

ANDRÉS ARNALDS
THANK YOU FOR YOUR
INSPIRATION,
COLLABORATION,
AND
FRIENDSHIP



Dear Andrés

**It is with great pleasure that your many international colleagues and friends present you with this booklet on your seventieth birthday and your retirement from the Icelandic Soil Conservation Service. What a privilege it has been to work collaboratively with you, to share and exchange ideas, and to improve the practice of soil conservation and the restoration of degraded land. Even more, what a pleasure it has been to have made such lifelong friendships. We all wish you well in your retirement. No doubt you will not give up on the many causes that are dear to your heart and exercise your mind. And we all hope that we will maintain our friendship and contact. Roger on behalf of us all.
December 2018.**

Students together

Fate brought Andrés and I to Colorado State University to pursue graduate degrees in range science in the early 1980s. When Andrés learned that I had conducted research on adaptations of Alaskan arctic tundra plants to herbivory (grazing, browsing), he and Didda invited Gwen (my wife) and I over for a dinner. It was there I met my first Icelanders and first learned about grazing impacts on Icelandic ecosystems. The first door was opened and led to our collaboration on a paper on “Spring Grazing” published in 1982 in the Icelandic Journal of Agricultural Research. That collaboration opened a second door: the opportunity to participate in a NATO Advanced Research Workshop in Hvanneyri organized by Andrés and colleagues in 1985. That, in turn, opened a third door: working with Ólafur Arnalds and Ása Aradóttir as they pursued their PhDs at Texas A&M. The collaboration with Óli and Ása then opened a fourth door: working with Berglind Oradóttir on her MS and Johann Thorsson on his PhD at Texas A&M. Along the path through these four major doors were many side doors that themselves opened a myriad of new and enriching opportunities (e.g. 1997 International Conference on Rangeland Degradation in Reykjavík). I owe a debt of gratitude to Andrés for starting me down this path, keeping me on it and opening

all those doors along the way. It has been a rich and fulfilling journey, both professionally and socially, that continues to this day. Thank you, Andrés!

As a faculty member at a land grant university in the USA, I have a deep appreciation for the interrelationships between research, teaching and outreach. Andrés' stellar career has been dedicated to promoting and maintaining a balance between these endeavours and he has done so in a creative, insightful and forward-looking fashion on an international stage. There is presently much interest in the academic community in endeavours aimed at the coupling of human and natural systems. Andrés has been doing this his entire career! Accordingly, it is fair to say that Andrés was ahead of his time. Here's hoping the next generation of scholars and practitioners will carry his vision forward. They have surely benefitted from the many doors opened by Andrés during his career.

Steve Archer

Keeping up with Andrés

I am grateful and proud to have shared many great times with Andrés Arnalds, professionally and on many challenging but incredibly rewarding hikes in the Icelandic wilderness. I realized as I sorted through hundreds of photos I had taken with Andrés in the picture, that many showed his back, and I am sure I am not the only one who has struggled to keep up with him, in many different ways. But Andrés is a leader who has always cared to help others along the trail, and encouraged his companions to better appreciate the beauty and value of the fragile natural world we share on our journeys, and to persevere to protect and restore nature even when the path appears to steepen, and the summit appears more distant.

Of all the outstanding qualities and achievements that have characterized Andrés' professional and social life, I think it is his role in bringing people along with him that has provided the most fundamental basis of his success in making a difference for natural resources and for people he has known. I know that Andrés is committed to bringing people together to make progress in

conservation not because of academic theory, but because he knows what works, and because he genuinely cares about all the people that need to be involved to make progress happen. I think that academic theory is now catching up with Andrés judging by growing international interest in participatory and experiential approaches in learning, adaptive management strategies, community-based local action, and the democratization of knowledge; Andrés has been doing these throughout his career and his life.

Andrés is a great scientist, but an even greater teacher and mentor. And the people who learn from his example and experience range widely, from farmers and land managers, colleagues and students, to movers and shakers in government and industry. He is a proud Icelander, and most concerned about what needs to be done at home, but thankfully has expanded the circle to help and inspire people across the world. His work with students in the United Nations University Land Restoration Program is a great example of his commitment and pleasure in sharing his knowledge and experience with young people from many nations. His mentorship has greatly influenced these students who will in turn make major impacts of critical importance to their home countries and the world.

Andrés has not been content to just make progress on traditional conservation issues such as agricultural land management, but has been prescient in identifying new challenges at home and abroad. In Iceland, he has been a leader in attracting attention to issues such as damage to hiking trails, off-road driving, protection of fragile geothermal areas, the danger of introduced species, and the growing impact of tourism on fragile ecosystems. His efforts to raise the alarm on these and other less popular issues will have lasting impact.

Andrés has never drawn attention to his successes in work or social life, but these are obvious to anyone who knows him. He has been a wonderful and dedicated family man who has always been there to provide support and encouragement that has been needed for the individual successes of his wife and children, all of whom have made great contributions in diverse areas such as music, health, education,

and business, and as parents and community leaders. All of these achievements are reflections of Andrés' qualities as a person. As well, Andrés is generous, patient, and loyal as a friend.

Andrés has inspired me in many of these ways, but the personal quality that has impressed me the most is his courage. Andrés is never done until he stands on top of a mountain and never happier than when he expresses gratitude for the beauty of the view and for the opportunity to expend the physical and mental effort to get there. All the while I have known him and struggled to follow him up steep trails and across cold streams, Andrés has been the fittest person I have known physically and mentally. He has had the courage to face and overcome adversity and health challenges that would stop most of us in our tracks. But Andrés never stops until he reaches the top, and even then, he is intent on encouraging others to make the effort to get there too.

Thank you, Andrés, for your friendship and for your life's work, and for encouraging me to keep going well after dark. Best wishes for your retirement, your family, and for many more "not too bad" vistas.

Brian Slater

Landcare Learning and Exchanges

Visionary soil conservationist

Andrés Arnalds is an unforgettable colleague. His virtues range from vision and technical mastery to straight-forward dealings with people, and a magnificent grace, humanity and warmth.

Andrés Arnalds is well known and liked in many parts of Australia for three reasons: his skill and vision as a soil conservationist; his initiative – which, amongst other things, led him to oversee the introduction of Landcare to Iceland; and his grace and decency. A side we have not seen, however, largely because of distance, is his splendid work with the UN University in Reykjavík, but we have met a few of his African students.

Andrés is a gentle, humble and generous person, but he will greatly appreciate being recognised via this *festschrift*.

There is one other aspect: he and his wife have given the twenty-first century one of its more esteemed composers of film scores, their son Ólafur Arnalds. How far will Ólafur go in the music world?

On behalf of Australian Landcare International, from the chair of which I have just stood down after ten years, we wish Andrés a happy retirement, with great family and personal pleasures, but retaining some involvement, academic and practical, with the cause of better land and water management, and sustainable farming, across the globe – a cause to which he has already given so much.

Rob Youl

Infectious enthusiasm for a big idea

Few people have worked as hard or done as much to conserve the soil and land resources of their homeland as Dr Andrés Arnalds.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Andrés for around 25 years, since he first enticed me to beautiful Iceland to share some of the Landcare ideas we had been developing in Australia. Our interactions since have usually been fuelled by Andrés' infectious enthusiasm for a big project or a big idea, of potential application and benefit for Iceland. Those interactions and my exposure to Iceland have been one of the highlights of my own professional career.

Andrés Arnalds is intellectually curious, wide-ranging in his reading, his thinking and his travel, and a gifted natural networker. His network of contacts around the world in land management, land restoration and soil conservation are as large and diverse as any individual could develop in a professional lifetime. He maintains such a vast network because anyone who has ever worked with or encountered Andrés is happy to do so again, and to nourish the contact. Andrés is a warm, generous and open colleague, a delightful host, and a terrific mentor of younger scientists and policy makers. His development of the land restoration course with the United Nations University and his

negotiation for it to be based in Iceland has been of immense benefit to many students, and has also helped to make more people aware of the unique land management and land restoration challenges faced by Iceland.

When I first encountered the challenges of Landgræðsla ríkisins - the tiny Icelandic Soil Conservation Service - trying to stabilise and conserve the most erodible soils I had ever seen, in some of the most difficult conditions, with very meagre resources, it seemed like trying to hold the ocean back with a broom. It is a task that since 1907 has seemed monumental, insurmountable, yet essential for the very survival of Iceland. It is a task that demands ingenuity, resourcefulness, persistence and the ability to find, adapt and apply ideas and technologies from all over the world, to the unique circumstances of Iceland - qualities exemplified in Dr Andrés Arnalds. It is a task that resonates with land management professionals from low-, middle- and high-income countries alike, making the achievements of Landgræðsla ríkisins of global interest and significance.

Those factors combined to make the 2007 Global Soils Forum, held in Iceland to coincide with the centenary of the Soil Conservation Service, such a resounding success. Realising that success was due in no small part to the large vision, tireless work, extensive international networks and infectious energy and enthusiasm of Andrés Arnalds, as ever supported by his Director and colleague Sveinn Runólfsson. Over his long career as Deputy Director of the Icelandic Soil Conservation Service, Andrés has played a hugely important intellectual leadership role within the organisation, the wider civil service of Iceland, and the global soil conservation community, bringing ideas, people and resources from all over the world to Iceland, and helping to share Iceland's challenges and achievements internationally.

I have had the pleasure of hosting Andrés and his lovely (and equally formidable) wife Guðrún, on one of their many travels to all parts of the world, where they enjoy experiencing nature, bushwalking and camping, and appreciating the vast natural and cultural diversity of

planet Earth. Social media is a mixed blessing, but one of its delights is being able to keep in touch with the adventures of Andrés and Guðrún (whether on a breathtaking glacier in Iceland or a mountain in the Andes) and the extraordinary achievements of the multi-talented Arnalds family.

The retirement of Dr Andrés Arnalds indeed marks the end of an era for Landgræðsla ríkisins. It provides an important opportunity for colleagues around the world to celebrate and reflect on the remarkable career and singular contribution of a wonderful man.

Andrew Campbell

Successful adaptation of Landcare to Iceland

I first met Andrés in 1995 when he visited Sydney, Australia, to attend the International Soil Conservation Organization conference. At the time, I was with the Soil Conservation Service of New South Wales in Sydney and Andrés spent some time with us following the conference. Little did I know at the time that this would forge into a long working relationship and close friendship. Early in 1996 Sveinn Runólfsson invited me to visit Iceland and provide some advice on soil conservation law and policy, which was the first of twelve visits over the next twenty two years. On each visit, I spent substantial time with Andrés discussing soil conservation. During this twenty year period Andrés visited Australia a number of times to travel and study various aspects of soil conservation and community based land management techniques, in particular Landcare, which he successfully adapted to Iceland.

Andrés has been a much valued and important colleague. We have shared many great moments together with our respective wives, Guðrún and Lynda. Lynda and I feel privileged that Andrés and Guðrún have stayed at our home at Newport and relaxed on the northern beaches of Sydney. We wish Andrés and Guðrún a long, busy and happy retirement.

Ian Hannam

From the wider international scene

Devoted to environmental sustainability

Andrés has been a colleague, friend and mentor to me. We first met through our collective work on desertification, land degradation and soils. A decade went by when my work took me elsewhere, but when we crossed paths again it was as if we were back to where we left off. And that is because of who Andrés is: intelligent, committed, curious, always smiling, and with piercing but accepting eyes that say “I see you”. His devotion to environmental sustainability is profound; his knowledge of the science exceptional; and his trust in humanity never wavering, even though he can be very critical of it. He has indefatigable energy, boundless optimism and effortless leadership. I have been privileged to know Andrés.

Maryam Niamir-Fuller

Drylands inspiration

Here’s wishing you well in your retirement Andrés! It has not been only our common engagement in land degradation and desertification that led to our exciting discourse during the UNCCD CoPs meetings, but also the common first initial of our countries’ names that made us sit nearly next to each other in the often boring UNCCD meetings. Altogether, it has been good to spend time together in comparing our countries’ land issues, and also for me to come to Iceland in 2007 and see on the ground what we have been discussing during the UNCCD meetings. You concluded that the main lessons from the SCS’s 100 year history were the synergistic role of soil conservation and land restoration, and the importance of participatory approaches to land management.

I am sure that even when retiring, you will continue to function as a source of inspiration to so many, in the drylands and beyond. With much respect.

Uriel Safriel

Great impact

My Dear Friend, I offer you the best of my wishes as you transition away from your professional life. Your work has left a great impact in the fields of land restoration, management of natural resources, and adaptation to climate change. That impact is not limited to Iceland, but indeed extends internationally.

I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to work together with you in organizing conferences and events, joint engagement with journalists, helping build the UNU-LRT programme in Iceland, and providing intellectual inputs to combatting desertification and land degradation. It has been an absolute delight to work with you and your professionalism and enthusiasm are infectious.

Thank you very much for introducing me to Iceland, which I now consider my second home. It's a beautiful country with lovely people, and you're one of the best Iceland has to offer (and I really mean it).

But what I cherish the most is your friendship. You have been a sincere and honest friend, which are sometimes difficult to find. I believe we are kindred spirits.

Let's stay in touch, particularly if you ever choose to visit the Canadian west coast. I would love to host you here in Vancouver. So long.

Zafar Adeel

Arguing the desertification case

I have many good memories of the time when I was active in Iceland, especially in the period during the candidature of Iceland to join the EU (then retracted). And, of course, during all my visits Andrés has been a crucial person assuring all my contacts and discussions with the relevant persons in the Icelandic government and beyond. But, Andrés was much more to me, since I certainly consider him as a friend and dear colleague, often sharing also his private life and personal interests. I still proudly own the series of music CDs he gave me with the compositions of his son that he was so proud of. Andrés and I were both passionate about soil protection and soil carbon management and jointly organized many events in Iceland covering

those issues. Unfortunately, I have no special pictures or images I can share with you, but I can assure you that I still keep a clear picture in my mind of me and Andrés in Iceland on many excursions and meetings.

And we were also meeting often abroad, since Andrés was usually representing Iceland in the meetings of the United Nations Convention to Combat desertification (UNCCD). It was actually on the occasion of the first Conference of the Parties of that Convention that I first met Andrés, back in the late 1990's. At that time, he was very passionately defending the idea that Iceland should be included as an affected party within UNCCD, but unfortunately the criteria adopted at the end by the Convention excluded Iceland on the basis of some climatic criteria. While we both totally agreed that Iceland is one of the best examples of desertification in the world, even so it is not in an arid, or semi-arid, climatic zone.

I really wish Andrés all the best for his 70th anniversary.

Luca Montanarella

Strengthening scientific understanding

I have known Dr. Andrés Arnalds since mid-1990s and have closely followed and greatly appreciated his illustrious career. I had the pleasure of welcoming him and his wife to the Ohio State University, and have also visited Iceland on several occasions, and specifically appreciated the opportunity to visit the world's oldest Soil Conservation Service established in 1907.

Andrés is credited with significant contributions to strengthening the scientific understanding of the processes and properties of soils of the Arctic climate in general and that of Iceland in particular. Notable among Andrés' numerous contributions is the enhancement of the awareness about the prevalence of soil desertification processes in an Arctic climate. His enthusiastic presentations, supported by the data and photographs, on accelerated soil erosion by wind and water in Icelandic Tundra is an important scientific and educational/ cultural contribution. He brought to global attention the seriousness

of the problem of desertification that occurs in high latitudes and within the Arctic circle where the soils are fragile, and the climate is very harsh. He organized several international conferences on this issue and conducted very well planned field tours and excursions. He also started a nicely conceptualized and meticulously implemented programme on restoration of desertified lands in northern climates and demonstrated positive impacts of establishing vegetation cover on restoring desertified lands. Naturally, the research and outreach programme also led to the creation of an international training course implemented in cooperation with the United Nations University. The course involved participants from Africa and elsewhere, and further enhanced the prestige of the outstanding work done in Iceland. His enthusiasm, dedication and commitment to excellence also conclusively documented that the impact of research and outreach depends more on the quality rather than the quantity of the scientists involved.

In addition to good science coupled with a world class professionalism, Andrés' personal attributes are of the highest standards of integrity and character. He is friendly, polite, courteous and humorous. He is a team player and is a real joy to work with.

The soil science profession is enriched because of Andrés Arnalds. I wish Andrés and his wife all the best in their retired life.

Rattan Lal

A catalyst for many things

What are the right words to give credit to Andrés Arnalds, for all that he is and all that he has done? Andrés (with the enthusiastic involvement of his colleagues at the Icelandic Soil Conservation Service) has been a catalyst for many things, including creating relationships between people from many countries who share his passion for protecting the land, and for supporting people on the land who are trying to be good stewards.

Despite the baggage that has been attached to the word, 'nationalist' is a good start, in the sense of being a person whose actions are driven

by the love of his country, its landscape and its people. However, that word too is limiting, because Andrés has always been energetic in creating and sharing ideas about how to protect the land and how to value people anywhere in the world. So perhaps ‘internationalist’ should be added when describing who he is and what he has done. A real internationalist!

However, these words miss so much because what uniquely pervades all that Andrés has done is a sense of love, fun and pleasure. He is a really nice guy, and someone whose company is its own reward. His generosity and openness, his honesty and his care for other people are other dimensions that together make him a really good bloke.

I am only one of the hundreds of people who have benefited from his wisdom, generosity and fellowship, and I thank him for it and look forward to more good times together.

Paul Martin

Opening my eyes to Iceland

Andrés thank you for opening my eyes to Iceland, for helping me see the rest of the world through different eyes, and introducing me to you many of your incredibly creative and insightful fellow citizens.

I believe we first met in September 1998 at a soil carbon conference in Las Cruces, New Mexico – in the Chihuahuan Desert, a few dozen km north of the US-Mexican border. Where it’s possible to find a square kilometer of land with less soil carbon than one can find in a hectare of low elevation forest in Iceland. You showed photos of surreal landscapes, and surprising degradation. Later I would learn about the equally incredible rates of soil formation and recovery: some of the simultaneously least resistant and most resilient soils in the world. It is a resilience perhaps matched only by the people of Iceland. And it doesn’t seem to matter whether the perturbation is climatic, financial, seismic or volcanic. Somehow the people of Iceland always seem to come out stronger.

So perhaps your successful career should not be surprising. Yet, having had little exposure to your nation when I met you, I have been continually impressed with your ability to not only put Iceland on the map through international conferences and symposia, but to use these to help the global community think differently about the risks and costs of land degradation, and the opportunities for restoration. I am particularly grateful for your work on the establishment of the UNU Land Restoration Training Programme.

I wish you the very best in retirement and look forward to the next opportunity to visit in person – in the US or Iceland. Thank you. Warmest regards and very best wishes.

Jeff Herrick

Adopting good ideas

Andrés and I first met September 1986 at the Icelandic Research Institute (RALA) in when I gave a seminar on New Zealand farming and land management using electric fencing that was being used well in Iceland. I was then sponsored by the Icelandic agent for New Zealand developed fencing for a week's mystery tour in this country, which has quite a few similarities with New Zealand.

Over lunch in Reykjavík before I flew off, Andrés sought ideas from New Zealand that might be worthwhile in his country. I was able to offer him a suggestion from successful work in Scotland before I moved to New Zealand in 1973. I had applied slow-release fertilizer on sand dunes for stabilisation and thought it could also benefit tree planting in Iceland. Andrés was also interested in no-tillage seed drilling equipment that New Zealand researchers had developed and was successful in several countries. Our electrified fencing was already making a difference in controlling grazing on sensitive Icelandic areas.

Andrés invited me to return to see his conservation work, so three years later I was able to do this while on holiday in Scotland. After a memorable, though freezing experience in the north, with Andrés' farming family during their community's autumn sheep gathering,

we drove south over the central highlands the following day in shirt-sleeve weather, to see some impressive soil conservation research in the central highlands. He showed me areas excluded from sheep and horse grazing - where trees were regrowing! Another trial of young trees was struggling where the colour of protective sleeves was too dark. The dark plastic sleeves were too hot, even in Iceland, but pale sleeves performed well.

As we drove south, we visited a mountain with steam hissing through the snow, and we were almost stranded when the vehicle's cable detached from the distributor top! I saw desertification, the result of centuries of overgrazing, and elsewhere the obvious benefits of fencing off susceptible land areas. The next morning back home Andrés found his vehicle's radiator was empty, but we had made it there.

Before departing, I visited the Soil Conservation Service headquarters at Gunnarsholt and met director Sveinn Runólfsson. There I saw tree saplings thriving significantly after application of the slow-release fertilizer I had used in Scotland. I was told that their first woman President, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, was leading school classes in tree planting using this fertilizer, to encourage soil conservation among future generations. Imported New Zealand seed drills were also being used effectively to reclaim severely eroded areas.

Andrés, Sveinn and I have since remained in contact and within a decade an Icelandic student was studying land use practices in New Zealand's South Island. We also were pleased to host Sveinn Runólfsson and Andrés here, along with family members. I was able to show them our land management practices and the volcanic plateau where desertification is no problem. We have kept in touch since then and I have much appreciated Andrés' work in several countries, including a year's study in Australia. His international reputation has gained significantly in recent years and I'm sure his wisdom will reign long after retirement.

Deric Charlton

Building conservation ethics

Whenever reflecting soil and water conservation my memory goes back to Iceland with its Soil Conservation Service, the oldest in the world, and my first visit in 1992, when I met Andrés Arnalds at the Keldnaholt Research Station near Reykjavík for the first time.

Since then, I have visited Iceland several times and I remember many field excursions and discussions with Andrés about the development of new conservation strategies, building upon conservation ethics and public participation. He also fostered a broad public knowledge about the potential of carbon sequestration as a basis of soil health and the sustainable use of land. On this basis he was able to develop the internationally well known Landcare Programme.

The international soil community is grateful for his important technical and scientific contributions and his outstanding achievements in the field of soil and water conservation, which became known all over the world. I am convinced, that with this retirement Andrés will not stop his activities, but will accompany further the progress of the Icelandic Soil Conservation Service.

Winfried Blum

A modest promoter

Amongst Andrés' many achievements the one that stands out for me is his modesty in promoting the excellent work of soil conservation in Iceland in international arenas. His key role in promoting international events, such as conferences and workshops in Iceland, has also raised the profile of the country's work on combating desertification. Until the very recent past few, even amongst the scientific community working on desertification, knew about Iceland's work. Thanks to Andrés' presentations and talks in venues such as the UNCCD Conference of the Parties this has now changed, and due recognition has been given to the work of the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland. Andrés' appreciation of the need for a holistic approach to solving natural resource degradation has been an important input into the successful United Nations University's training course on

land restoration thus adding high value to the country's investment in international training courses. Iceland can certainly be very proud of his achievements and hopefully he will receive due recognition for his service to the country and scientific community.

Richard Thomas

A great ambassador for Iceland

It has been my privilege to have met Andrés several times, in Australia and in Iceland. He has been a great ambassador for Iceland, and I admire his passion for soil conservation work. I have a great memory of an extraordinary field trip organised by Andrés and his colleagues on a cold and rainy day in conjunction with a major soil conservation conference out of Selfoss. I still use an old Icelandic joke in my class on land degradation law that I first heard on that day: "What do you do if you get lost in an Icelandic forest?" The answer is: "stand up". I wish Andrés the very best in his retirement. He will always be welcome in Australia.

Ben Boer

A remarkable career

In 2012 I had the honour of attending an International Workshop on Soil Governance and Society, hosted by Andrés and the Soil Conservation Service in beautiful Reykjavík. The workshop was an extremely engaging and lively affair, with contributions from a wide range of academic disciplines and philosophical perspectives. Andrés was the perfect host, organising tours throughout the countryside, the highlight being a one day trek, led by Andrés and Guðrún, to Fimmvörðuháls. Incredible landscapes, wonderful company, and a few unexpected thrills on the snow and ice. It was a truly a magnificent and memorable day. Our workshop culminated with a formal dinner in which Andrés's talented children displayed their exceptional music prowess. I recall looking over to Andrés to see him justifiably bursting with pride. A remarkable career and a wonderful family. Congratulations Andrés, you have earned the respect and admiration of all.

Don Hine

Promoting participatory approaches

I first came across Andrés and his work during a fellowship I was undertaking in Australia to research Landcare initiatives in Germany and Australia. Andrés had published a paper on landcare in Iceland and I got in touch with him to find out how he had come to know about Australian Landcare and why he had decided to frame the development of more participatory strategies and community involvement in Iceland as ‘Landcare’.

I found Andrés’ understanding of landcare and ideas of what it could achieve were similar to mine, so it seemed a logical consequence to cooperate on a COST Action proposal led by Andrés, entitled “SoilCare – Fostering community and farmer engagement in sustainable land management”. We submitted in 2011, but unfortunately this was not funded. Nevertheless, the cooperation led to my participation in an international workshop on ‘Soil Governance’ hosted by the Soil Conservation Service Iceland and Andrés in the summer of 2012. I met researchers and stakeholders from different countries and disciplinary backgrounds, and was impressed by the wealth of knowledge assembled at the event. These two experiences illustrated to me how good Andrés was at networking with people and bringing new ideas to Iceland. At the same time, he took care to ensure there were wider benefits and people had opportunities to connect with each other. Some of the insights I heard at this workshop informed the direction of my further work.

Going back to Andrés’ paper, this was also the first time I became aware of *Land Degradation & Development* (LDD). I was surprised to find that this journal was open to publishing research on social aspects of land and soil management. Ultimately, I selected this journal to publish a special issue resulting from the SoCo project (Soil Conservation and Sustainable Agriculture).

I am grateful to Andrés for sharing his ideas and knowledge, the opportunities arising from invitations to collaborations, and his very pleasant and honest manner.

Katrin Praeger

And on to visitor management

On the right path with Andrés

It was my privilege to make the acquaintance of the inimitable Andrés just a few years ago when as a more-or-less retired manager of mountain footpaths in Scotland I was imported to Iceland in the hope that I could offer some useful advice on path management. This by recommendation of my old friend Roger Crofts, who has such a long history of effective and highly regarded advisory work on conservation and land management in Iceland, much of it through close contacts with Landgræðsla, through Sveinn and Andrés.

I quickly learned that Andrés' keen interest for the too often parlous state of Icelandic paths is both professional and personal, stemming from his concern as a soil conservation scientist for the stability and coherence of vegetation and substrates, and from his passionate enthusiasm as a hiker for landscape and recreational quality. I also learned that Andrés is promulgating a message that too many in Iceland still have no wish to hear. In this activity particularly so, when tourism superficially seems to offer a limitless economic boon for the country, and when its environmental resource is far too generally taken for granted as a Free Good. It's one of Andrés' many engaging qualities that he seems able to take on the role of unpopular public advocate of successive unpalatable truths with unflagging commitment and ironic good humour, though he can be forthright and stern when required.

Andrés sets dauntingly high standards. I've too often been aware of my intellectual limitations to engage with his clear analytical thinking, especially about 'Land', but I've learned a great deal from listening to him. I was also at first dismayed by his exalted expectations of what I could deliver for him, especially when I felt considerable diffidence about my ability to contribute, all too aware that international experience is often less transferable to new cultural and environmental conditions than we might like to think. On the morning of my third day in Iceland, he boldly presented me to a gathering of

path managers and practitioners, apparently with the expectation that I would chair the meeting and carry all before me. My ignorance of the field context was almost virginal: my one ‘familiarisation’ day at Þórsmörk had been spent almost entirely indoors talking paths with local guru Chas Geomans, and worrying whether the relentless thundering rainstorm outside would allow us to escape through the rapidly rising rivers. Happily, I hit upon the notion of inviting all present at the meeting successively to outline their own analysis and prescription for the current path management situation, which was vastly more useful, if only to me. Ten days later I felt sufficiently informed to pontificate with conviction at a public lecture.

Field days with Andrés are both stimulating and fun. Typical was a visit to the cliff path on Sliabh Liag in Donegal, at the north-western extremity of Ireland. This visit was at the margins of the ASCENT European project for mountain recreation and path management, of which Iceland is a partner – inevitably, through Andrés and Landgræðsla. At Sliabh Liag too much readily available capital funding had been thrown at a difficult site with wholly unrealistic aspirations, with virtually no management capacity for specification or direction, and with a contractor who had nothing like the expertise needed. The results were all too predictably dire. Andrés’ sheer delight in seeing a site that carried so many lessons for Iceland – perhaps not unmixed with a certain amount of schadenfreude – carried him far along the windy cliff-top, exclaiming how pleased he was to be there.

In 2017, on my second ‘paths’ visit, Andrés and Guðrún generously extended to me the warm hospitality of their handsome home in Mosfellsbær, with its endless supply of excellent coffee, before trusting Joy and me with the run of the house, and their car, as the base for a week’s tourism, while they went off to Russia (a visit which Andrés relished with his usual gusto).

As part of his hospitality, Andrés was anxious that I should adopt his habitual practice of taking my morning ablutions in the geothermally-heated outdoor shower in his garden. While invigorating in a

characteristically sulphurous way, this was something of a cultural challenge, as well as a physical one when bitter Icelandic rain was thrashing across the patio. Very Nordic. With typical practical thoughtfulness, one day while I was away on site visits Andrés swiftly and dextrously added a small alcove to the timber shower-screen, so that I could keep a towel and dressing-gown approximately dry there, rather than have to scuttle back to the kitchen door stark naked. Less authentically Nordic perhaps, but I was very grateful.

For me, many of Andrés' appealing attributes were epitomised at the launch of the ASCENT project in Donegal in October 2016, where the rural community hosted us in their village hall. Several local dignitaries and agency officers made appropriate short speeches, usually starting with a few apposite words in Gaelic. Each of the ASCENT partners was then invited to make a brief statement. Andrés, who always seems entirely but quietly composed in such circumstances, rose perfectly to the occasion. He opened with two or three sentences in Icelandic, before explaining in English. "We in Iceland, like you in Ireland, have an ancient language of which we are very proud, and which is central to our culture and identity." Warm applause; instantaneous rapport. That's Andrés. Wholly Icelandic. Wholly admirable.

Bob Aitken

An inspirational person

I was introduced to Andrés Arnalds by Bob Aitken from Scotland. Bob could see that Andrés and I shared a desire to promote sensitive and sustainable solutions to footpath erosion and the environmental impacts of tourism in our respective countries.

From the outset, I found Andrés' positivity, his commitment to respecting and protecting the beauty of nature, his interest in people and his collaborative approach, to be absolutely inspirational. Through his example, and his drive to implement the ASCENT project, Andrés has helped Mountaineering Ireland in our work to develop footpath management capacity in Ireland.

Andrés invited me to Iceland in May 2017 to speak at an event to mark the 90th anniversary of Ferðafélag Íslands. One talk soon became three and each day was filled with meetings and site visits.

Andrés' determination shone through on one day in particular. We spent hours looking at the path network on Ulfarsfell with Andrés' colleagues David and Örn, and Andrés had arranged that we would all go out with a walking group that evening. It was a day of relentless rain that found every weakness in our clothing and also killed Andrés' mobile phone. After Ulfarsfell, we retreated to Andrés and Goðrún's beautiful home for food and to dry out a little. David and Örn politely declined the offer of the evening walk, but Andrés' enthusiasm was undimmed, he drove us outside Reykjavík for a delightful walk through moss and lava, with one of the most colourful and cheerful walking groups I've ever met. It may have rained a little more that evening, but my memory is only of Andrés' joy and passion to be outdoors, his sense of achievement, and his pride in sharing the beauty of his country.

Helen Lawless

Finally, so many thanks but not farewell

Andrés your ideas and actions are wide ranging, challenging, creative, outgoing, insightful, practical and based on sound ethical principles. You are collaborative, seeking out and listening to the best practice and meeting the best practitioners in the world on soil conservation and land restoration. And you make sure that Iceland obtains the very best advice and action. That is how I know you my good friend and outstanding collaborator for a quarter of a century.

You have taken to a new level the great SCS tradition of interacting with professionals in the field from outside Iceland. You have brought them to Iceland, and you have developed and adopted their best ideas for the benefit of your native land. Most significant were the insights you gained from seeing the *Landcare* movement in action in Australia. You made sure that its key practitioners gave you their wisdom and

knowledge to allow it to be adapted to Icelandic conditions as *Farmers Heal the Land*. What a difference that has made to the farmers and to the land where it is practiced.

Your wide outlook and the development of a network of contacts is second to none. It has resulted in a series of events in Iceland that have been game changers in the way we view the importance of the soil as a natural resource and as a necessity for human survival. You masterminded two important international conferences in 2005 and 2007. Those attending who had never visited Iceland were surprised to see the extent of the problems you were facing and to recognise how you and your colleagues in SCS, aided and abetted by the Agricultural University experts, were really world leaders. You did not stop there. For example, in 2012 you invited a much broader range of expertise to gather to address soil conservation and land restoration. This resulted in new intellectual partnerships and even greater recognition of the status and standing of you and your SCS colleagues in land restoration. Perhaps most important of all has been your attempts to persuade the parties to the UN CCD to accept that land restoration is an acceptable mechanism to sequester carbon as a one means of combating climate change.

It is very clear that you have a skill of interaction with others, coupled with a steely determination not to let matters, however awkward, disappear from view. Throughout you have been grounded in reality. Inevitably, you have been frustrated at the rigid and old fashioned views of many of those you interact with in Iceland. This is particularly the case with those farmers who are poor stewards and with the off roading lobby who believe they have some sort of divine right to go wherever they please whatever the consequences to the land over which they drive. You have been determined to open their eyes and through that open their minds to new approaches. Unfortunately, they do not share your ethical approach to these issues which is one of your most important hallmarks.

You have a supreme skill as a communicator. I have read through many of your power point presentations and heard you give others in Iceland. They are an amazing collection of analysis, challenge, creativity, and especially new ways of looking at issues. All SCS staff and those in other parts of the government dealing with the land and natural resources would gain a great deal through reading them, and listening to and reflecting on your words. A recent presentation to the Bishops and their staff majoring on the ethical approach is a case in point. Just as significant has been your relationship with the UN Land Restoration Training students from around the world. How fortunate they have been to have you as their guide and mentor and to be able to feed off your ideals and ideas to help them be better practitioners when they return to their homelands to put their learning into practice.

As if all of this amazing contribution was not enough, you have also made a major contribution to making your home community of Mosfellsbær a better place to live. The tree planting programmes and the walking trails are a living tribute to your determination that all ages should have a good experience of the world beyond their front door where they live.

Above all of the constant intellectual striving for improved practices and learning from others, you formed a winning partnership with Sveinn at SCS. I cannot think of a better combination of complementarity than the two of you. Of course, you did not always agree with each other, but that was the basis of moving things forward and ensuring that SCS had a progressive approach to its work and was able to communicate it to the wider world.

I cannot ever forget the many hours we have spent together in the office, at your kitchen table with Guðrún, as well as the delightful evening meals in your beautiful home, on a local trail around your home, and in the field looking, debating, arguing and stimulating each other's minds into even more crazy ideas and action. A number of memories spring to mind. For example, wadding the Þjórsá to view

the wonderful vegetation sequences which were threatened with flooding for yet another hydroelectric scheme to fuel some foreign owned industrial development. Your dancing the 'in memorium' ode at Kárahnjúkar because of the victory of developers to build the Háslón reservoir and dam for more hydroelectricity. The long route to Gunnarsholt via Krýsuvík to view poor management of the geothermal areas and to see the erosion caused by off road vehicles. The visit to Gjáin to view the beautiful landscape. The flights over the land to observe the unbelievable landscapes of sediment, soil, water and ice first from Höfn to Egilsstaðir and later from Reykjavik to Egilsstaðir with Ómar Ragnarsson among others. And the many times you challenged me to speak my mind about Iceland's poor environmental management in public talks you organised, especially with Tryggvi Felixson. And you taught me a new and highly relevant language about soil and wider environmental literacy.

My dear friend what an enormous privilege and pleasure it has been. And, I sincerely hope that our friendship and collaboration will continue for many years to come both in Iceland and definitely in Scotland please.

Roger Crofts



Andrés with Guðrún on receiving the Knight's Cross of the Icelandic Order of the Falcon from the President of the Republic of Iceland on June 17th 2011