

2

Timeline of the recent history of Greenland

Materials G 4

Society

Housing

Inuit life was characterised by subsistence hunting and high seasonal mobility with smaller permanent settlement round trading posts.

An increasing part of the population changed livelihood and stayed in permanent houses due to reduced possibilities for hunting.

As infrastructures were extended and fishing especially in South and Central Greenland became the dominant source of income, more Inuit settled permanently and gave up their seasonal mobility.

People in Greenland cannot own the ground where e. g. their house is located, but are only given use permissions and to build a house. An increasing number of houses in Greenland are owned by companies or privately.

Concrete buildings with large numbers of flats were erected (alone in Nuuk's Blok P 1% of the total population of Greenland lived). The new concrete apartment buildings were considered a leap towards modernisation.





Society 7





2

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Materials G 4

Society

Health | Education | Poverty

Missionaries emphasised that the Christian population was able to read the Bible and established schools. In 1928, the Danish language was introduced in the curriculum of schools in Greenland.

Outbreaks of diseases like tuberculosis, because of widespread poverty and bad housing conditions in the established, permanent settlements.

In the 1960s, the health services were improved and a number of hospitals were built in all regions. The number of children per family decreased following the improved living conditions. School curricula were brought in line with school curricula in Denmark.

The Greenland government decided that the language in schools should be Greenlandic by 1979 and was made the official language in June 2009. Danish is still widely used in the administration and in higher education.

In the late 19th century, compulsory primary school education was introduced extending elementary school from 4 to 7 years.

The concentration of people in larger cities and the change from a subsistence living to employed labour resulted in the growth of unemployment. Disconnected from local resources (hunting) the unemployed became dependent on public welfare.

In 2011, the economic inequality measured by money income is recognized to be higher in Greenland than in the USA.



2

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Materials G 4

Society

Population | Migration

The isolation of the Greenland population results in very low outmigration while the Danish colonial administrators and traders all come from Denmark or Norway.

The war period isolates Greenland from Denmark. USA takes over supplies due to their military interest in the area. While Greenland is still isolated the supplies from the USA present new goods not seen earlier.

In order to implement the new administration and education system after World War II, teachers and administrators from Denmark were hired. Other Danes came to build infrastructure and to work in the health institutions.

Outmigration is an increasing threat to Greenland as both educated young people and social drop-outs move to Denmark resulting in 20% of people with origins in Greenland living in Denmark.

The strict Danish immigration policies were not practical for Greenland. The shortage of labour was a main challenge. In 2012 the legislation about large scale industries opens the country for migrant workers contracted to global companies.

2

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Materials G 4

Economy

Hunting | Fishing

The Inuit hunted for seal and whale. Export of fat and oil from both animals had been the main export but this declined as people began to use petroleum instead of oil from whale. This reduced the income of the Greenland colonies seriously.

From the end of the 1960s, prawn fishing in the Disko bay (Central Greenland) started to develop increasing economic importance. Prawns mainly live in deep waters, which requires larger vessels with employed labour.

Halibut fishing started in the 1980s in the North of Greenland. Halibut fishing is suitable for small scale fisheries, and therefore people mainly living from subsistence hunting can catch and sell halibut, thereby adding to their incomes.

When the demand of fat and oil from animals declined, fishing of cod began in South Greenland and along the west coast up to Sisimiut. This fish was dried, salted and sold to Southern Europe. By 1930, seal hunting was replaced by fishing as the main economic basis.

From the end of the 1970s the cod stock declined. This resulted in a reduction of cod fishing and resulted in an economic decline of the cities dependent of this part of fishing.







2

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Materials G 4

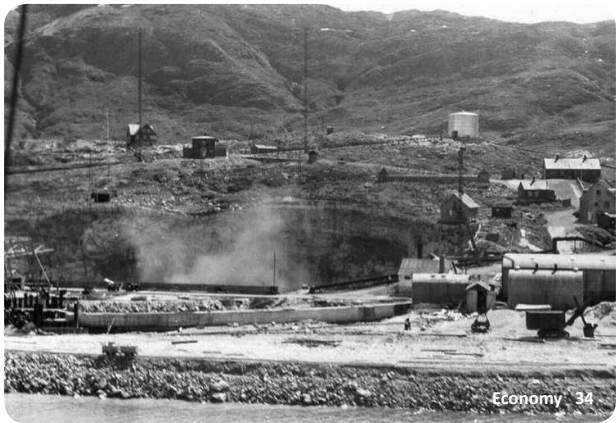
Economy

Mining

Cryolite (used in the manufacture of aluminium) from Ivittut became the main export good for Greenland, when the demand for fat and oil from whales declined due to the increased use of mineral oil.

In 1972 the coal mine Qullisat was closed by the Danish administration and the population moved to cities distributed along the west coast. The closing sparked political protest initiating the move towards independence.

Greenland is focusing on the development of natural resource extractions, including off-shore oil as well as mineral resources. Exploration rights for oil and minerals have been given to several foreign companies.







2

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Materials G 4

Economy

Internal market

The Royal Greenland Trade (KGH) held a trade monopoly for Greenland. The KGH supported the Greenland settlements. It also promoted Danish colonial authority by providing essential goods, if necessary at stable and below-market prices.

The war cut off the contacts to Denmark. The US took over the supply of basic goods. This resulted in scarcity, but also opened for new experiences with goods not seen in Greenland before opening for new expectations.

Uniform prices are introduced to give equal opportunities for local investors to support economic development. While basic goods are available in all settlements the smaller ones are only offered limited choice and few luxury goods to be purchased.

1994 the uniform prices system on daily goods and the obligation to deliver goods everywhere in the country was removed. As a result prices now vary a lot.

2005 the uniform price system for electricity and water was removed. As a result, prices for electricity and water now differ from villages to cities. Financial subsidies for passenger transport are removed, as well making flights extremely expensive.







2

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Materials G 4

Economy

Support from Denmark

Greenlands was viewed at best to be self-reliant and consequently neutral to Denmark, as the sales of cryolite substituted the incomes from whale oil and fat.

The German occupation of Denmark in WW II cuts off all supplies and trade relations between Denmark and Greenland. USA supplied goods to Greenland paid for with Cryolite (used in aluminium production) and built military bases and airports.

After World War II the Greenland Technical Organisation (GTO) was established to build houses and infrastructure. Its operations were financed by Denmark.

More government responsibilities were taken over by the Greenlanders. The costs were covered by a Block Grant from Denmark. The Grant was adjusted to meet the country's need.

From the early 1970s a Danish funding programme with investments in harbours and fish processing industries was initiated. Though investments were made in Greenland, Danish workers and companies prospered as the main contractors.

The Block Grant from Denmark was fixed at 3.6 billion DKK (approx. 0.5 billion EURO) in 2009. If Greenland receives revenue from mineral resource activities the Block Grant is reduced by about half of this revenue.





2

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Politics

Independence

Global relations

Colonial rule of Greenland by Denmark was established in 1814. In 1862 the local population was formally involved in local decision-making.

In 1953 Greenland was made a region of Denmark in the Danish constitution. This gave equal rights with other Danish regions and demonstrated that Greenland was not a colony. Representatives of Greenland became now members of the Danish parliament.

In 1979, Greenland home rule was established. This means, that a Greenlandic government took over the right to make its own decisions independent of Denmark in most areas of policy, though not foreign policy and the utilization of mineral resources.

The intention of the Danish colonial policy was to maintain the original hunter lifestyle that supplied the trading post with oil and furs, but it also aimed to avoid a culture clash resulting from fast changes in the Greenlandic life style.

In 1953, the population of Thule was forced to move with a warning of 4 days in the middle of the winter to provide space for the US to establish an airbase. It was a 150 km drive with sledges to the new settlement of Qaarnaag.

In 1985, Greenland decided to leave the EU in order to protect their fishing stocks. In a specific deal with the EU commission some fishing rights in Greenlandic water were sold to European fisheries.

In 2009, the Greenland self-rule was established based on an agreement with the Danish government. Most political responsibility is passed to Greenland, while foreign affairs are handled by Denmark (except the relations with the EU, where Greenland negotiates).

2

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Materials G 4

Politics

Development agenda

Greenland is governed with the intention of a gradual societal development that the Inuit population could follow.

Due to isolation, the war period and the following years were characterized by a lack of development leading to extended poverty.

Two Danish commissions in 1950 and 1960 argued for a market based economy and a centralization of the population. They assumed that moving people to cities would make the country less dependent. During the 1960s several smaller settlements were closed.

In 2009, the 18 municipalities were merged into 4. In 2011, the 16 hospital districts were merged into 5 regions.

Former public services like the provision of water and electricity were transferred to become the responsibility of private, though public owned companies to initiate competition and increase efficiency.

2

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Materials G 4

Environment

Natural resources | Climate

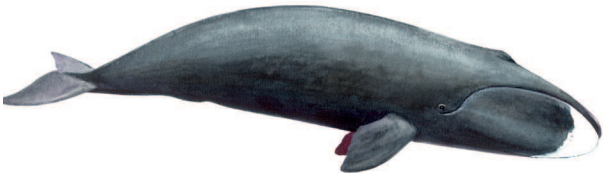
Around 1890, the seal disappeared from South Greenland, because of over-hunting by the Norwegians and Canadians on the sea ice along East Greenland and Canada. This led to serious hunger in South Greenland.

The ocean currents coming from the South became stronger in the middle of the 20th century. The warm water also brought cod fish to Greenland's South-West Coast.

Colder seawater and/or overfishing resulted in a serious reduction in the number of cod starting in the late 1970s. By 1990, cod almost had disappeared from Greenland waters.

With the decline of cod stock, there were fewer predators for prawns. The populations of prawn grew. Prawns prefer cold water and stocks are mainly located in central and northern Greenland. Halibut, and lately also mackerel and cod appear in Greenland waters.

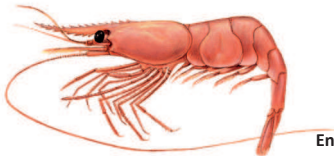
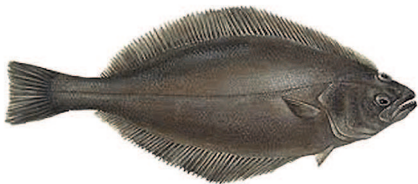
In the 1980s, climate change is for the first time recognized as having huge impact on Greenland and on the world. At the same time the melting ice promises access to formerly buried natural resources.



Environment 70



Environment 71



Environment 72