

BLÖNDUÓS

Northwest Iceland has a long background as an agricultural region with sheep farming, fishing and tourism now forming the primary sector of industry. Presently, these industries constitute the primary sectors, yet the region faces challenges such as limited employment diversity, a trend of youth migration, and depopulation. In response, the Association of municipalities in Northwest Iceland (SSNV), including Blönduós, actively seeks innovative solutions for long-term strategic plans and the attraction of new businesses.

Blönduós, a town with fewer than 1,000 residents, houses the Icelandic Textile Centre within the heritage building Kvennaskólinn, one of Iceland's four Women's colleges founded in 1879. The center, dedicated to promoting textile innovation, knowledge-building, and local production, plays a vital role as a makerspace and educational platform. At the Icelandic Textile Center, traditional handicrafts seamlessly blend with 21st-century skills, contributing to the region's economic development and preserving its cultural heritage.

City Population size	XS	Productive focus	Textile, handicrafts and digital technology
Population density	Blönduós: 4.9 people/km2	Partners	University of Iceland, Icelandic Textile Center
Pilot scale	Rural	Website	Cartography web

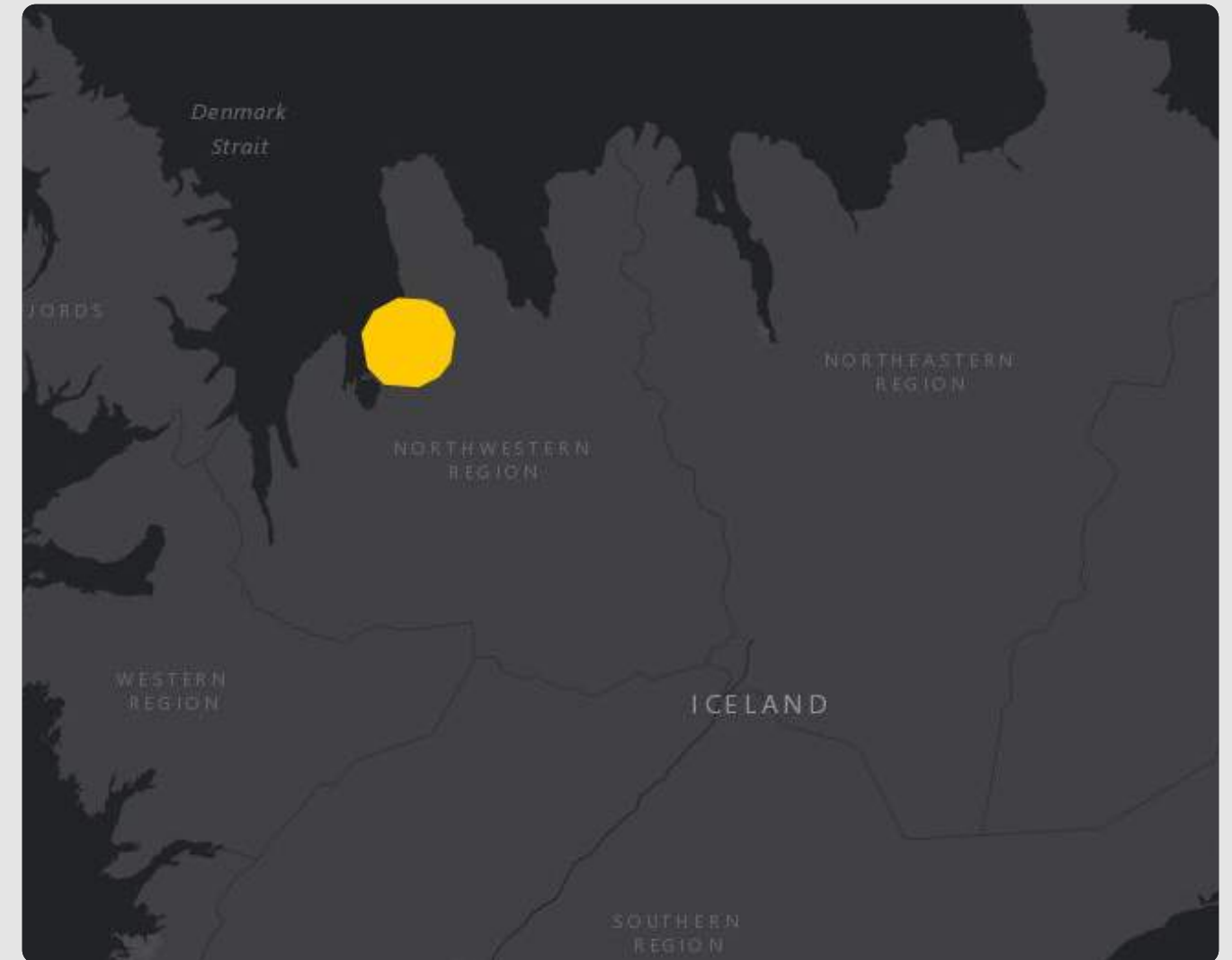


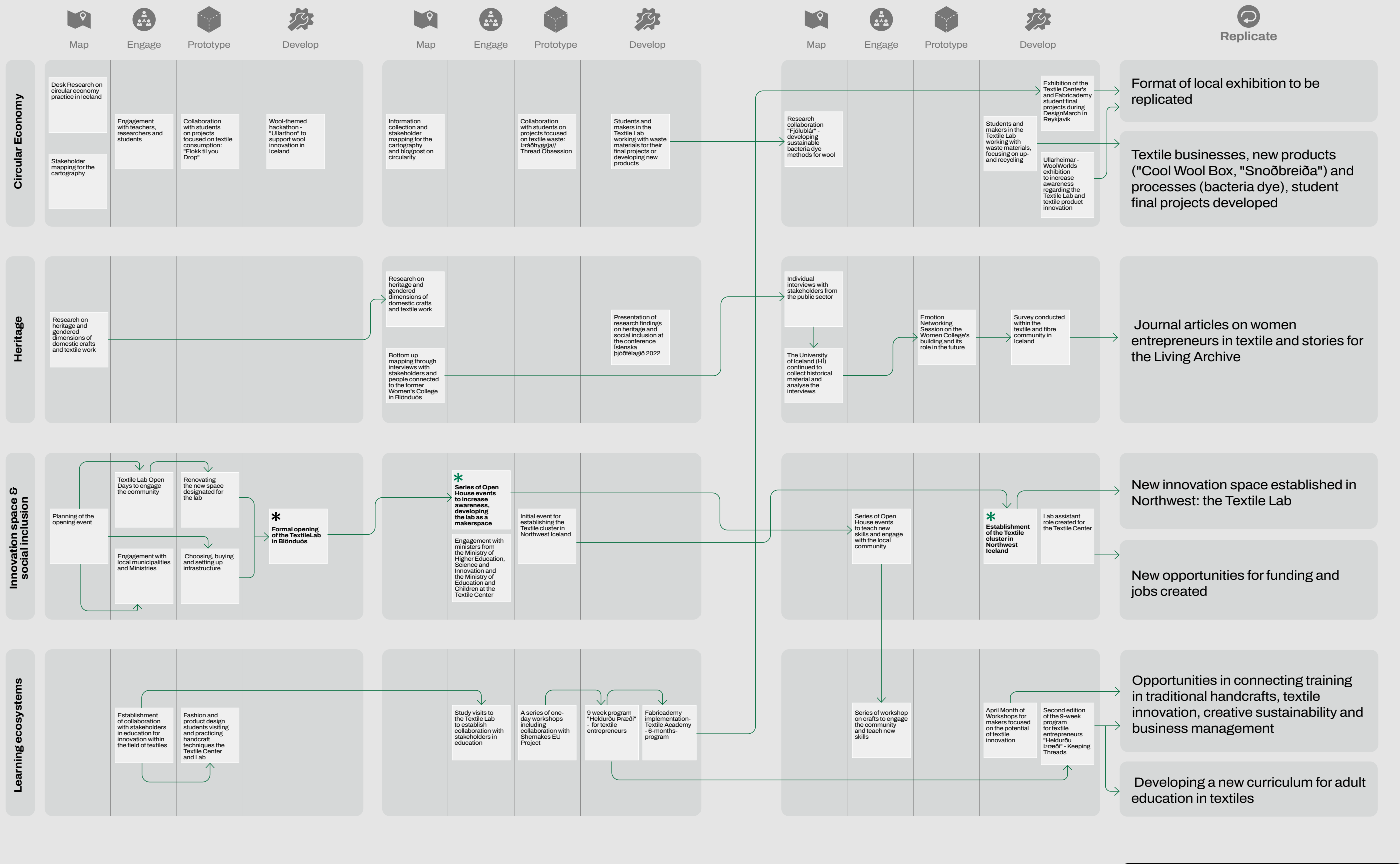
Figure 16. Map of the Blönduós pilot area by Metabolic Institute.

Vision

To further develop the Icelandic Textile Center in Blönduós, strengthening it as a makerspace and center of textile innovation. This involves research, education and a wider experimentation towards circular economy while bridging traditional handicrafts with digital technology.



Figure 17. Blönduós Pilot Key Performance Indicators



SPRINT 1: M8-M14

'Building foundations': Connecting with stakeholders, mapping data and preparing the Textile Lab

SPRINT 2: M19-M25

Learning How To (Textile) Lab: Developing the Textile Lab by building connections, teaching courses and doing research

SPRINT 3: M30-M36

Implementing Best Practices: Taking textile education to the next level and keep developing the Textile Lab

Legend for acronyms

HÍ: University of Iceland

* Trigger moment for policy recommendation

* Tool development and application

HOW TO SET UP A TEXTILE CLUSTER

An ecosystem of local actors creating new educational and job opportunities for textiles in Iceland

Hybrid Setting

Government, businesses, innovation and education sectors

Target

Tool Format



Photo by Blönduós pilot

What is it about?

The Textile Cluster is an idea developed by the Icelandic Textile Center and partners. The main aim was to use the cluster concept as defined by the Icelandic government – an ecosystem of stakeholders interested in specific topics and collaborating on various projects – for textiles.

Several benefits come from forming a textile cluster in Iceland, such as increasing knowledge, skills, stronger networks, investment opportunities and ability to innovate within the fibre community, whether within existing companies or by investing in new projects.

Story behind

The Textile Cluster helped to strengthen the role of the Textile Center, reshaping new perceptions of textiles, and creating new opportunities and jobs in the field.

Key steps

- Developing the idea and presenting it to the Association of Municipalities in Northwest Iceland (SSNV)
- Mapping stakeholders through the concepts of cluster building and participation models
- Introductory meeting to discuss the textile cluster goals and possible revenue models
- Developing a questionnaire with the University of Iceland
- Meeting representatives from government, businesses, innovation, and education to discuss next steps, financing models, and the role of the Textile Center within the cluster.

Recommendations for future applications

- The participation of as many different stakeholders within textiles as possible can increase the success of a cluster's creation and ensure a good balance between different key areas and stakeholders from the market, community, non-profit, and state
- Establishing a vivid ecosystem, including the government, can improve the communication of challenges and opportunities in the textile field with policy making representatives
- Creating a textile cluster helps to connect people, institutions, associations and makers within the textile field; it can foster a sense of belonging and connectedness, promoting collective action and shared ownership within the fibre community.

TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL WEAVING

Weave innovation by rediscovering traditional patterns workshops

Hybrid Setting

Students, researchers, artists and makers

Workshop Format



Photo by Blönduós pilot

What is it about?

The traditional and digital weaving workshop is a set of activities and a method used to teach students, researchers, artists, and makers practical skills around weaving. It also serves to communicate the importance of cultural heritage for craft innovation.

The activity includes:

- lectures on the history of weaving and textiles in a given context (local, national or international)
- theoretical lesson on how to weave on hand-operated looms using traditional weaving techniques and tie-up patterns
- practical lessons on (1) how to weave on hand-operated looms and (2) how to operate a digital loom (TC2), revisiting traditional patterns

Story behind

This workshop was part of the Blönduós pilot's overarching goal, which focused on contributing to the (re)creation of a new type of textile industry in Iceland with an emphasis on local production using sustainable local resources, like Icelandic wool, as well as spreading awareness and a heritage-sensitive culture around textiles and weaving.

Key steps

1. Identification and collaboration with a weaving expert
2. Development of project proposals and application for funding
3. Equipment and materials purchase
4. Definition of a suitable space
5. Creation of the weaving pattern database
6. Development of weaving workshops and lectures

Recommendations for future applications

- Encourage the rediscovery of weaving as a cultural and economic heritage exploring a diverse group of stakeholders
- Create activities that raise awareness around textile small-scale productions
- Promote collaboration with visiting scholars and agreements regarding study visits and field school programs with local and international universities
- Provide makers with a better understanding of textiles, circular economy and a broad set of skills

GIVING A NEW BREATH TO INNOVATION AND CIRCULAR TEXTILE PRODUCTION IN NORTHWEST ICELAND

Circular Economy

Heritage

Vocational Training

Innovation Spaces

Social Inclusion

Related key concepts

Heritage value and innovation

Policy-making mindsets

Contingency and macro trends

Spatial Planning and Urban Development Frameworks

Regulation

Funding

Knowledge and Capacities

Areas of influence

Recommendations

- Establishing and promoting creative labs as enabling spaces for circular transitions within the Textile and Clothing (T&C) sector, encouraging innovation and sustainable methods.
- Implementing dynamic educational programmes aimed at fostering entrepreneurship and research within the industry.
- Making accessible education to all, actively addressing and dismantling gender disparities prevalent in the industry to create a more inclusive workforce.
- Training the future trainers with international networks of practitioners.
- Strengthening the values associated with historical traditions, heritage and cultural identity and traditional craftsmanship embedded at regional sites.
- Engaging in lobbying strategies for the adoption of “true cost” business models within the textile sector.

Practical case

In the territory of Northwest Iceland, deeply rooted in sheep farming and textile heritage, a pressing need for innovation and diversified employment opportunities have been identified by the local pilot. In the face of the national textile challenges, the Blonduos pilot team, composed by representatives from the Textile Center and the University of Iceland, has initiated impactful micro missions. They've established the Textile Lab, a space which offers access to state-of-the-art textile equipment and digital technology for makers, students and artists. A dedicated program for textile entrepreneurs has been cultivated through a robust partnership with the University of Iceland, stimulating innovation and skill development. Engaging globally, they've participated in initiatives like the Shemakes EU project and the Fabricademy network, fostering skill exchanges and amplifying visibility. Further, the Textile Center and its innovative Lab have emerged as a pivotal hub, steering discussions on the future of wool with key stakeholders. Now aiming to consolidate these endeavours, the Textile Center aims to spearhead the establishment of a comprehensive Textile cluster in Iceland. This concerted effort seeks to consolidate various initiatives under a unified framework, fostering growth, innovation, and sustainability within the Icelandic textile industry—a transformative step towards addressing local challenges and propelling the region into a vibrant, forward-looking textile ecosystem.