



# From Arctic Wisdom to Global Action

## A Strategic Narrative of the Nordic Circular Summit 2025

# The Summit's Purpose Was Revealed by its Place

The choice of Nuuk was strategic. Greenland embodies a critical paradox: a region experiencing climate change at twice the global rate while holding resources essential for the green transition.

More importantly, it revealed the summit's central thesis: the circular economy is not a new system to be invented, but a traditional wisdom to be reclaimed.



"Greenlandic tradition in hunting and local food production reflects careful use of resources where **nothing is wasted** and **every part of the catch has a purpose**."

— Peter Borg, Minister

# A Historic Arctic Gathering at a Glance



## Historic First

First summit held in an autonomous Nordic region.



## 6th Annual Summit

2020-2025 series.



## 100+ Participants

In-person, with hundreds more joining online from 10+ countries.



## 44 Speakers

Perfect 50/50 gender balance.

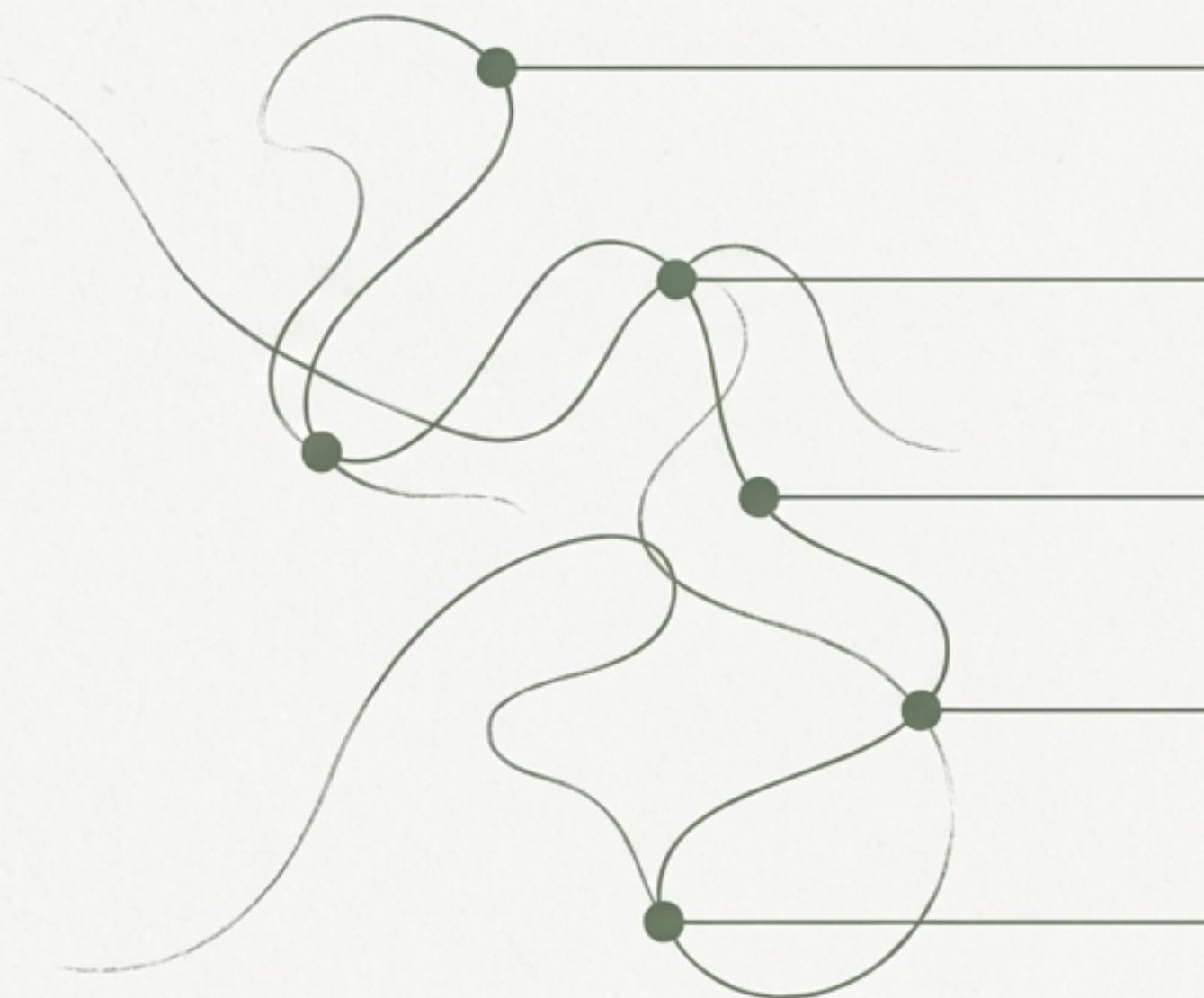


## 12 Speakers

From Greenland, ensuring strong local representation.

# Five Truths Uncovered in Nuuk

Across 5.5 hours of intensive dialogue, five cross-cutting themes emerged. These are not merely topics that were discussed; they are foundational truths that reveal a more integrated way of thinking about the **circular economy**, rooted in Arctic wisdom and applicable globally.



1. Trust is the Invisible Infrastructure
2. Indigenous Knowledge is a Circular System
3. Solutions Must Be Place-Based
4. Circularity is an Economic Imperative
5. The Real Value is in the Inner Loops

# Truth 1: Trust is the Invisible Infrastructure

**Insight:** In regions with sparse populations and limited physical infrastructure, trust serves as the essential framework enabling commerce, collaboration, and collective action. Circular business models, which depend on long-term, multi-stakeholder partnerships, are impossible without it.

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“The real infrastructure in Greenland is trust, I would say. Not the roads. Trust is the real infrastructure.”

— Edvard Lybert Mørk, Nalek Ventures

## The Proof

- **Greenland:** National sustainability strategy for construction operates on industry trust, not mandatory legislation.
- **Latvia:** The Cesis bioregion's memorandum of goodwill took one year to craft with 13 diverse institutions.
- **Denmark:** The Circular Furniture Network brings 30 competing brands together to collaborate on shared challenges.

# Truth 2: Indigenous Knowledge is a Circular System

**Insight:** Traditional Arctic and Indigenous practices are not romantic history; they are sophisticated circular systems that sustained communities for millennia. Instead of reinventing the wheel, we must learn from those who never abandoned circular thinking.

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**The Voice:** "We've never thought of seal skin as a waste product in Greenland. It's very evident... that Inuit have survived in the Arctic because of the seal and also because of the seal skin."

— Mia Chemnitz, Grevilliot

## The Proof



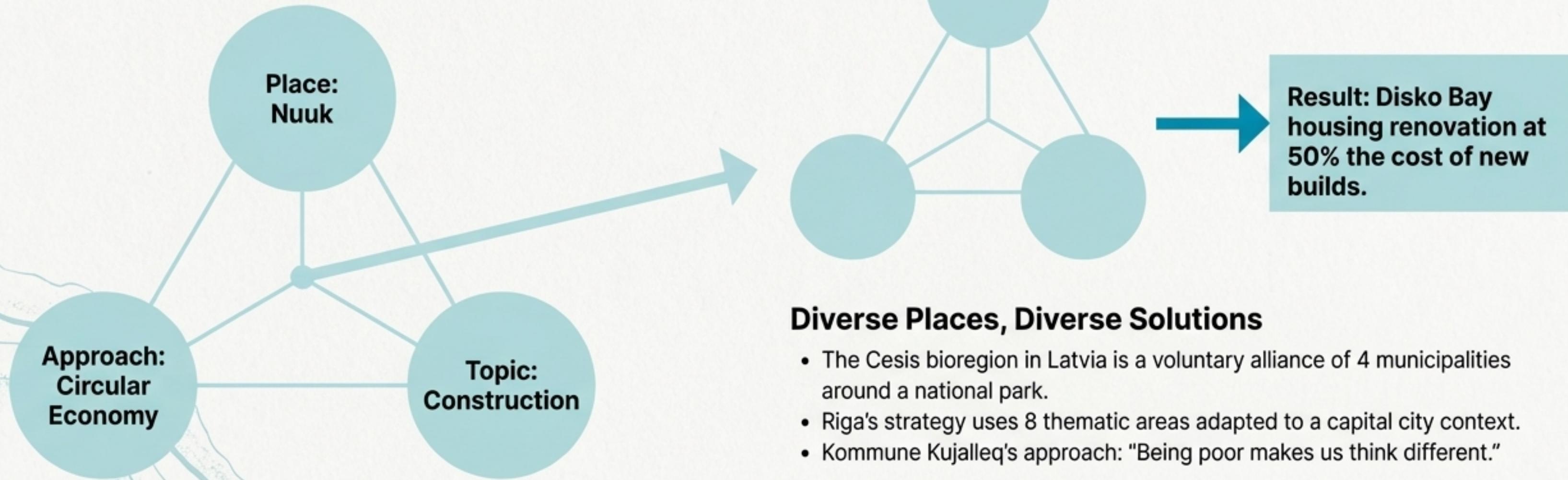
- **Complete Utilization:** Every part of a hunted animal has a purpose—meat for sustenance, skin for survival clothing, bones for tools.
- **Design for Disassembly:** Inooraq Brandt's father's house was constructed to be moved when the family relocated, a traditional practice.
- **Ecological Limits as a Feature:** Business models like Grevilliot's accept natural quota limitations, building value from scarcity, not volume.

# Truth 3: Solutions Must Be Place-Based

Insight: Circular economy cannot be imposed through universal blueprints. Effective solutions must emerge from specific contexts, honoring local geography, culture, resources, and constraints.

"Communication and content is key, where culture is key to understand in a place-based approach."  
— Einar Kleppe Holthe, Natural State

## The Framework in Action: Triangulation



# Truth 4: Circularity is an Economic Imperative

**Insight:** The circular economy has evolved from an environmental “nice-to-have” to a strategic necessity for competitiveness and security. When supply chain resilience has a quantifiable monetary value, circular models become the superior business case.

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**The Voice:** “The value of resilience has increased. This is structural. It's not going to go away. The fundamental trust in the market is broken.”

— Luca De Lorenzo, Nordic Investment Bank

## The Proof



**€31B → €100B**

Europe's remanufacturing market is projected to triple by 2030, creating 500,000 jobs.



**\$12 → \$5,000**

The value of a single Atlantic cod in Iceland through 100% utilization.



**Loss → Profit**

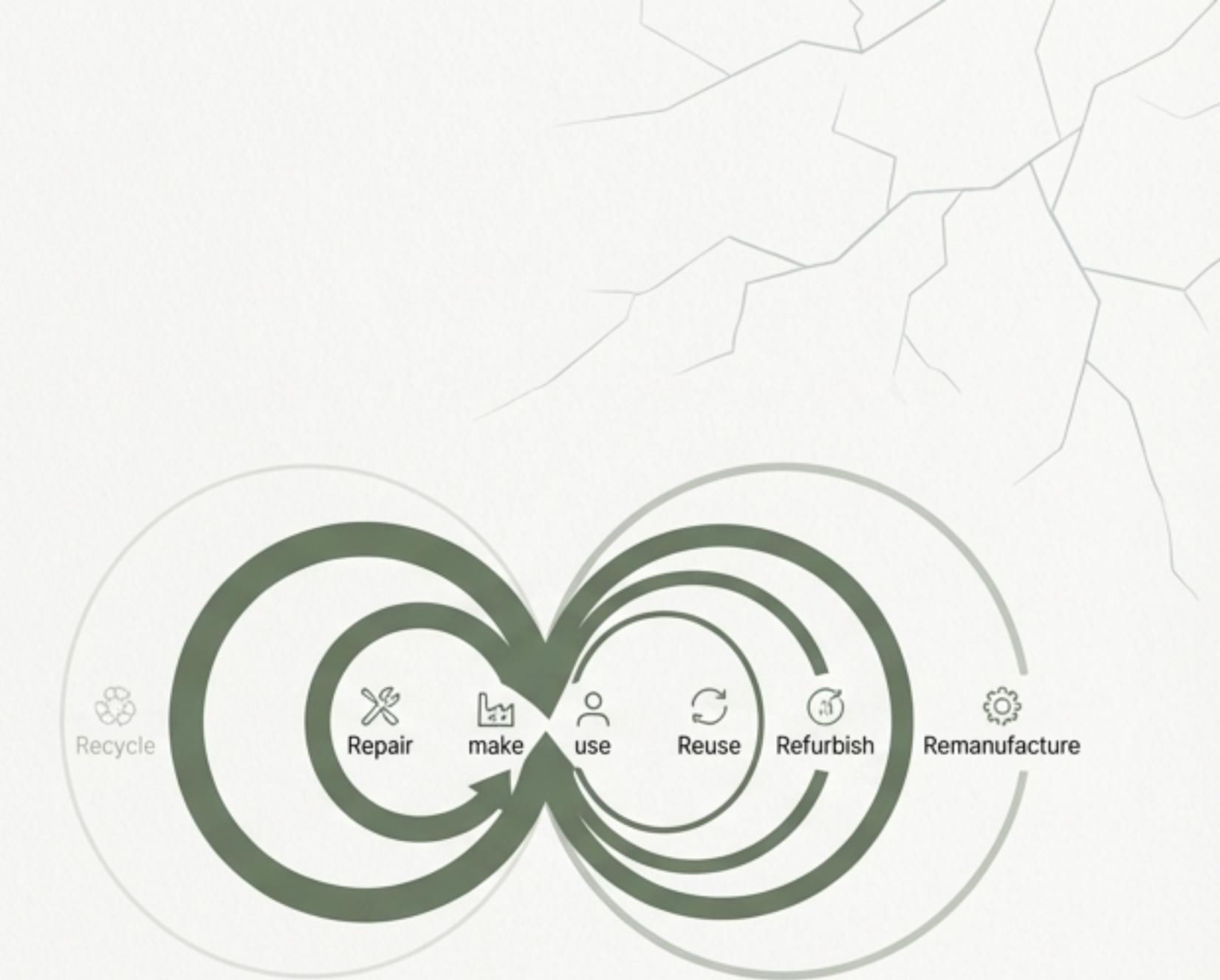
Royal Greenland turned a loss-making shrimp meal factory into profitable chitosan production.

# Truth 5: The Real Value is in the Inner Loops

Recycling is the last resort of the circular economy. The strongest economic and social benefits come from keeping products and materials in their highest state of use through repair, reuse, refurbishment, and remanufacturing.

“The person who made the garment is probably the best in the world to repair it.”

— Mia Chemnitz, Grevilliot, on her company’s repair model.



## The Proof

- **ESPR**

The EU’s Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation mandates durability, repairability, and upgradability.

- + **Nordic LCA Policy**

Reused construction products are set to zero emissions in calculations to incentivize retention.

- 📅 **Digital Product Passport**

Enables repair instructions and resale connections, creating the infrastructure for inner loop economies.

# From Insight to Implementation



Day 1 of the summit established the foundational truths of a place-based circular economy. Day 2 operationalized these insights, moving from plenary vision-setting to focused partner sessions dedicated to sector-specific action. The conversation shifted from why we must change to how we will build the systems to do so.

- Circular Construction
- Textile Transition Strategies
- Circular Design Tools

# Building the Infrastructure for a Circular Future

## Launch of the Nordic-Baltic Textile Transition Group

### The Challenge

~80% of collected textiles from the Nordic-Baltic region are exported to Africa and Asia.

### The Insight (Quote)

"No single market has scaled feedstock volumes or technology mix available to build a circular textile system alone." – Kerli Kant Hvass

### The Solution

An 8-country platform to build regional infrastructure for sorting, reuse, and recycling, and to harmonize EPR schemes.



## Scaling Circular Construction

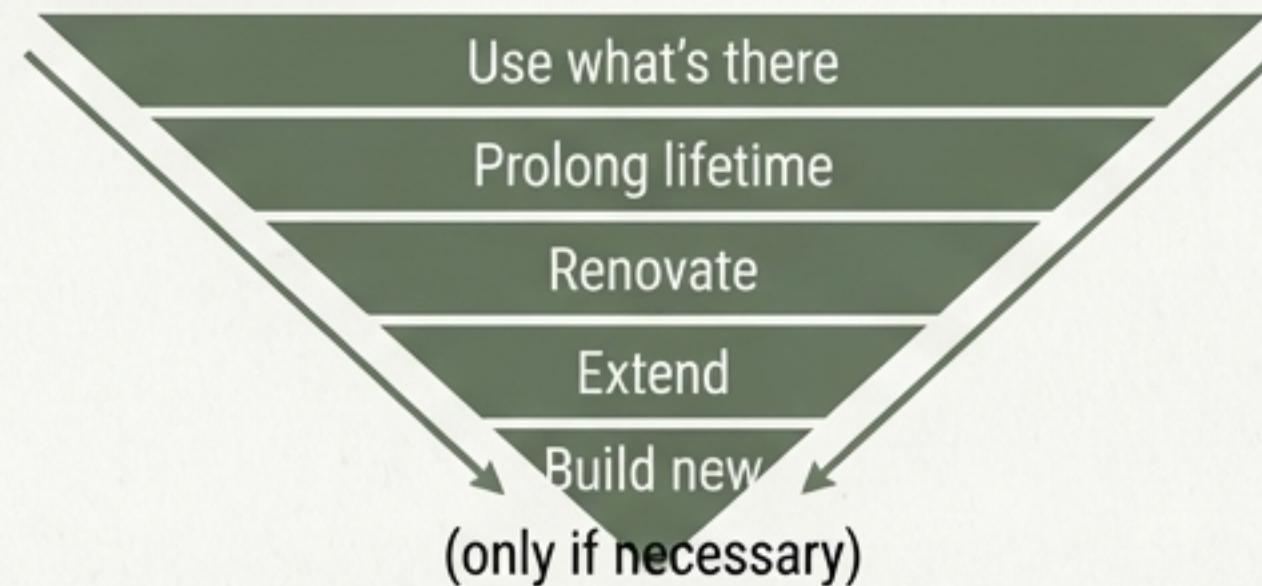
### The Insight (Quote)

"The most sustainable building is the one that is kept in use and loved." – Beyond Zero collaboration

### The Tool

The Nordic Circular Construction Product Catalog was launched, making viable circular solutions visible to property owners (scaling from 15 to 100 companies).

### The Framework



# Overcoming the Barriers to a Circular Built Environment

## 8 Barriers to Circular Construction

1. Linear domination
2. Policy limitations
3. Public procurement inaction
4. Immature market
5. Trust issues
6. Low risk appetite
7. Small reuse market
8. Slow cycles

## Nordic Maturity Assessment

Level	Countries
Pioneer	Netherlands (benchmark)
Leading	Denmark, Finland
Following	Sweden
Catching up	Norway, Iceland
Starting	Greenland

## 9 Key Policy Measures

1. Lifetime extension
2. Demolition prevention
3. Remove renovation barriers
4. Efficient space use
5. Tax incentives
6. Design optimization
7. Design for disassembly
8. Public procurement power
9. Research & demonstration

# Charting the Course: The Path Forward

The summit was not an end, but a catalyst. Three strategic priorities have emerged to carry this momentum forward, transforming insights into institutions and regional initiatives.

## Establish ArcCirc

### Vision

An Arctic Circular Economy Resource Centre, modeled on the EU CERC, to ensure the 4 million Arctic residents are active partners in the circular transition.

### Function

A policy lab, business lab, and knowledge lab adapted to Arctic realities.

## Scale Retrofit-First Economics

### The Proof

Renovation costs ~50% of new construction in London, Oslo, Riga, and Greenland.

### The Action

Adopt regulatory models like London's "preserve or explain," create material banks from existing buildings, and train the workforce in adaptive reuse.

## Implement Regional Digital Product Passports

### The Mandate

Mandatory for EU market access by 2030.

### The Advantage

Transparent, local supply chains (like those in Greenland) find compliance easier. Use DPP as a competitive advantage and storytelling platform.

# Publico Headline: The Real Thing is on the Coast

“You can’t compare Nuuk to the rest of Greenland.  
The real thing is on the coast. So I hope you’ll visit.”

— Malene Vahl Rasmussen, Mayor of Kommune Kujalleq



The invitation stands. The circular economy isn't a future to be planned, but a present reality being built in communities large and small. The summit in Nuuk was a reminder to listen, learn, and implement together.