>14</sup> The positive effects of social capital can also be seen in organizations that perform services that cultivate trust that reaches far beyond their immediate influence. They often have the initiative to respond to problems, become the spokespeople for various groups, and encourage others to participate and resultantly strengthen democracy.<sup>15</sup>

In order to better explain links and analyze reality in a holistic manner, one may look into systems thinking and systems theory in which one sees how various factors connect different factors in people's social reality. Three main components can be analyzed; standalone factors, how they connect reciprocally and what role they play. An example of this is the complicated interactions in and between one's team, school, or workplace, which are all examples of systems that can again connect to a network of systems. The traditional analysis of connections and network systems often corresponds to traditional structures such as organization charts, school districts, and group characteristics. However, the reality is often much more complex. Therefore, it is necessary to take a look at such analyses and produce informal connections, networks, and more that social knowledge can provide us. As such, one may see entities that, at first glance, have no influence, but can actually possess a lot of power and influence on the progression of issues. The starting point could be the child's perspective and how we best work holistically to meet their needs in both formal and informal ways.<sup>16</sup> Fundamental ideas of quality control are built on these theories in which emphasis is placed on reform and different factors are evaluated comprehensively so as to yield as good of results as possible. Emphasis is placed on engaging all relevant parties in order to reduce the number of mistakes and make steady improvements. By responding earlier, further problems will be prevented and reduce waste in time and resources for all parties involved.<sup>17</sup> Over the previous years, the service design approach has been utilized. This approach builds on more thorough knowledge of the needs and wants of the residents as it pertains to decisions and execution of service. It is also one of the manifestations of system theory and quality control. Service design is one of the foundations of the City of Reykjavík's Service Policy that was approved in 2016.<sup>18</sup>

These focuses appear in different fields, especially knowledge on community work which has been developed within social work and has been an organic part of its development from the time of the Industrial Revolution.<sup>19</sup> Knowledge amongst urbanologists has also developed considerably as emphasis is placed on the importance of the social aspect so as to elicit

---

<sup>14</sup> Coleman, 1990

<sup>15</sup> Kristmundsson and Hrafnisdóttir, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Seddon, 2008 and Cross and Parker, 2004

<sup>17</sup> Deming, 1982

<sup>18</sup> Accessed July 15th, 2020:

[https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/ymis\\_skjol/skjol\\_utgefid\\_efni/thjonustustefna\\_2016.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/ymis_skjol/skjol_utgefid_efni/thjonustustefna_2016.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Twelvetreets, Community work, 1991 and Popple, Analyzing community work, 2015

strengths and opportunities from every community, individual, and family for good. Solutions can often be found in the immediate environment, so it is important to support and engage those that can provide key knowledge and quality to the community's development.<sup>20</sup>

### **Development of the neighborhood approach**

Neighborhood service organization in Reykjavík has been under development since 1994, a year in which certain laws were put into effect by Icelandic Parliament, known as *Alþingi*. The purpose of these laws was to make it easier for municipalities to develop their services and to strengthen the democratic role of municipal governments. These laws were built on, among other things, knowledge and evolution of similar issues in the Nordic Countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden) and especially in Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway, Sweden). The municipalities there have had a much bigger role in providing public service than executive bodies in an otherwise ambitious social security system that the government has secured with policy formation and legislation. District division in municipalities, especially cities, has evolved somewhat with the advent of service centers. These service centers were called "one stop shops" in which the goal was to integrate and improve the local services with consideration to the needs of the residents rather than government officials' guidelines.<sup>21</sup> Community work in Iceland is executed with this in mind as there is deliberate work done to build up social capital in a micro-society.<sup>22</sup> The goal of these laws was to shift the responsibility for the execution of community projects and help them thrive as an additional function of public service.<sup>23</sup> The Miðgarður family and service center (hereafter simply *Miðgarður*) was established in Reykjavík in 1997 and was the then largest contribution the city made to achieve this goal. Miðgarður's role was to develop integrated service in the northeastern Reykjavík neighborhood of Grafarvogur, work closely with Grafarvogur's residents, and work with the district committee that was appointed by the Reykjavík City Council. This endeavour went well and then became the prototype for the establishment of service centers in six of Reykjavík's neighborhoods in 2005.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> McKnight, Block, *The abundant community*, 2012, Sampson, *The great american city*, 2012

<sup>21</sup> Askim, Fimreite, Moseley, & Pedersen, 2011 and Hansen, Klausen, & Winsvold, 2013; Bäck, Gjelstrup, Helgesen, & Klausen, 2005; Brunet-Jailly, 2005

<sup>22</sup> Hutchinson, 2009; *Community work in the nordic countries*

<sup>23</sup> Accessed July 25th, 2018: <https://www.althingi.is/lagas/130a/1994082.html>

<sup>24</sup> Accessed July 25th, 2018: <https://www.stjornarradid.is/media/velferdarraduneyti-media/media/acrobat-skjol/uttek2001.pdf>.



25

The service centers were then given the tasks of evolving their neighborhood services across fields, have good collaboration with government institutions, and prepare further transfer of projects from the government to the municipalities as was the case in 2010 and 2011 when services for disabled people were transferred to the municipalities.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the service centers worked with 10 district councils with the goals of increasing direct democracy and fostering social capital. The picture above shows the division of the city.<sup>27</sup> Matters that pertain to Breiðholt started being discussed in 2010 by city authorities in, among other places, a meeting in the Gerðuberg Culture House (hereafter *Gerðuberg*).<sup>28</sup> Some decisions from this meeting approved by the Reykjavík City Council in 2011 concerned the Breiðholt Projects, their goals, the main focuses, and how the projects were to be carried out.<sup>29</sup> Decisions were made to take extra steps towards further development of the neighborhoods in which more emphasis would be put on collaboration and democracy as well as comprehensively investigate how Breiðholt could be advanced by, among other things, by hiring a district manager that would serve the role of as the Executive Director of the Breiðholt Service Center in 2012.

## Background

Breiðholt had 20,546 residents in 2012. By 2020, that figure would increase to 22,184 residents. When the population was at its peak, there were 30,000 residents around 1980.<sup>30</sup> The neighborhood's residents come from many different backgrounds socially and culturally. When Breiðholt was being built, many apartments were constructed for those that needed

<sup>25</sup> The map shows Reykjavík's neighborhoods with the exception of Kjalarnes. The service centers were located in the following neighborhoods: Vesturbær, Miðborg/Hlíðar, Laugardalur/Háaleiti/Bústaðir, Grafarvogur/Kjalarnes, Árþær/Grafarholt/Úlfarsárdalur and Breiðholt. The Vesturbær Service Center and the Miðborg/Hlíðar Service Center have since been joined.

<sup>26</sup> Accessed July 26th, 2018: <https://www.althingi.is/altext/139/s/0298.html>

<sup>27</sup> Accessed July 25th, 2018:

[https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/ymis\\_skjol/skjol\\_utgefid\\_efni/throunognyskopun.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/ymis_skjol/skjol_utgefid_efni/throunognyskopun.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Accessed July 26th, 2018: [http://timarit.is/view\\_page\\_init.jsp?issId=323675](http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?issId=323675)

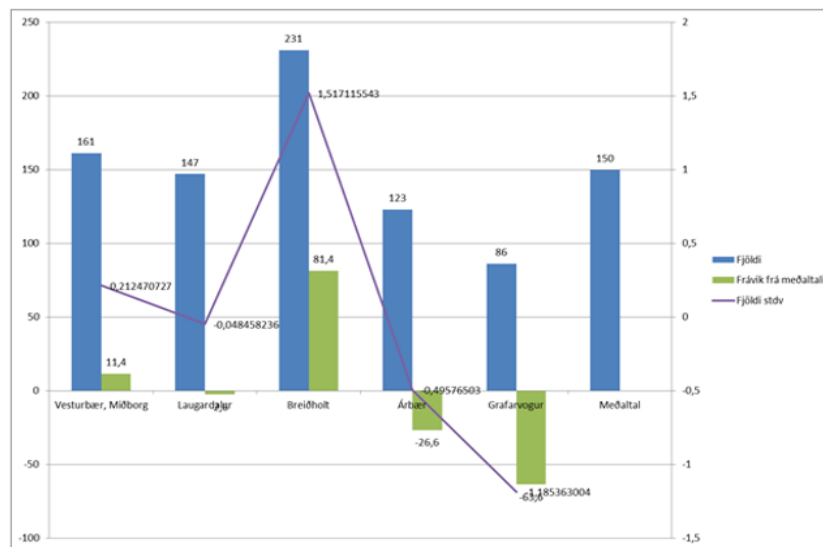
<sup>29</sup> Accessed July 26th, 2018:

[https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/sam\\_ykkt\\_tillaga\\_um\\_brei\\_holtsverkefni\\_1.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/sam_ykkt_tillaga_um_brei_holtsverkefni_1.pdf)

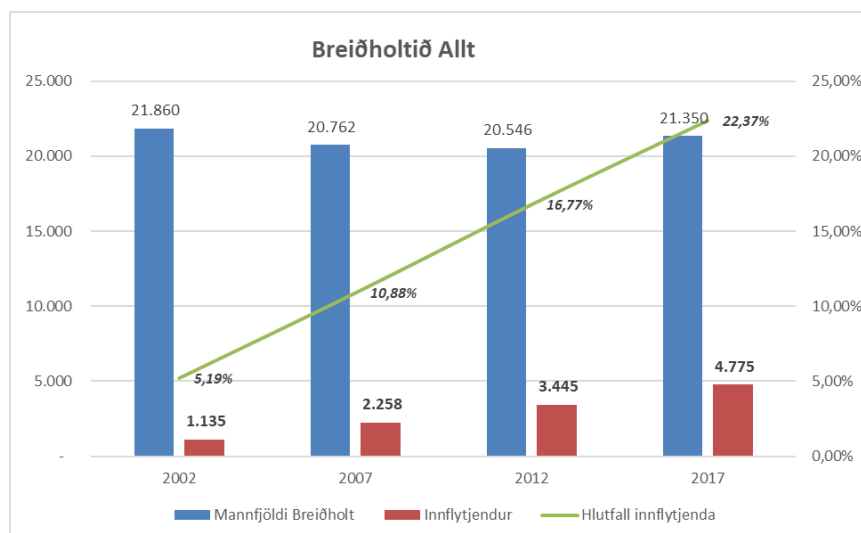
<sup>30</sup> Accessed July 30th, 2018:

[http://px.hagstofa.is/pxis/pxweb/is/Ibuar/Ibuar\\_\\_mannfjoldi\\_\\_2\\_byggdir\\_\\_Byggdakjarnarhverfi/MAN03301.px/?rxid=cba6a67f-20ef-4bcb-94c6-c6d12a648525](http://px.hagstofa.is/pxis/pxweb/is/Ibuar/Ibuar__mannfjoldi__2_byggdir__Byggdakjarnarhverfi/MAN03301.px/?rxid=cba6a67f-20ef-4bcb-94c6-c6d12a648525)

financial or social support. The picture below shows the number of people per neighborhood that received financial assistance in 2018.



Over the past decade, the percentage of residents of foreign origin has skyrocketed beyond those of other neighborhoods. The percentage of immigrants in Breiðholt has gone from 5% of its population in 2002 to 22% in 2017. The highest percentage of immigrants (29%) lived in Upper Breiðholt, higher than anywhere else in Reykjavík (14%).<sup>31</sup> The percentage of children with a mother tongue other than Icelandic has risen over 80% in pre- and primary schools in Fellahverfi.<sup>32</sup>



Breiðholt is, once again, becoming popular amongst parents. Many parents in Breiðholt are highly-educated and are well-off socially and financially. An increase in residents has begun as more and more people move to Reykjavík. The neighborhood's plan is said to be rather

<sup>31</sup> Accessed July 31st, 2018:

[http://px.hagstofa.is/pxis/pxweb/is/Ibuar/Ibuar\\_\\_mannfjoldi\\_\\_3\\_bakgrunnur\\_\\_Uppruni/MAN43006.px/](http://px.hagstofa.is/pxis/pxweb/is/Ibuar/Ibuar__mannfjoldi__3_bakgrunnur__Uppruni/MAN43006.px/)

<sup>32</sup> Accessed September 3rd, 2018: <http://borgarblod.is/?p=3287>



adequate, especially when one looks at how well diversity thrives there, open walking paths to children's schools, business and cultural centers, and good access to nature and open areas. A review of the neighborhood plan was carried out with the help of residents and the results were published in the new plan.<sup>33</sup> Further development that will result in more apartments and more residents will be permitted. The development of business centers in Arnarbakki and Völvufell has begun as many different organizations and service providers have the space to perform community work.<sup>34</sup> It is expected that Breiðholt will be better connected with other parts of Reykjavík with better public transportation and bike lanes as improvements are being made in these domains (e.g. by making more bike lanes and connecting Breiðholt to the upcoming *City Line*, a bus rapid transit (BRT) system). Therefore, there would be a better flow of people all around the city.<sup>35</sup>

### The Breiðholt Projects

At the beginning of the projects in Breiðholt, a steering committee was established. This steering committee was composed of the City of Reykjavík Mayor, Director-Generals, and representatives from the district council that worked with the then newly-hired district manager of Breiðholt.<sup>36</sup> The neighborhood's executive board enacted decisions made by the steering committee. The executive board was composed of representatives of institutions in the neighborhood. The steering committee had monthly meetings and published their meeting minutes on the website breidholt.is.<sup>37</sup> It was decided in the beginning to conduct analyses and consult the primary stakeholders. From this came a course for heads of institutions in the neighborhood that was called *Holistic Leadership* (Icelandic: *Heiltæk forysta*) which then led to, among other things, the Breiðholt Wave (Icelandic: *Breiðholtsbylgjan*) summit in which all 45 workplaces and 1200 employees in the neighborhood were invited to. The results have been discussed in an article that may be found in an accompanying reference, but the main conclusion is that the employees considered such an event useful as it gave them the opportunity to exchange knowledge.<sup>38</sup> The course with institution heads lasted for approximately one year. This course discussed how to improve collaboration so as to benefit children in the neighborhood.<sup>39</sup> In order to hear the ideas of residents, an event was held in Gerðuberg in which residents contributed many different ideas regarding the neighborhood.<sup>40</sup> This event led to the creation of an action plan that was crafted for the Breiðholt Service Center. This action plan would serve as the basis for a wide range of projects designed to

---

<sup>33</sup> Accessed July 31st, 2018: <http://hverfisSKIPulag.is/>

<sup>34</sup> <https://reykjavik.is/frettir/samfelagsleg-verkefni-fa-adstodu-i-arnarbakka-og-volvufelli>

<sup>35</sup> Hjálmar Sveinsson, Borgin heimkynni okkar, 2017

<sup>36</sup> Accessed August 16th, 2018: <https://reykjavik.is/styrihopur-hverfisstarfs>

<sup>37</sup> Accessed July 30th, 2018:

[https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/a\\_ger\\_a\\_tlun\\_st\\_rih\\_ps\\_um\\_b\\_tta\\_j\\_nustu\\_brei\\_holti.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/a_ger_a_tlun_st_rih_ps_um_b_tta_j_nustu_brei_holti.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Accessed July 30th, 2018: <https://www.facebook.com/breidholtsbylgjan/> og

[https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/working\\_together\\_breidholtsbylgjan\\_2017.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/working_together_breidholtsbylgjan_2017.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> Accessed July 30th, 2018: <https://kritin.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/breic3b0holt-a2-plakkat.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Accessed July 30th, 2018: [https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/samantekt\\_umr\\_uh\\_pa\\_-\\_brei\\_holtsr\\_-\\_ing\\_25\\_ma\\_2012.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/samantekt_umr_uh_pa_-_brei_holtsr_-_ing_25_ma_2012.pdf)



meet a need for evolution within the neighborhood.<sup>41</sup> Several of these projects will be described here.

### *Image and dissemination of information*

This project analyzed the general opinion of the neighborhood and how the media speak about it. A meeting was held with certain individuals that resided in the neighborhood, had connections to it, and had knowledge of public relations. Decisions were taken to improve the neighborhood's image and increase the amount of positive news. To start with, it was decided to create an image for this project. The image came from the designer Bobby Breiðholt, who placed the Breiðholt logo on a green background. In order to highlight the diversity of the neighborhood, flags were made in various colors. This logo has been used on Snapchat to symbolize this project when the neighborhood is being discussed.



Negotiations took place with Fjölmiðlavaktin (roughly translated: *The Media Watch*), a company that allows one to follow discussions in the media. The purpose of these negotiations was to monitor the results of this project in 2013 and 2014. By analyzing discussion topics, it was possible to see how and how much each institution published in a public forum, whether the discussion was positive or negative, and what development was being discussed.<sup>42</sup> Fjölmiðlavaktin held seminars for institution heads in the neighborhood on public relations in Gerðuberg during the afternoon. In the wake of this, a course was held on social media usage in collaboration with the police in the Capital Region. Workplaces were asked to set the goal of increasing the number of positive coverage and news about happenings and events in the neighborhood. A “like” page on Facebook was made for Breiðholt that over 3600 people follow. There has also been good collaboration with the Facebook Page for the residents’ association Residents for a Better Breiðholt (Icelandic: *Íbúasamtök Betra Breiðholts*) where there are 7900 members. These websites have been used to provide information, discuss issues that pertain to the neighborhood, and respond to whatever is posted there.<sup>43</sup> Breiðholt’s newsletter entitled *Breiðholtsblaðið* is another powerful medium that is used to relay information, provide news, and foster discussions.

---

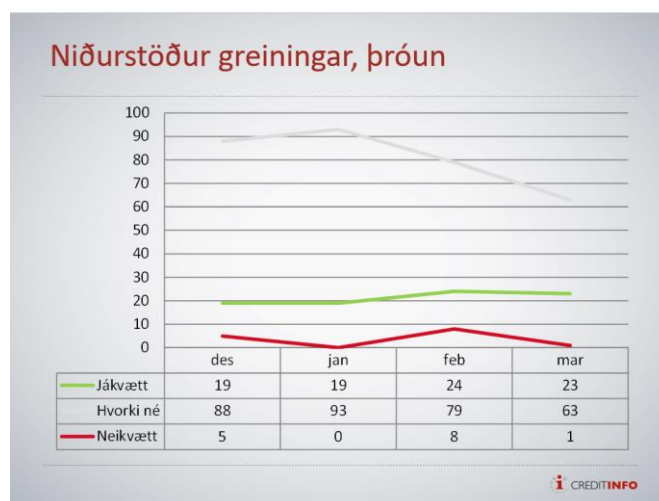
<sup>41</sup> Accessed July 30th, 2018:

[https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/stefna\\_og\\_starfa\\_tlun\\_brei\\_holt\\_2013-2014.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/stefna_og_starfa_tlun_brei_holt_2013-2014.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Fjölmiðlavaktin: Breiðholt-Niðurstöður fjölmiðlagreiningar April 2013, August 2013, December 2013 and May 2014.

<sup>43</sup> Accessed August 1st, 2018: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/48187369678/> og <https://www.facebook.com/breidholtid/>

Informal surveys have shown that Breiðhóltsblaðið is proportionately more read than other neighborhood's newsletters.<sup>44</sup>



The main conclusion taken from Fjölmiðlavaktin showed that in a four-month period, the amount of negative news decreased by 5% and that the amount of positive news increased by 4%. However, overall discussion of Breiðholt decreased as the amount of news that was neither positive nor negative decreased by 26%.

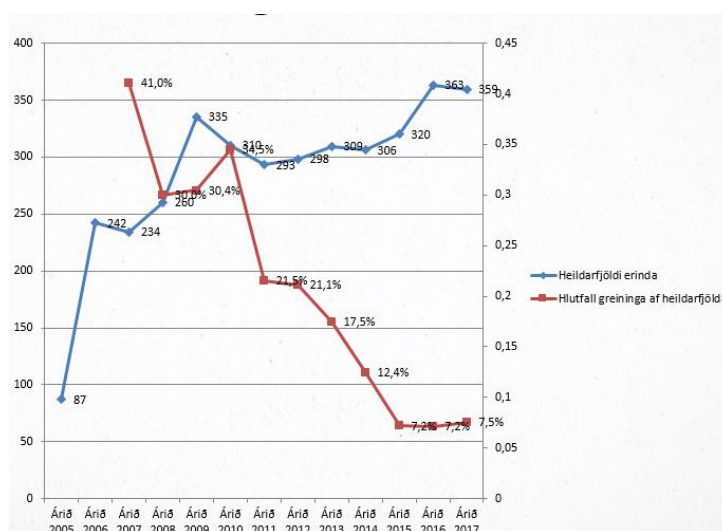
#### *The Breiðholt Model and early intervention*

Upon the founding of the service centers, their one goal was prevention. Part of this approach is early intervention. In this context, attempts are made to find the first symptoms of a problem in younger children by, for example, conducting screenings and responding with support and guidance with how to act appropriately. There is then more emphasis put on programs and less emphasis on formal diagnostics. This leads to less of a need for diagnoses that are often the grounds for community institutions providing programs relevant funding. This development began in 2005 and has been worked in close collaboration with the pre- and primary schools in Breiðholt. A considerable amount of collaboration has taken place between health centers, Child Protection Services of Reykjavík, the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Department, and Breiðholt's secondary school known as *Fjölbrautaskólinn í Breiðholti* (hereafter *FB*). with this approach. From 2005 has much emphasis been placed on collaboration between pre- and primary schools. There are contacts at each school that offer interdisciplinary service with psychologists, counselors, and social workers to name a few. This service has been coordinated due to, among other things, withdrawal from school and a program run by the Skólasel Recreation Center that offers a short-term solution for students that have needed additional support and teaching outside of school.<sup>45</sup> Aside from the usual analytics, screenings and preliminary studies have been used to address children's problems sooner rather than later and to respond as soon as possible. Among the programs offered to children are courses and support due to their upbringing. For example, parent management

<sup>44</sup> Accessed August 1st, 2018: <http://borgarblod.is/?cat=5>

<sup>45</sup> Skólasel has been combined with a team that works for East Reykjavík: [https://www.mbl.is/frettir/burdargrein/2019/09/16/thyrfti\\_fleira\\_fagfolk\\_inn\\_i\\_skolana/](https://www.mbl.is/frettir/burdargrein/2019/09/16/thyrfti_fleira_fagfolk_inn_i_skolana/)

training, courses in emotional control and support services within the home. Similar programs have been offered to teachers and school employees. The Breiðholt Service Center has also provided secondary school students psychological help in collaboration with FB since 2013. The results show that it is possible to reduce the need for diagnoses and resolve children's problems by providing them additional support instead of waiting for a diagnosis and then offering support, which is a waste of the child's time. Studies have shown that the earlier that a child's problem is addressed in their life, the more likely that it is to successfully resolve the problem in question.<sup>46</sup>



The results of the project have highlighted the importance of early intervention in a child's life in order to have the desired results. The need for diagnoses has reduced greatly and employees' time is better utilized in early intervention and active support for children and parents.<sup>47</sup>

### *Health promotion in Breiðholt and prevention*

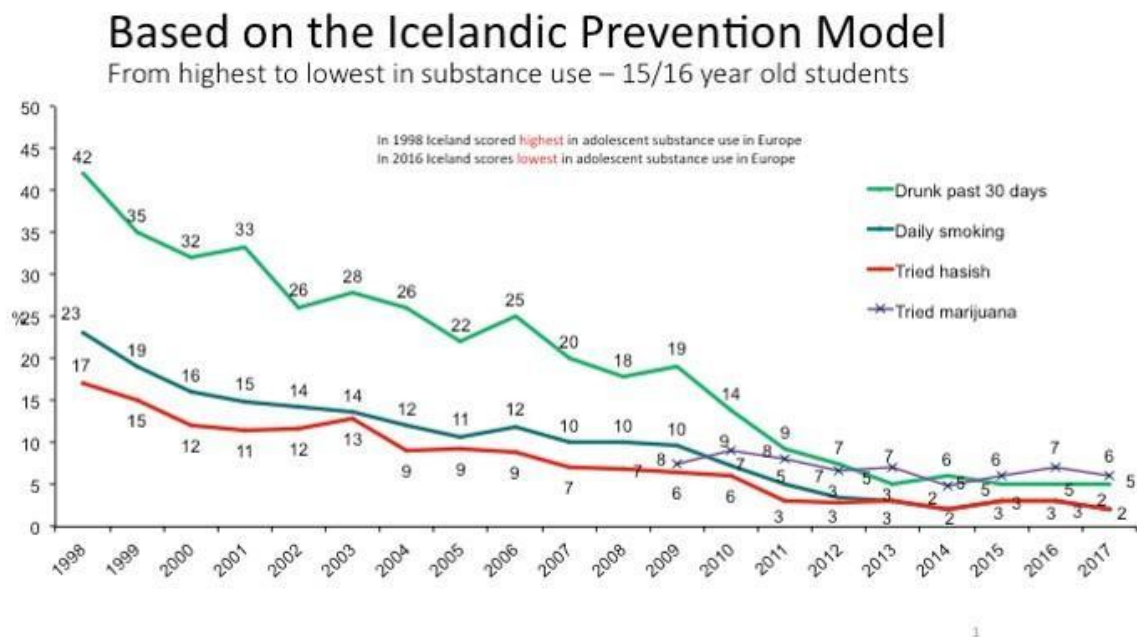
To follow state policies on health, a comprehensive project was launched in Breiðholt built on a positive approach and on the foundation that two-year prevention had provided. By linking research on adolescents' attitudes towards the work of professionals together with collaboration with parents, significant results have been achieved when it comes to changing attitudes towards child rearing, especially towards a curfew and use of tobacco and alcohol. This approach has been called "The Icelandic Prevention Model", which is built upon collaboration in the immediate environment. In Reykjavík, this model has been based on good collaboration with the goal of making these changes.<sup>48</sup> Research has shown that obstacles in prevention are no longer the aforementioned issues, but are now poorer well-being and other

<sup>46</sup> Accessed August 14th, 2018: <https://heckmanequation.org/resource/the-heckman-curve/>

<sup>47</sup> Accessed July 15th, 2020: [https://fundur.reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/agenda-items/fyrirspurn\\_um\\_breidholtsmodelid.pdf](https://fundur.reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/agenda-items/fyrirspurn_um_breidholtsmodelid.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> Accessed September 24th, 2018: [https://www.academia.edu/34653967/The\\_neighborhood\\_effect\\_Presentation\\_about\\_preventive\\_work\\_in\\_Reykjav%C3%ADk\\_for\\_20\\_years](https://www.academia.edu/34653967/The_neighborhood_effect_Presentation_about_preventive_work_in_Reykjav%C3%ADk_for_20_years)

lifestyle-related problems in the lives of children and adolescents.



Promotion of health has helped prevention work go much deeper as it is a better way to discover the necessary solutions. The prevention model is still a work in progress as there is a great deal of collaboration on the local level as it pertains to values and conduct in daily life and child rearing. This is a natural evolution of the successful prevention work that has helped Icelandic children and adolescents to have a better life. Breiðholt's health promotion is following the model of the nearby town of Mosfellsbær which also promotes health in their community. Secondary schools began promoting health with pre- and primary schools later doing the same. The community approach adds others to the equation, such as senior citizens, disabled people, and residents as a whole. After the City of Reykjavík Mayor, President of the Breiðholt District Council and the District Manager met in 2015 to discuss a declaration at a residents' meeting in the primary school Fellaskóli, a collective effort to promote health in the neighborhood began with the support of institutions.<sup>49</sup> The goal is for such promotion to be introduced into other neighborhoods in Reykjavík.



<sup>49</sup> Accessed July 15th, 2020: [https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/heilsueflandi\\_yfirlysing.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/heilsueflandi_yfirlysing.pdf)

As such, there are now 42 programs in the neighborhood's institutions with measurable goals that will be followed up on regularly. Furthermore, this program was the neighborhood's prevention plan that was valid until 2019. It is built on four pillars: *nutrition, movement, wellness, and lifestyle*. Strides are being taken to secure special preventative measures such as children's dental health in collaboration with preschools.<sup>50</sup> Consistent discussion in *Breiðholtsblaðið* and on social media that zero in on Breiðholt residents help to bolster the values and norms in the community that pertain to a healthy lifestyle. The project in Breiðholt has been used as a blueprint for other neighborhoods in Reykjavík and in the city's health policy formation as the city has stated that it will promote health in collaboration with Icelandic Director of Health.

#### *Menntun núna (e. Education Now)*

A decision was made by the Minister of Education to take on launch two experimental projects relating to adult education in September 2013. Two neighborhoods were chosen to participate, Breiðholt and Northwest Constituency (Icelandic: *Norðvesturkjördæmi*) which combines parts of West Iceland, North Iceland, the Westfjords in the northwest. What sets these neighborhoods apart was that the level of formal education was not high and that the percentage of immigrants living in these neighborhoods had increased quickly. Statistics Iceland (Icelandic: *Hagstofa Íslands*) did a study on level of education in the chart seen below. The objective of the project was to strengthen support and advice on education to people. Different approaches were taken in these projects. More emphasis was placed on collaboration with businesses in Northwest Constituency whereas more emphasis was put on collaboration with residents in Breiðholt.<sup>51</sup>

Tafla 1 - Menntun í Breiðholti

Menntunarstig	karlar og konur	Grunn-menntun	Framhaldssk.-menntun	Háskóla-menntun	Upplýsingar vantar
Hverfi	Aldur	Hlutfall	Hlutfall	Hlutfall	Hlutfall
Reykjavík	Alls 16-74 ára	32,8	33,6	32,4	1,1
Reykjavík	16-24 ára	62	34,8	2,5	0,7
Reykjavík	25-54 ára	22,8	32,1	43,9	1,3
Reykjavík	55-74 ára	31,4	35,9	31,5	1,2
109 Breiðholt	Alls 16-74 ára	41,8	34	21,5	2,7
109 Breiðholt	16-24 ára	66,5	32,7	0	0,8
109 Breiðholt	25-54 ára	38,8	30,5	26,1	4,6
109 Breiðholt	55-74 ára	29,4	39,5	29,7	1,3
111 Breiðholt	Alls 16-74 ára	49,7	38,4	10,8	1,1
111 Breiðholt	16-24 ára	78,9	21,1	0	0
111 Breiðholt	25-54 ára	40,2	44,3	13,6	1,9
111 Breiðholt	55-74 ára	50,2	37,4	12,3	0

Collaborating parties were FB who provided school supplies, Mímir with regards to Icelandic as a second language studies, etc., study groups with regards to education for young people, labor unions on education for their members, Young People's Education, Reykjavík University with regards to technical education, and the education center Iðunn with regards to skills assessments. The project gave way to the founding of the Family Center and enhanced

<sup>50</sup> Accessed September 24th, 2018: [https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/forvarnarstefna\\_breidholts\\_-\\_heilsueflandi\\_breidholt\\_0.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/forvarnarstefna_breidholts_-_heilsueflandi_breidholt_0.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Accessed here: <http://www.menntun-nuna.is>



the integration that had begun with the advent of the Breiðholt Projects. Furthermore, this had a positive impact on the connection between Gerðuberg and residents, especially immigrants in the neighborhood.<sup>52</sup> Appreciable results were achieved when it came to getting students in FB that had dropped out to register again on the offer of Education Now. 316 withdrawn students were in contact while the project was in progress.<sup>53</sup>



The Family Center now operates based on the results of this project. The Family Center holds Icelandic courses and collaborates with FB by, among other things, overseeing *FabLab*, a place for people to learn more about technology in a hands-on manner. Íslenskuþorpið (e. *The Icelandic Village*) has been continued in collaboration with preschools in Breiðholt. The Icelandic Village features Icelandic studies and immersion in preschools and in other settings. The Icelandic Village won the European Language Label in 2019, which is awarded by the European Union for language teaching.<sup>54</sup>

### *The Family Center*

Quite a bit led to the founding of the Family Center. After 2010, discussions were being had about a program that was called Bergin, located in Breiðholt. Bergin discussed the fusion of Reykjavík institutions with Gerðuberg in order to achieve greater results with deeper collaboration and more affordable operations. A proposal was approved in 2013 by the Department of School and Leisure (Icelandic: *Skóla- og frístundaráð*) that suggested the establishment of the Family Center under the name “Blið byrjun” (e. *Gentle Start*).<sup>55</sup> These proposals were used to create a family center based on activities in Gerðuberg and were approved by the Reykjavík City Council in 2014. The objective was to “build up a family center that offers services for residents of Upper Breiðholt keeping in mind the necessity of adapting to people’s diverse sets of needs.”<sup>56</sup> When the Red Cross discontinued their family center in 2016, collaboration with the Family Center in Gerðuberg began with many different projects for families. Adult education, Icelandic courses and many other different courses for adults and children, counseling for asylum seekers, collaboration with linguistic and national groups, and dynamic activities for people of all ages have all taken place under the Family

<sup>52</sup> Accessed August 16th, 2018: <http://www.menntun-nuna.is/sites/default/files/Greinager%C3%B0%20og%20lokask%C3%BDrsla%20Menntun%20nuna%20Brei%C3%B0holt.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> Accessed August 16th, 2018: <http://menntun-nuna.is/sites/default/files/%C3%9Attektarsk%C3%BDrsla%20Menntunar%20N%C3%BAna%20styrihopur%2024%20feb.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> Accessed July 15th, 2020: [https://www.mbl.is/frettir/innlent/2019/10/11/islenskukennsla\\_kvenna\\_faer\\_evropuverdlaun/](https://www.mbl.is/frettir/innlent/2019/10/11/islenskukennsla_kvenna_faer_evropuverdlaun/)

<sup>55</sup> Accessed August 24th, 2018: <https://reykjavik.is/blid-byrjun-skyrsla-starfshops>

<sup>56</sup> A letter of instructions from the Mayor from February 1st, 2014.

Center's roof. The Family Center has also been in good collaborations with the Gerðuberg Culture House, which oversees a library, room rentals, and a restaurant in its quarters.



This project has enabled many different entities to work together to support Breiðholt residents. This birthed a project called Breiðholtsbrúin (e. *Breiðholt's Bridge*) in collaboration with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland, the European Anti-Poverty Network, and the churches Fellakirkja and Hólakirkja in which people come together to cook and meet. This collaboration was moved to Mjódd, the main square of Breiðholt, as well as to the Salvation Army's family center and to the church Breiðholtskirkja. The Red Cross has offered a swap market and homework help for children. Residents have used the space for meetings and all kinds of grassroot projects that result in increased social capital. The projects overseen by the Family Center have received donations in the form of grants and have facilitated collaboration with many different social funds. Good collaboration has also been had with the government, which gave some projects a logo. Such projects include Education Now and Tinna, a project designed to empower impoverished families and halt the vicious cycle of social inheritance.

#### *Tinna*

Social services are among the major projects of the Breiðholt Service Center. Much attention has been paid to social services due to the positive changes they can make in the lives of impoverished and socially isolated families. Children in such families can become stuck in a sociological vicious cycle in which social inheritance forms and sinks them into poverty and social isolation. The project by the name of Tinna is intended to counter this.<sup>57</sup> The foundation of the project consists of research about these issues and an academic article by the same name.<sup>58</sup> After a 2015 meeting in Gerðuberg between the Minister of Welfare, Breiðholt's District Manager alongside counselors and people living in poverty, a proposal for a project was presented to the Welfare Watch (Icelandic: *Velferðarvaktin*). After negotiations between a minister and the Ministry of Welfare of the City of Reykjavík, the Breiðholt Service Center claimed the project. Therefore, a place was found in the Family Center where it was possible to have more active communication with participants.

---

<sup>57</sup> Accessed August 27th, 2018:

[https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/svid\\_skjol/VEL/tinna\\_vel.\\_juli\\_2017.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/svid_skjol/VEL/tinna_vel._juli_2017.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> Accessed August 27th, 2018: <https://www.stjornarradid.is/media/velferdarraduneyti-media/media/velferdarvakt09/Ritrod-VIII-RBF-Jadarstada-foreldra.pdf>





Parents have resumed their studies, started working again, and received parental training. Children have received support to participate in sports, among other things, and better acquaint themselves with their opportunities. An assessment on the project has revealed that the project has had the desired results.<sup>59</sup> The decision has been made to continue this collaboration and boost the project and its services so that it will be available to all residents of the city.

### *Literacy - everyone's language<sup>60</sup>*

Literacy - everyone's language (Icelandic: *Læsi – allra mál*) is the name of the collaboration that was launched in Breiðholt in 2015. In the project are pre- and primary schools in the neighborhood as well as the Breiðholt Service Center. The main objective of the project is to strengthen language development and literacy in Breiðholt. Emphasis has been placed on cohesion between grade levels and committed collaboration between the neighborhood's pre- and primary schools. Regular screenings followed by early intervention are the backbone of the project alongside counseling and education for workers and parents. The program as a whole is based on the City of Reykjavík's literacy policy.



Students have improved their reading and their performance in the primary schools Breiðholtsskóli and Fellaskóli has gotten attention. The project has served an entrepreneurial role within the city and the city's short master plan on literacy issues is under the control of the Middle of Language and Literacy (Icelandic: *Miðja máls og læsis*), an institution that helps educators tackle issues of language and literacy..

<sup>59</sup> Accessed July 15th, 2020:

[https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/svid\\_skjol/VEL/lokaskyrslatinna.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/svid_skjol/VEL/lokaskyrslatinna.pdf)

<sup>60</sup>

### *TUFF in Breiðholt*

The Unity of Faiths Foundation (TUFF) is an association that collaborated with the City of Reykjavík, the Reykjavík Sports Association (Icelandic: *Íþróttafélag Reykjavíkur*) and Leiknir (another sports association) on an experimental project in Breiðholt from November 2017 to May 2018. There were also collaborations with primary schools, dance schools, service centers, shared language communities, religious associations, the police, and more. The goal was to increase the participation of 6-15 year-old children and adolescents in sports and recreational activities with a special emphasis being put on children of foreign origin in which children and families receive support in order to take part in the community as well as mutual adjustment. This project has fought against isolation, immoderacy, and separation. Presentations were given widely on the possibilities for athletic participation in all primary schools, recreation centers, shared language communities and religious associations, to name a few examples. Trainers and others involved in children's social and leisure activities attended a course led by TUFF on the approach that the association had used to achieve the aforementioned goals.



A report about the project concluded that children's, adolescents', and families' participation in the community increased, consciousness and interest in active participation and the positive impacts of sport have also increased and their connection to the neighborhood has strengthened.<sup>61</sup> The connection has also gone beyond the neighborhood and has been established with residents of other municipalities, the British Embassy in Reykjavík, and entities abroad that have an impact on Reykjavík's multicultural community. It has been decided to work with more neighborhoods and municipalities with the above-mentioned goals.

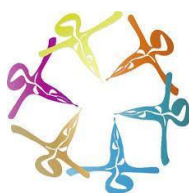
### *Our Issues (Icelandic: Okkar mál)*

In 2011, a project was launched that was intended to strengthen collaboration between pre- and primary schools in Fellahverfi (eastern Breiðholt) and the Breiðholt Service Center. Our Issues is a development project that was originally intended to run for five years when it began. The end of the project was anticipated to be in Spring 2017, but due to the positive results, it has been continued. The main objective of the project is to increase collaboration between schools in Fellahverfi and institutions in Breiðholt with the goals of strengthening social equality, progress in studies, and children's well-being in the neighborhood.

---

<sup>61</sup> TUFF Ísland, Breiðholt. Tilraunaverkefni, lokaskýrsla June 2018.

Collaborators in the project are Fellaskóli, Holt Preschool (Icelandic: *Leikskólinn Holt*), Ösp Preschool (Icelandic: *Leikskólinn Ösp*), The School of Education at the University of Iceland, the Department of School and Leisure, and the Breiðholt Service Center. There has also been focus on taking advantage of opportunities that can be found by collaborating with local institutions such as Gerðuberg, the Reykjavík City Library, the health clinic, sports associations, and other organizations. Efforts are being made to enhance collaboration with parents in pre- and primary schools, increase knowledge of teachers and workers on factors that impact language acquisition and literacy for children with a mother language other than Icelandic and improve work ethic and teachers' to perform their job with a wide array of children and parents. There have also been attempts to develop and implement more diverse teaching methods with the goal of giving children equal opportunities for education.<sup>62</sup>



Our Issues, alongside other development projects in Fellahverfi, have fostered teamwork and integration in education. The project relies on collaboration and, as such, creates a formal platform for communication and teamwork between schools, grade levels, recreation centers, and institutions in the neighborhood. The collaboration has enabled the network of specialists to get larger and the discussions about education in the neighborhood to greatly increase. This has, in turn, increased universities' interest in schools in Fellahverfi. A study carried out by Dr. Brynja Halldórsdóttir in 2014 showed that professionals of both levels of schooling realize the importance of understanding the experience of children that are learning a new language and that the project was based on understanding and respect for students' and their parents' cultures, keeping in mind that customs and education can differ greatly between cultures. Brynja oversees an assessment on the project in which it is especially being investigated how well it has gone working towards all objectives of the project and whether there are improvements that need to be made. The evaluation is built on interviews with university employees.<sup>63</sup> In 2020, Fellaskóli has been further improved under the name Draumaskólinn (e. *The Dream School*).

### *The Breiðholt Mental Health Center*

The project was developed on the initiative of a mental health team of home nurses. The objective has been to integrate the service that the mental health team provides in the form of home visits with social service provided by the Breiðholt Service Center in order to improve services that are provided on the local level to individuals that are struggling with mental

---

<sup>62</sup> Accessed September 20th, 2018

[http://tungumalatorg.is/okkarmal/files/2018/07/starfsskyrsla\\_verkefni-2017-2018-1.pdf](http://tungumalatorg.is/okkarmal/files/2018/07/starfsskyrsla_verkefni-2017-2018-1.pdf)

<sup>63</sup> Accessed September 20th, 2018:

[http://tungumalatorg.is/okkarmal/files/2015/07/Skyrsla\\_15052015BH.pdf](http://tungumalatorg.is/okkarmal/files/2015/07/Skyrsla_15052015BH.pdf)

illnesses. The main collaborators aside from the mental health team and the service centers were the National University Hospital of Iceland and health clinics.



Results of the Breiðholt Mental Health Center were seen in, among other things, a 28% decrease in admissions into the hospital from 2012-2014. Additional funds were not given to this project, but rather, changes were made on the organization of matters of personnel and collaboration became more defined between the Breiðholt Service Center and the mental health team.<sup>64</sup> The project received the Icelandic Innovation Award in public service and administration in 2015.<sup>65</sup>

### *Collaboration with organizations*

At the beginning of the Breiðholt Projects, it was clear that the city could get more results with more collaboration. Aside from close collaboration with the government, collaboration with the tertiary sector or organizations, individuals, and businesses was also pursued. Ideas were proposed for developing the collaboration in the spirit of community work and theories on social capital. By working with residents and organizations, there would be more opportunities to share the best solutions based on actual need. Collaboration with the Red Cross has centered around development of family centers, which has resulted in projects such as the swap market for children, more homework help, and support for groups such as immigrants. Formal arrangements have been made with regards to collaboration between the City of Reykjavík and the Red Cross.



Collaboration has been had with associations such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland and the European Anti-Poverty Network PEPP in order to fight against poverty and support families in need. This collaboration has centered around the project Tinna and the

<sup>64</sup> Accessed August 28th, 2018: [https://www.stjornarradid.is/library/03-Verkefni/Rekstur-og-eignir-rikisins/Nyskopun/2015\\_Ge%C3%B0heilsust%C3%B6\\_C3%B0\\_VII.pdf](https://www.stjornarradid.is/library/03-Verkefni/Rekstur-og-eignir-rikisins/Nyskopun/2015_Ge%C3%B0heilsust%C3%B6_C3%B0_VII.pdf)

<sup>65</sup> Accessed September 6th, 2018: <https://www.stjornarradid.is/verkefni/rekstur-og-eignir-rikisins/nyskopun-i-rikisrekstri/nyskopunarverdlaun/>



development of family centers. The Breiðholt Bridge has been working with the same parties, alongside the churches Fellakirkja, Hólakirkja, and Breiðholtskirkja. The project offers people the opportunity to cook and eat together, strengthen connections, and increase the possibilities of reciprocal support.<sup>66</sup>



There has been powerful collaboration due to the multicultural community. Linguistic communities have received attention for their work in helping The Breiðholt Service Center. There is collaboration with many different entities that enriches the lives of people that move to Breiðholt. For example, Kurds have held a cultural and art festival in Gerðuberg, Buddhists in Iceland have held gatherings, and groups that want to improve people's knowledge of the Icelandic language and culture, responsibility and obligation with courses and meetings. The City of Reykjavík's Multicultural Festival was held in collaboration with the Family Center and Gerðuberg in Spring 2018.



The collaboration with organizations has opened new doors as it pertains to possibilities for grants and collaboration with new parties. One could also argue that this approach is empowering, is likely to stimulate initiative and forge connections, and that more participation in the community will come about in contemporary development.

### *Iceland's biggest wall art museum!*

Along with the emphasis on developing services in a coordinated manner, many changes were made to the environment. City authorities made the decision to better distribute artwork throughout the suburbs without additional funds. Therefore, focus was placed on wall art in Breiðholt from 2012-2017. The goal was to spread art in public spaces outside of downtown Reykjavík, beautify Upper Breiðholt, and increase residents' pride in their immediate environment. The Department of Culture and Tourism sought out collaboration with known artists and got into contact with them about displaying their works on apartment complexes

---

<sup>66</sup> Accessed September 24th, 2018: <http://borgarblod.is/?p=2182>

and buildings. Theresa Himmer did the honors in October 2013 by displaying her piece *Birtingarmynd* (e. Manifestation), on a wall on Jórufell 2-12.



After this, Sara Riel displayed her piece known as *Fjöðurin* (e. The Feather) that went on a wall located on Asparfell 2-12. A meeting was held with apartment owners in Asparfell in which they unanimously agreed to this work being displayed. Then, the artists Erró and Ragnar Kjartansson had works displayed. Erró's piece entitled *Réttlætisgyðjan* (e. The Goddess of Justice) went on an apartment block on Álfthólar 4-6 and *Frumskógardrottningin* (e. The Queen of the Rainforest) went onto a swimming pool and on a sports facility by Austurberg. The piece by Ragnar Kjartansson was placed on an apartment block on Krummahólar 2 and was based on a Christmas card that he had sent to his girlfriend.



A group of adolescent wall artists that worked in Miðberg also got to display their works in several different parts of the neighborhood, such as in an underground tunnel. Alongside this campaign, collaboration with the Reykjavík School of Visual Arts was sought out upon the request of the City of Reykjavík Mayor in order to increase visual arts teaching. The then mayor now works in Miðberg which is located close to Gerðuberg.

### *Democracy*

In order to determine the needs of residents in service and how best to develop said service, assemblies known as *Breiðholtsping* were held in which various issues were on the agenda.<sup>67</sup> Parents got the opportunity to discuss issues relating to child rearing and school, environmental issues were discussed during one session as well as safety in connection to neighborhood watch and neighborhood law enforcement. A wide range of issues arose in these assemblies that will be held again. For example, there was development on Seljagarðar

---

<sup>67</sup> Accessed September 24th, 2018:

[https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/ni\\_urstoe\\_ur\\_brei\\_holts\\_ings\\_28\\_n\\_v\\_2012.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/ni_urstoe_ur_brei_holts_ings_28_n_v_2012.pdf)

presented as a project that residents got the opportunity to make their own with the support of neighborhood spaces. The project entailed a group of residents getting to tend to a space. Another large-scale issue was addressed in close collaboration with residents was the neighborhood plan. In collaboration with the Department of Environment and Planning, it was decided to use a democratic approach that originated in England and is called “Planning for real”, which was translated as *Skapandi samráð*. A three-dimensional model was made of the neighborhood in which children and residents got to pitch their ideas on five primary schools and Gerðuberg.<sup>68</sup> The new neighborhood plan was revealed in late 2018.



The Breiðholt District Council had representatives in a steering committee of the project in which further focus was placed on developing democracy within the neighborhood. The resolution was, among other things, to create a policy for the neighborhood that was founded on discussion with residents.<sup>69</sup> Efforts have been made to follow said policy. The project entitled *A Better Neighborhood* has had a positive impact on residents’ democratic participation in the sense that many projects have been voted on by the residents and worked on in collaboration with the District Council. In the District Council, the residents’ associations have always had an observer that has had collaboration in many uplifting projects. One such project has been to share these uplifting projects with their powerful Facebook page.<sup>70</sup> There has also been good collaboration between the District Council and *Ungmennaráð Breiðholts*, a council for adolescents in the neighborhood. This collaboration has resulted in quality discussions in a common space shared by the Reykjavík City Council and adolescents involved in city politics.

### *Collaborations*

Collaborations have been widely developed throughout the past five years. One such collaboration is *Together Against Violence* (Icelandic: *Saman gegn ofbeldi*), a collaboration between the Ministry of Welfare, service centers, Reykavík Child Protection Services, and the police in the Capital Region. When violent crimes are committed, it has been possible to employ the help of an on-call social worker and have them enter the home with

---

<sup>68</sup> Accessed September 24th, 2018: <http://hverfisSKIPulag.is/samrad/>

<sup>69</sup> Accessed September 24th, 2018:

[https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/stefnumid\\_og\\_framtidarsyn\\_0.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/stefnumid_og_framtidarsyn_0.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> See link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/48187369678/>



representatives from the police and an employee of Reykjavík Child Protection Services, all serving various roles in order to bring cases into the right channels. The highest percentage of such cases has been in Breiðholt. Significant results have been achieved and all follow-up has been made easier.<sup>71</sup> Another collaboration is one that pertains to matters of disabled people and is called Serving Guidance (Icelandic: *Þjónandi leiðsögn*). This is a part of the City of Reykjavík's vision on personal independence. Efforts have been made to employ the methods of Serving Guidance as new strategies to make progress in the service for disabled people, which can be demanding. Collaboration on this project is between the town of Akureyri and international organizations such as Gentle Teaching.<sup>72</sup> Considerable results have been achieved and this has been presented as the one main strategy in the city when it comes to serving disabled people. The Breiðholt Service Center has been able to look to leading specialists all over the world in this field. These specialists have regularly come to Iceland over the years to hold courses, train and work with employees providing these services.

## Results

The Breiðholt Projects were assessed by two parties as was expected due to the proposal approved by the Reykjavík City Council on the Breiðholt Projects.<sup>73</sup> First, a status assessment was done by the Institute of Public Administration and Politics for the years 2013 and 2014. Then, the consulting firm Expectus performed a final assessment in late 2015. The main conclusion of the status assessment was that professional work was carried out in a strategic manner. What characterizes many of the projects executed in Breiðholt over the years has been their innovation value in an ever-changing community. Aside from this innovation value, early intervention is being widely applied and a lot of emphasis is placed on prevention. By responding sooner rather than later when issues arise, further issues have been prevented, introduce better lifestyles, and have a positive impact on core values. Collaboration and integration also characterize most of the projects. The innovation value of the project can be seen in, among other things, the fact that the neighborhood's network has strengthened substantially, communication has gone from the neighborhood to ministries, as an example, and these connections have given way to new projects. This development has all of the signs of a policy coalition.<sup>74</sup> A systematic approach has developed that could be useful for other neighborhoods. A number of new projects have been created and some of them have earned

---

<sup>71</sup> Accessed September 28th, 2018:

[https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/ymis\\_skjol/skjol\\_utgefid\\_efni/afangaskyrsla\\_151019\\_afangaskyrsla\\_-\\_saman\\_gegn\\_ofbeldi\\_fin.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/ymis_skjol/skjol_utgefid_efni/afangaskyrsla_151019_afangaskyrsla_-_saman_gegn_ofbeldi_fin.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> Accessed September 28th, 2018:

[https://fundargatt.akureyri.is/meetingsearch/displaydocument.aspx?itemid=03636268259226056582&meetingid=1703033F%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20&filename=Busetudeild\\_ThjonandiLeidsogn\\_single\\_LR008-loka.pdf&cc=Document](https://fundargatt.akureyri.is/meetingsearch/displaydocument.aspx?itemid=03636268259226056582&meetingid=1703033F%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20&filename=Busetudeild_ThjonandiLeidsogn_single_LR008-loka.pdf&cc=Document)

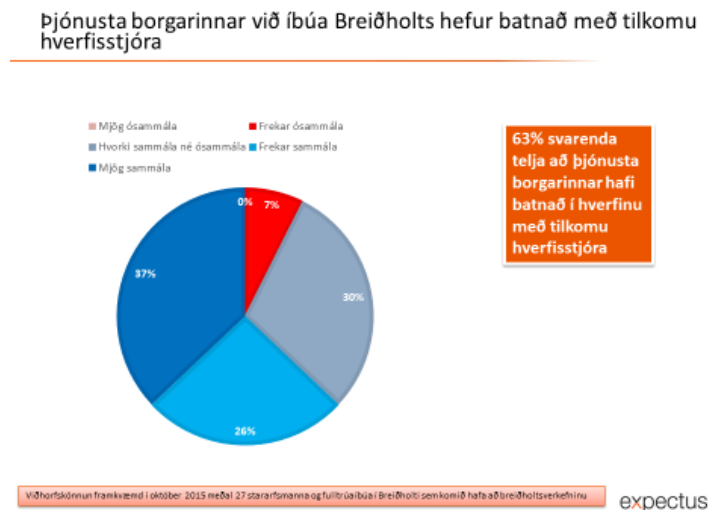
<sup>73</sup> Accessed September 24th, 2018:

[https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/sam\\_ykkt\\_tillaga\\_um\\_brei\\_holtsverkefni\\_1.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/sam_ykkt_tillaga_um_brei_holtsverkefni_1.pdf)

<sup>74</sup> Accessed January 31st, 2019:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic\\_alliance?fbclid=IwAR1gpnZLLGLxWPK6h1Xu2-8NWDTP3O-CsNoVfU1Uc9qWIWVCSH4HHcEwHhU](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_alliance?fbclid=IwAR1gpnZLLGLxWPK6h1Xu2-8NWDTP3O-CsNoVfU1Uc9qWIWVCSH4HHcEwHhU)

recognition.<sup>75</sup> It has come forth that some policy components in the plan were unnecessary since they conflicted with existing policy components elsewhere in the city system. It also came forth that strides have been made to prevent stagnancy in execution and implementation of some collaborations.<sup>76</sup> These results coincide with those of Expectus which also stated that the standards of the projects were not sufficiently clear and operative. This made it difficult to evaluate projects. As a response to this, a sentiment survey was made amongst the main players of the Breiðholt Projects, including residents, institutions, residents' associations, and the government. 27 subjects answered the survey.



The conclusions were that 63% agreed that the city's services had improved upon the arrival of a district manager, 30% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 7% disagreed. 56% of respondents believed that democracy had increased 56% once the projects began, 21% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 26% disagreed. When asked about collaboration between institutions with the purpose of increasing democracy, 92% believed it to be important to increase said collaboration, 4% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 4% disagreed.<sup>77</sup> When taking into consideration actions that were taken to strengthen collaboration, one sees that stakeholders have a strong will to work together to achieve results. Previously, there was good collaboration that was enhanced with a mix of meetings with institution heads and courses in holistic leadership. One measure that came out of these meetings was the introduction of the Breiðholt Wave, a summit for all workers in Breiðholt. The objective of this summit was to offer opportunities to meet and share knowledge deliberately. Workers were very satisfied with this as was reflected in a sentiment survey that was conducted afterwards. One may notice a significant correlation between attitude and level of education. The less education that one had, the more satisfied they were with the summit. Preschool employees were the most satisfied.<sup>78</sup> Many of the projects that have been described above have been built on

<sup>75</sup> Accessed August 28th, 2018: <https://www.stjornarradid.is/verkefni/rekstur-og-eignir-rikisins/nyskopun-i-rikisrekstri/nyskopunarverdlaun/>

<sup>76</sup> Breiðholt, status assessment 2013-2014

<sup>77</sup> Reykjavíkurborg. Breiðholtsverkefnið – Þróun íbúalýðræðis og stjórnsýslu í Breiðholti.

<sup>78</sup> Accessed August 29th, 2018:

[https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/working\\_together\\_breidholtsbylgjan\\_2017.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/working_together_breidholtsbylgjan_2017.pdf)

collaboration that would not have been possible or as productive if different parties had not worked together. The Breiðholt Projects got attention outside of Iceland by the COST Action research group that comes all over Europe. This research group stayed in Breiðholt for a week to collect data in 2016.<sup>79</sup> Some of the results were that components of bridge building cultivated good connections with immigrants and that the approach of offering conversations to residents, whether in meetings or on Facebook, was a more efficient way to provide information than booklets or via traditional media. Since making it easy for immigrants to participate in community events, it has helped immigrants assimilate rather than separate.<sup>80</sup> Similar results can be seen in the TUFF project in which emphasis was placed on visiting different religious and spiritual groups, shared language communities, and places that immigrants meet. They built trust and opened up channels of communication for further discussion and dissemination of important information about possibilities for children's participation such as, for example, services available to children as well as grants in the form of a leisure card in which parents are allotted 50000 ISK to fund their children's leisure activities.<sup>81</sup> As such, one can assume that there is a reason to simplify this communication, make use of public space, and welcome new residents in a public setting.

The diversity of the projects that pertain to the development of the past five years reflects how extensive the Breiðholt Projects are and have been. Several factors characterize this development. The applications of early intervention and follow-up have proven effective. Focus is placed on the first 10 years of a child's life in which they, their parents, and their families are to be provided support and guidance. Focus on courses and active support as described in the Breiðholt Model have reduced the need for further actions. One may also notice the focus on providing interactive service and more collaboration, such as with organizations. An example of such can be seen in the comprehensive development of the Family Center and projects that have developed there such as Tinna, service for immigrants, and the Red Cross' swap market. Bigger steps have been taken to approach new residents with the strategies of cultural dissemination and bridge building with projects such as Education Now (The Icelandic Village) and TUFF among others. By entering immigrants' spaces, offering space in return, and offering support, connections and trust have been created. Even bigger steps need to be taken in order to create even more personal connections between neighbors, service providers, and others that can assist with assimilation into the community. Assistance and counseling on an international level has helped the development. Specialists have introduced an intercultural approach, new and professional practices in service and mutual comparison of policy formation between other countries. Since the community will diversify even more, it will be even more urgent to find solutions across borders and receive

---

<sup>79</sup> COST Action builds on a European Science Foundation exploratory workshop on the emerging theme of smart and liveable cities.

<sup>80</sup> Wilkinsson, C; Fumagalli, I; Rosetti, S. (2016). Rebranding a district. The Breiðholt project in Reykjavik. See more at this link:

<http://www.tema.unina.it/index.php/tema/article/view/4004/4812?acceptCookies=1>

<sup>81</sup> TUFF Ísland, Breiðholt. Tilraunaverkefni, lokaskýrsla júní 2018.

the best knowledge there is when developing solutions in service. Such work also coincides with Reykjavík's policy on Intercultural Cities in Europe.

The Breiðholt Projects that began in 2012 have given way to further development that manifests itself in multiple ways, such as in the beginning of 2020 with A Better City for Children (Icelandic: *Betri borg fyrir börn*). The Department of School and Leisure as well as the Department of Welfare decided to join forces in Breiðholt with the goals of integrating operations, providing children wholesome service on the scene, and increasing efficiency.<sup>82</sup> This project will be used as a launch pad for other neighborhoods.

## Works cited

Allison, Graham T: „Public and private management: Are they fundamentally alike in all unimportant respects?”, Shafritz, Jay M. og Hyde, Albert C. (ritstjórar) *Classics of public administration*, Fort Worth 1997, pgs. 387 – 403

Askim, J., Fimreite, A. L., Moseley, A., & Pedersen, L. H. (2011). One stop shops for social welfare: The adaptation of an organizational form in three countries. *Public Administration*, 89(4), 1451–1468. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9299.2011.01933

Bason, Christian (2010). *Leading public sector innovation. Co-creating for a better society*. Bristol: The policy press.

Block, Peter; McKnight, John (2012). *The abundant community. Awakening the power of families and neighborhoods*. Berrett-Koehler publishers.

Borgarráð (2011). “Tillaga að tilraunaverkefni í Breiðholti”, approved by the Reykjavík City Council on November 1st, 2011.

Breidholt.is

Breiðholt, status assessment 2013 – 2014. Conducted by the Institute of Public Administration and Politics, The University of Iceland in January 2015.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie (1979). *The ecology of human development. Experiments by nature and design*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Coleman, James (1990). *Foundations of social theory*, Cambridge: Harvard university press.

Cross, R., & Parker, A. (2004). *The hidden power of social networks: Understanding how work really gets done in organizations*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

---

<sup>82</sup> Accessed July 15th, 2020: <https://reykjavik.is/frettir/betri-borg-fyrir-born-markvissara-samstarf-um-thjonustu-vid-born-og-fjolskyldur-theirra> og [https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/betri\\_borg\\_fyrir\\_born\\_13092019\\_borgarrad.pdf](https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/betri_borg_fyrir_born_13092019_borgarrad.pdf)

Deming, W. Edwards (1982). *Out of the crisis*, Boston: MIT press.

Gilchrist, A., & Taylor, M. (2016). *The short guide to community development*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Hagstofa.is

Henderson, P., & Thomas, D. N. (2013). *Skills in neighbourhood work*. London: Routledge

Hutchinson, G. (2014). Community work within the Norwegian welfare state. In A.K. Larsen, V. Sewpaul, & G.O. Hole (Eds.), *Participation in community work: International perspectives* (pp. 133- 144). Oxfordshire: Routledge

Kristinsson, Gunnar H.: *Staðbundin stjórnmál, markmið og árangur sveitarfélaga*, Háskólaútgáfan: Reykjavík, 2001.

Kristmundsson, Ómar H. & Hrafnadóttir, Steinunn (2008). *Stjórnun og rekstur félagasamtaka*, Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan.

Macgillivray, A., & Walker, P. (2000). Local social capital: Making it work on the ground. In Baron, S. Field, J. & Schuller, T. (Eds.), *Social capital: Critical perspectives* (pp. 197–211). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ólafsson, Óskar D. & Árnadóttir, Hervör A. (2016). Working together in local communities: Networking and learning for better services.

Poppo, Keith (2015). *Analyzing community work. Theory and practice*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Putnam, Robert D. (2000). *Bowling alone. The collapse and revival of American community*, New York:Simon and Schuster.

Reykjavik.is

Reykjavíkurborg. Breiðholtsverkefnið – Þróun íbúalýðræðis og stjórnsýslu í Breiðholti. Expectus 2015.

Rogoff, Barbara (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*, Oxford: Oxford university press.

Sampson, Peter J. (2012). *Great American city: Chicago and the enduring neighborhood effect*, Chicago: University of Chicago press.

Seddon, J. (2008). *Systems thinking in the public sector*. Axminster: Triarchy Press.

Seddon, John (2008). *Systems thinking in the public sector. The failure of the reform regime and a manifesto for a better way*, Axminster:Triarchy press.

Sveinsson, Hjálmar & Skarphéðinsdóttir, Hrund (2017). *Borgin heimkynni okkar*. Reykjavík: Forlagið.

Þorvaldsdóttir, Margrét & Jóhannesson, Sveinn M. (2010). „Þróun og nýsköpun. Þjónustumiðstöðvar Reykjavíkurborgar 2005 – 2010”, Reykjavík:Nýsköpunarsjóður námsmanna:. Accessed November 12th, 2014:  
[http://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/ymis\\_skjol/skjol\\_utgefid\\_efni/throunognyskopun.pdf](http://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/ymis_skjol/skjol_utgefid_efni/throunognyskopun.pdf)

Twelvetrees, Alan (1991). *Community work*. Palgrave MacMillan Ltd.

Wilkinson, C; Fumagalli, I; Rosetti, S. (2016). Rebranding a district. The Breidholt project in Reykjavik.