

Kangeq – *Introduction*



by
Keld Jensen

Kangeq – Introduction

Kangeq is an abandoned settlement sixteen kilometres southwest of Nuuk in the mouth of the Godthaabsfiord. Kangeq was vacated in the 1970's.

Today, a few houses are used for holiday cottages, but the other houses stand untouched today as monuments to a life that once was.

The story of the abandoned settlement Kangeq represents a general perspective on the evolution of the settlement patterns in Greenland. One of the most topical political issues in the country today is what is supposed to be done in the context of the rapid urbanization taking place in these years.

Many have the feeling that the small settlements and the associated activities of the hunters are the main carrier of the culture and identity of the people in Greenland. Others have the opinion that urbanization is the own desire of the people to develop the same culture and identity.

But while this debate is on-going year after year, the population is voting with their feet, and the urbanization

accelerates in these years. For economic reasons it is necessary to differentiate the levels of service between large and small settlements and the people make their choices.

The Greenlandic settlement pattern is recorded minutely over a more than a century: If we start at the end of the World War I in the year 1918, the total population in Greenland was 14,643 inhabitants. The population was scattered along the coast into 196 settlements. A lot of people also had their home outside the settlements, and many had more than one settlement, because they went to the catch camps in the summer.

Almost thirty years after, immediately after World War II the population had risen to 22,000 inhabitants, and the number of settlements had fallen by only three.

Then the development went fast. In 1953, nine settlements were abandoned, and an intense commitment to centralization implied that in 1967 only 154 settlements had survived, even in defiance of the population now were

three-fold since 1918.

By the introduction of Home Rule in 1980, when the village Kangeq had already been abandoned, there were only 90 settlements left over.

Now, where Greenland has achieved self-governance, the number of settlements has declined to 75. Today a fifth of the population are living in the capital of Greenland, Nuuk.

If this development continues 40 to 50 per cent of the population over the coming decades will be residents in the country's largest city.

I visited the abandoned settlement Kangeq in August 2012. The abandoned, demolished houses provide on the one hand the impression of desolation and sadness, but the untreated weathered wood and the storm scarred doors and windows also contains some picturesque that I as a photographer must try to capture.

The abandoned settlement Kangeq in the mouth of the Godthaabsfiord southwest of the Capital of Greenland, Nuuk.







































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