



Arctic and northern community governance: The need for local planning and design as resilience strategy

Kristof Van Assche and Monica Gruezmacher
University of Alberta

Northern Communities

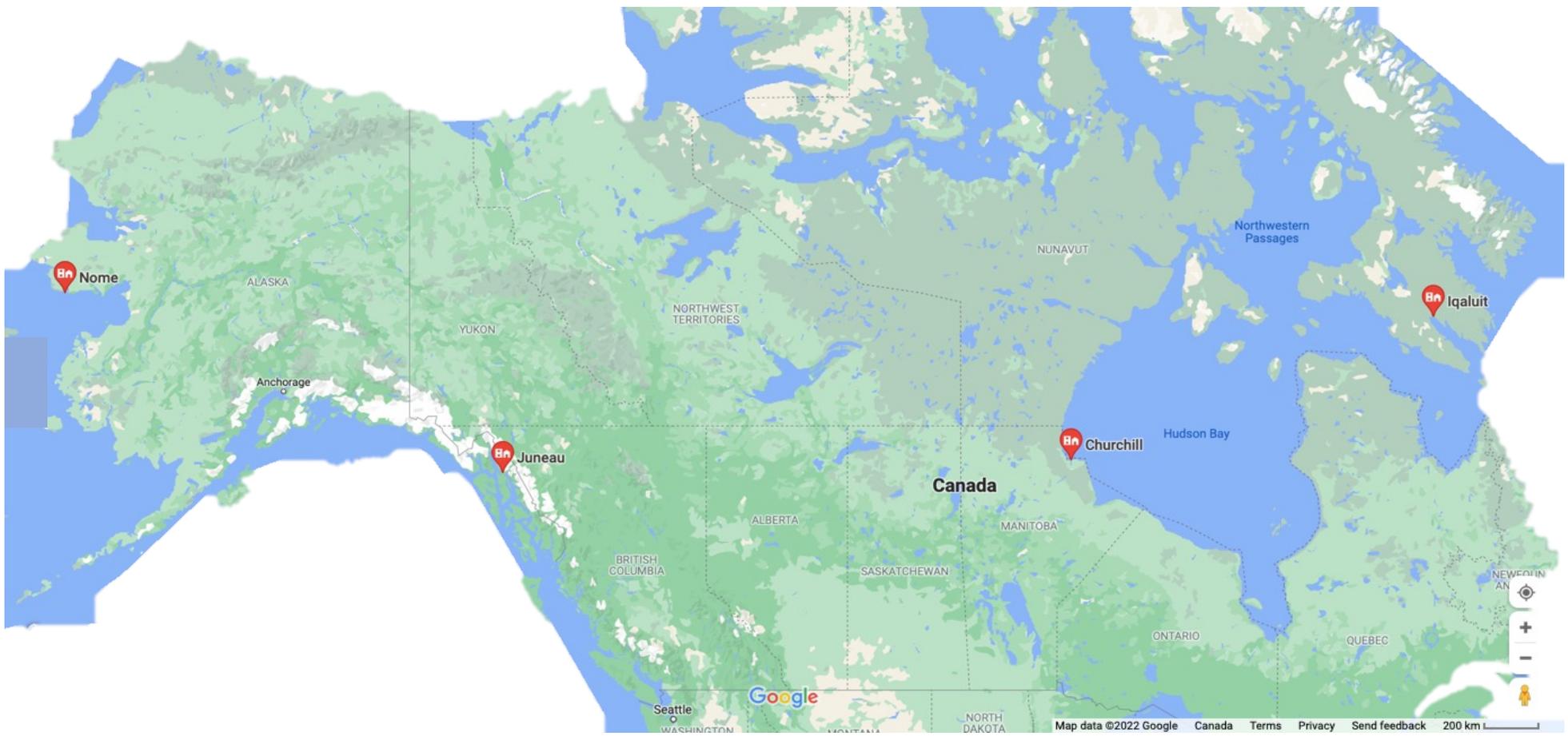
The background of the slide is a faded, light-colored photograph of a small town or village. The buildings are colorful, with some in shades of orange, red, and blue. They are situated in a valley or on a slope, with a large, snow-covered mountain or hill in the background. The overall scene is wintry and somewhat desolate.

Often remain unobserved by the centers of power, money and expertise

Have the need for *local* strategies for resilience

Those strategies need to embrace spatial planning and need to be closely associated with environmental design

Vignettes



Churchill, Manitoba

- railroad linking Churchill and the Hudson Bay to Winnipeg and Chicago still exists but port infrastructure is crumbling -tourism cannot compensate for the loss of the port and the military base
- late recognition as fully empowered local government
- decades of exclusion (Dene and Inuit people), made it difficult for anyone to significantly influence development strategy
- weak local governance aggravated a host of social and ecological problems



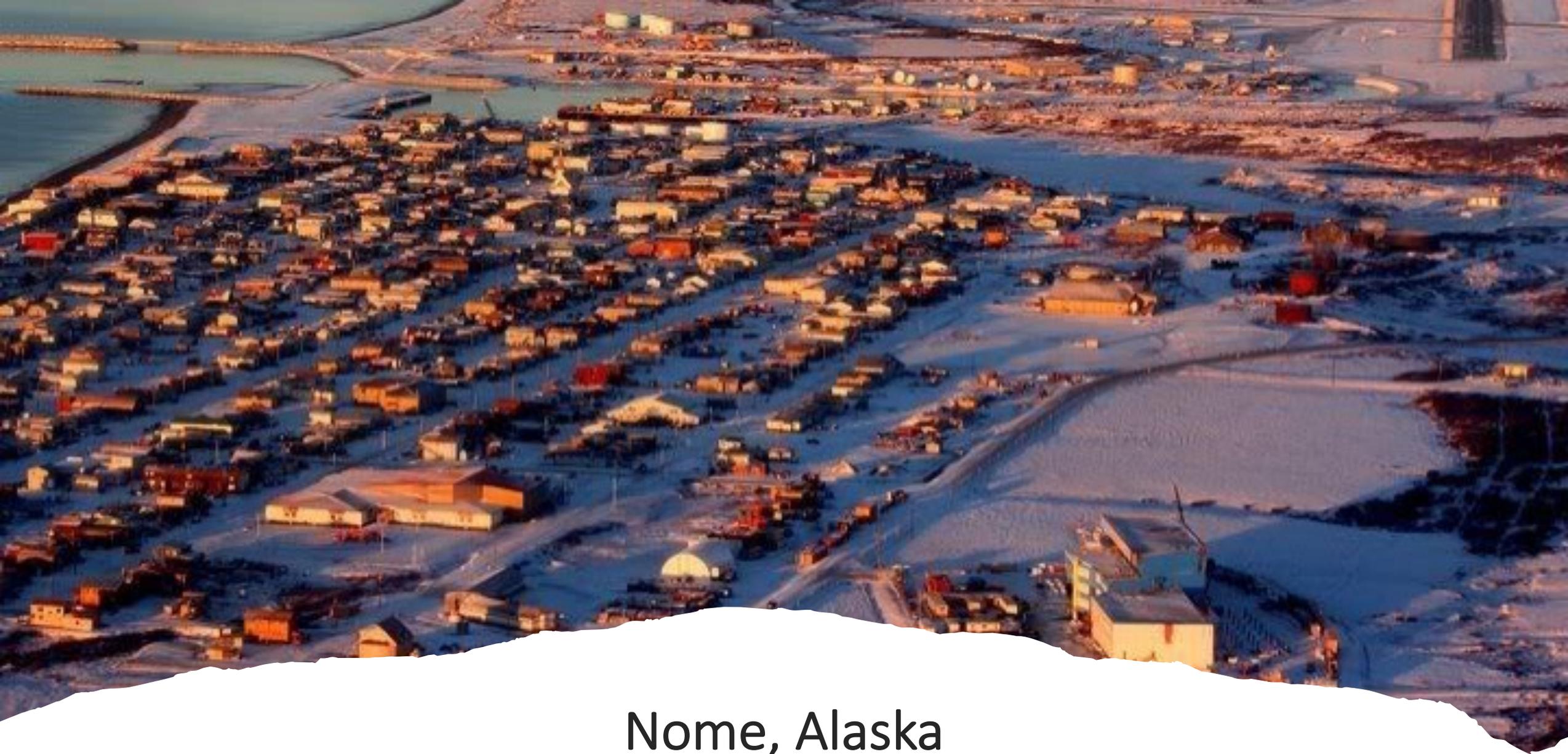


Roblin City, Manitoba



Iqaluit, Nunavut

- Restructuring of multi-level governance, potentially reducing informality and bricolage and representing a radical change in inclusion of local and traditional knowledges in governance
- Many do not wish to entirely adopt traditional lifestyles. Planning challenge; dependency on cars and car infrastructure, while wrecked cars and other kinds of waste, resulting from modern lifestyles, cannot easily find a place or adequate management
- Reinvention paradox: intense process of change (positive and needed) creates doubts (everything new is questioned creating hesitance)
- Newly emerging identity of Iqaluit poses problems in narrative terms for the newly emerging polity of Nunavut



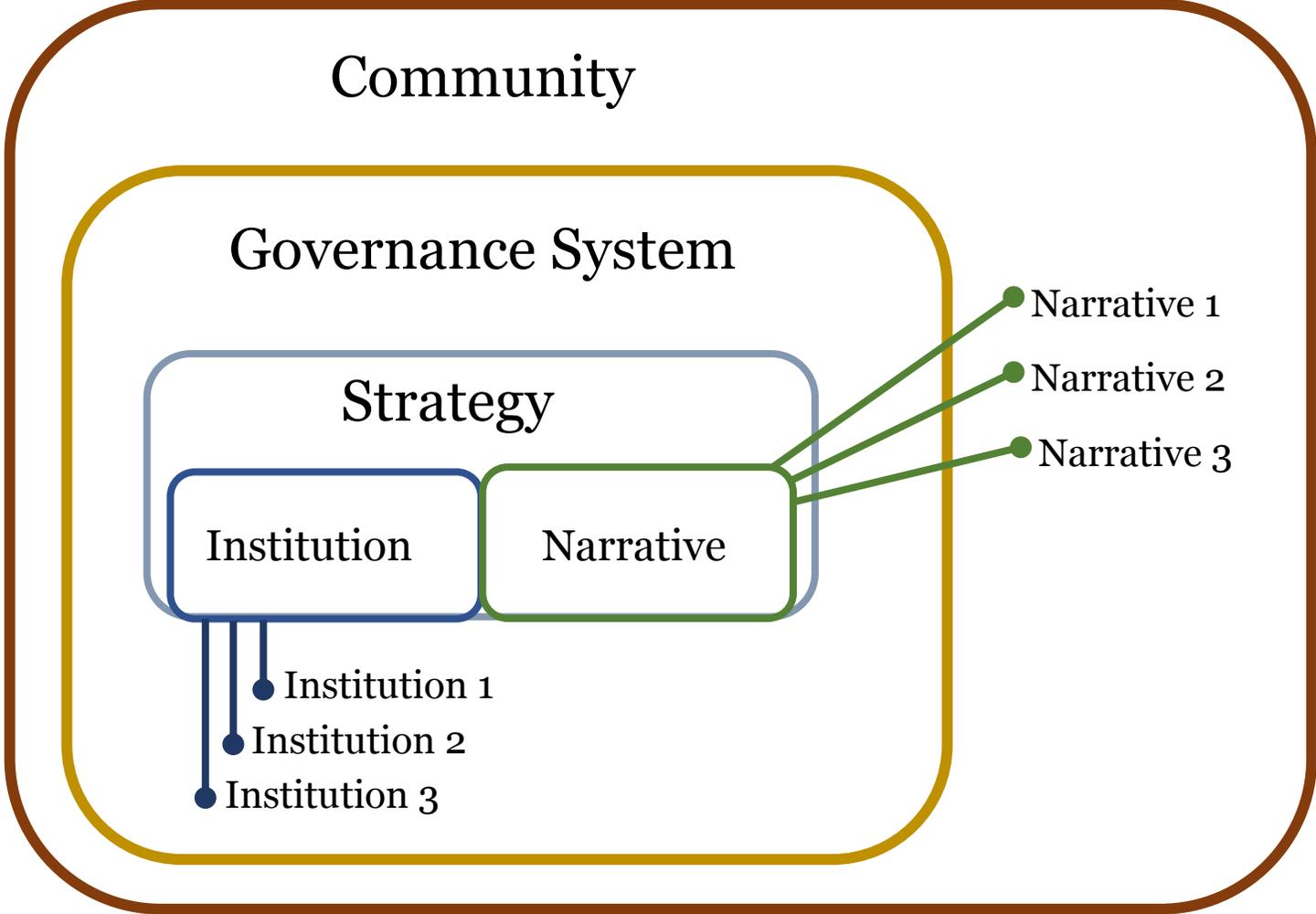
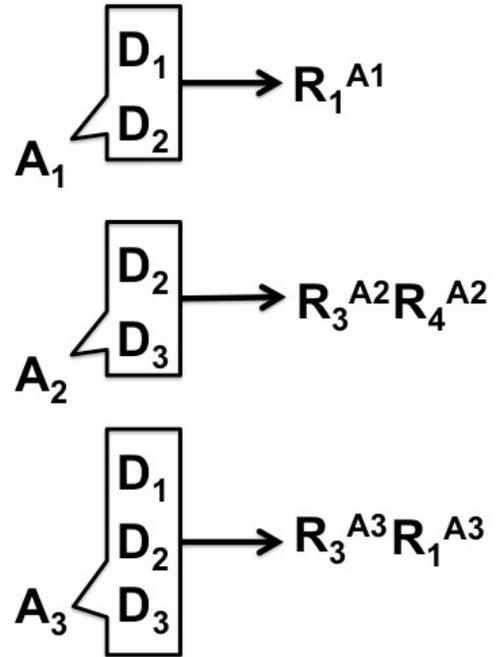
Nome, Alaska



Juneau, Alaska

Strategies

Effective strategy requires collectively binding decisions → require some form of governance



Northern Governance

- Traumatic history and bricolage
- Visibility and representation
- Material dependencies
- Fragile differentiation



Traumatic history and bricolage

- relatively recent colonization and resource extraction leading to polarization (indigenous traditions vs development)
- formal model of multi-level governance rarely works in the north



Visibility and representation

- selective investment in communities, in infrastructures, in health and school systems make it harder to change the development path at a given point
- long distance to centers of power, learning and economy make northern regions selectively represented in media South



Material dependencies

- Can be human- made (infrastructures), natural (bedrock, climate, soil fertility) or hybrid (a polluted environment, a deeply entrenched forest management tradition).



Fragile differentiation

- maintaining *distinct* social function systems: politics, law, religion, science, art is difficult in the north
- Adaptation and managing complexity requires differentiation
- combining too many roles makes differentiation difficult





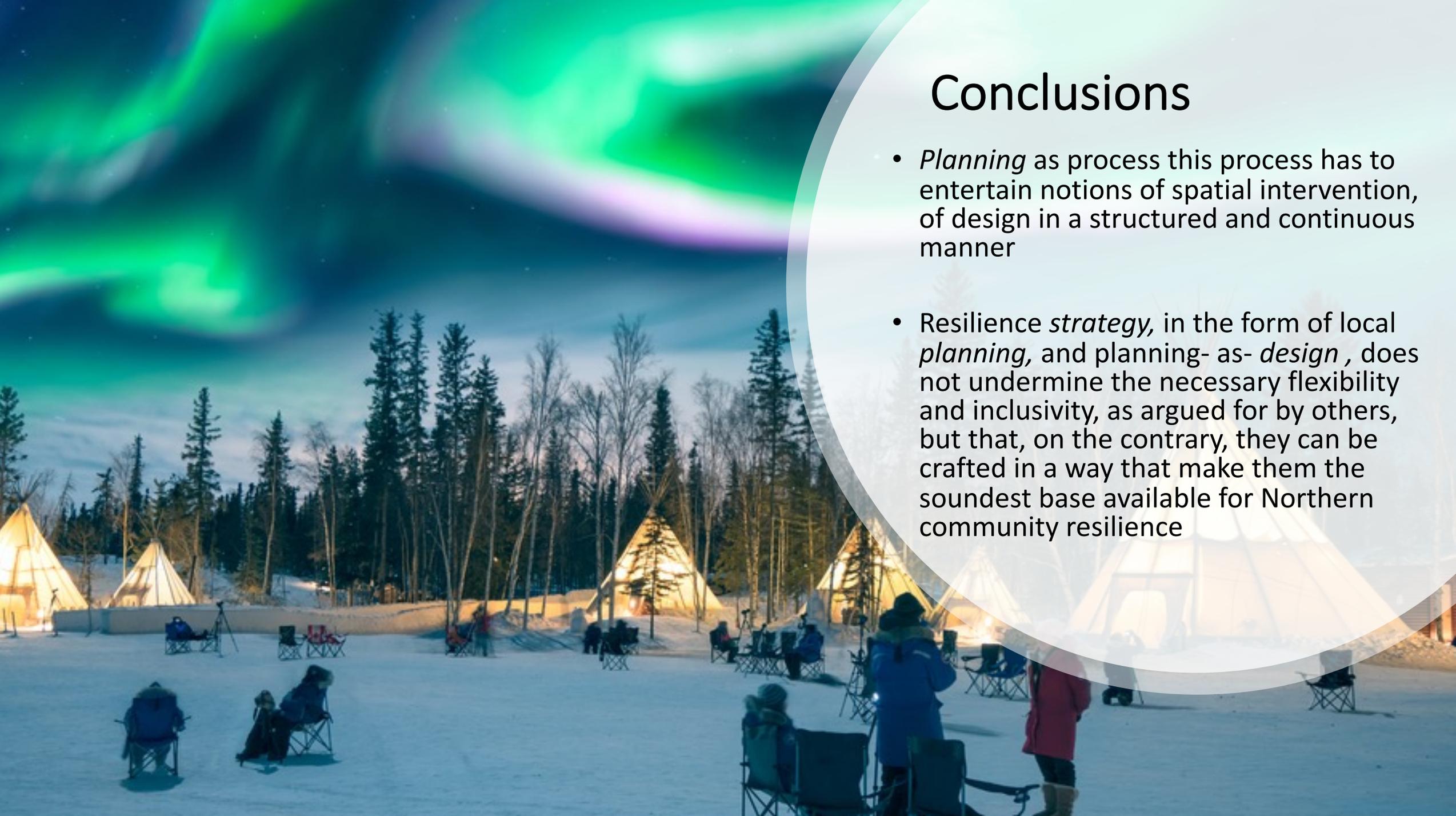
Desirable features of northern resilience strategies

- it needs to be a strategy
- the strategy narrative and the process of producing it has to be inclusive of and sensitive to local and traditional knowledges and interests
- *resilience strategies cannot be restricted to one domain of governance.*
- a northern local resilience strategy cannot replace a continuous conversation on assets, threats, vulnerabilities, common goods, and opportunities in the community

Towards local planning and design as resilience strategy

Strategy in the form of spatial planning; arena for policy integration it can contribute to managing change (harness adaptation) and it can be a site for the integration of knowledge.





Conclusions

- *Planning* as process this process has to entertain notions of spatial intervention, of design in a structured and continuous manner
- Resilience *strategy*, in the form of local *planning*, and planning- as- *design* , does not undermine the necessary flexibility and inclusivity, as argued for by others, but that, on the contrary, they can be crafted in a way that make them the soundest base available for Northern community resilience