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Analyzing Iceland's Specific Legal Amendments to its Border Control and Civil Protection Acts in 2020-2021: A Unique Framework for Agile Crisis Management

Abstract

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Keywords: Border Control Act, Civil Protection Act, Agile Crisis Management, Agile Governance, Modularity, Dual-Track Legislative Strategy

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Analyzing Iceland's Specific Legal Amendments to its Border Control and Civil Protection Acts in 2020-2021: A Unique Framework for Agile Crisis Management

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Abstract

The report focuses on investigating the implementation of the amendments to the temporary Border Control Act (No. 50/2007) and Civil Protection Act (No. 82/2008), which were implemented by Iceland in response to COVID-19 but did not directly concern it. It considers this strategy toward the law as a proactive and directed policy of agile crisis management. The result of the current study in terms of a qualitative, comparative case study of the two legislative tracks is that iterative time-bound amendments in Iceland may not always have been a reactionary mechanism but a dynamic mechanism of rapid calibration of activity, long-term democratic supervision, and flexibility to operate. The report results in the conclusion that this framework provides a generalizable model that can be pursued by small and highly globalized states in the future in case of transnational crises and is aimed at balancing legal authority, adaptive capacity, and democratic accountability.

Keywords:

[Border Control Act](#), [Civil Protection Act](#), [Agile Crisis Management](#), [Agile Governance](#), [Modularity](#), [Dual-Track Legislative Strategy](#)

Introduction:

Background and Rationale

In early 2020, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic put a previously unknown strain on national governance systems worldwide (Bevilacqua et al., [2023](#)). In small and highly globalized nation-states, this question was particularly acute, and it involved fine-tuning between decisive actions on the issue of the health of the population and the system of essential functions of the society. This is a risky situation that was experienced in a small island country, Iceland, whose economy is highly

dependent on foreign tourism and constant imports/exports and is characterized by a small and interconnected population. The economically unsustainable aspect of a stringent, extended lockdown was that, out of its finite healthcare resources, unimpeded viral spread was likely to overwhelm it (Al-Masbhi & Dureab, [2021](#)). The first response, which was science-based and led by Iceland, featured early and widespread mass testing, advanced contact tracing, and strategic isolation, which earned a lot of international acclaim for its operation effectiveness in mediating the spread.

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Nevertheless, this business triumph was supported by a less noticeable, yet no less important, innovation: a new legal and administrative framework that allowed such adaptability to take place. Most importantly, Iceland, in contrast to most of its European counterparts, did not declare a total, constitutional state of emergency (BJARNASON, [1972](#)). A declaration that gives such broad executive authority may have a centralizing effect that is coarse and rigid, in general avoiding the parliamentary checks and balances as well as limiting the ability to respond flexibly to policy changes through iterative means. Rather, Iceland followed a different path. Between March 2020 and 2021 and into 2022, the Alþingi (Icelandic Parliament) entered into a strategy of legislative agility, passing a successive series of specific, temporary amendments to two existing acts: the Border Control Act (No. 50/2007) and the Civil Protection Act (No. 82/2008) (Jelena Ćirić, [2021](#)).

This was not a pre-determined planning strategy or a plan that was wholesale and blanket. It was a dynamic and changing system that was built in real time. The amendments were also custom-made tools to give certain authorities that were time-limited and given to authorized expert agencies, such as the Directorate of Health and the Chief Epidemiologist, to take targeted measures such as compulsory border testing, controlled quarantine, or localized restrictions on gathering (Bilawal Khaskheli et al., [2023](#)). This legal approach developed a special system of governance enabling the state to quickly shift the direction according to the variability of epidemiological data, the emergence of new viral variants, and socio-economic pressures. Although much of the research on Iceland's population health and technological successes during the pandemic has been given serious scholarly and media focus, the facilitating legal machinery and the conscious creation and purpose of these iterative amendments as a system of crisis governance are important but poorly studied fields of inquiry. This disjuncture obscures what may be a radical paradigm of how democracies (especially smaller ones) can make up their minds out of long-term and complex crises whilst being able to be flexible, expert-led, and the correlative democratic responsibility.

Research Question and Objectives

This paper tries to determine this new rule of law by not just describing the amendments but trying to understand how they work systemically and their theoretical meaning. It is also guided by the following basic research question:

- What did the context-specific, iterative changes to the Icelandic Border Control Act and the Icelandic Civil Protection Act in 2020-2021 do? And what do the implications of this model have on the theory of small-state emergency management?

The research aims to: examine their contents in order to classify the specific powers conferred, their longevity, and who is permitted to exercise them, to analyze the operational implementation and coordination of the agencies regarding the implementation of delegated powers. It evaluates whether "legislative agility" is a unique approach to small states and condense the lessons of this practice to the design of crisis frameworks in other countries.

Theoretical Framework

The interpretation of the amendments to the Iceland legal system during the pandemic requires the theoretical framework that will go beyond the traditional models of crisis management, which tend to focus on the hierarchical command structure and the unchanging emergency guidelines. This study is placed at a juncture between two very strong literature blocks, Agile (or Adaptive) Crisis Governance and Small-State Resilience Theory, to comprehend the signification and role of this approach in Iceland (Janssen & van der Voort, [2020](#)). It is by adding these areas together that we would be able to create a more refined prism through which to analyze the Iceland model of legislative agility, not as an improvised response, but as a complex and potentially imitable approach to statecraft in the face of extreme stress.

Agile Governance: The Static Plans to Dynamic Systems

The idea of agile governance is based on the criticism of the conventional models of a command-and-control approach to the public administration, which are most likely to be inappropriate to a global pandemic-like challenge (Mergel et al., [2020](#)). Agile governance is also based on the principles of

complexity science, adaptive management, and organizational theory, aiming at the ability of the state to learn continuously, adapt quickly, and continuously improve under uncertainty.

The Theoretical Foundations of this Field That Guide the Analysis Are

Regulatory Experimentation and Feedback Loops: Agile systems are created to be experimental and to learn. Instead of adopting long-term and constant policies, they adopt temporary ones and observe the results and apply the data obtained to correct direction. This brings about positive feedback between action and evaluation. The institution of this loop was in fact institutionalized in the structure of temporary, sunset-clause amendments in the case of Iceland (Gylfason, [2013](#)). Every amendment was a policy experiment (e.g., a new border testing regime), and its time-limited nature required a formal review, meaning it had to carry out a data-driven assessment of its effectiveness to continue before renewal or adjustment.

Decentralized Decision-Making and Delegation of Experts: In agile development, the decision-maker should push power out of one central location towards the nodes that hold the most information and can act the fastest (Guerrero-Ulloa et al., [2023](#)). This includes outsourcing to the specialized agencies or positions that have the necessary technical expertise. The literature highlights the importance of sensemaking, i.e., the overall process by which the ambiguous situations are interpreted and the necessary action is undertaken. The structure in Iceland formally assigned the sensemaking authority to the institutions of interpretation of the epidemiological data and health risk to the population by giving the Chief Epidemiologist and the Directorate of Health legal authority to do so, so the chain between information and action became shorter.

Modularity and Scalability: Agile systems tend to be modular, consisting of interoperable pieces that can be modified or even added or removed without breaking down the rest of the system (Alsaqqa et al., [2020](#)). This modularity is seen in the target amendments of two different acts, one of the external borders and the other of internal civil measures. The state could tailor the "border module" to the international variants, but on its own, it is a

scalpel-like and not a sledgehammer approach to the domestic rates of hospitalization by adjusting the internal restrictions module.

The agile governance lens is used in this study to understand whether the legal amendments in Iceland were instruments of control or the deeper meaning of the institutional framework of an adaptive system of governance. Was it the legal process itself that eases sensemaking and iteration? The structure assumes that agility should be codified into law to be both sustainable and acceptable in a democratic environment and be beyond informal administrative flexibility.

Small-State Resilience: Changing Vulnerability into Adaptive Capacity

The second theoretical perspective is the one that puts the emphasis on the processes of governance but is concerned with the particular context of the state unit. The major paradox facing small-state studies is this: these states are frail in certain ways, due to their lack of economic diversification, low domestic markets, limited bureaucratic and human resources, and excessive vulnerability to exogenous shocks, but are also often highly resilient and adaptive (Stavros et al., [2023](#)). Iceland is the quintessence of such a paradox: the small population and the economy heavily reliant on tourism preconditioned a high level of vulnerability to the global biological and economic shock, but its reaction was quite successful.

According to the small-state resilience theory, success on many grounds depends on the ability to use unique intrinsic or nurtured assets to transcend structural drawbacks. These are the assets that are most applicable to this case of Iceland, and they include:

Social Cohesion and High Trust: Big, homogeneous societies tend to have dense social networks, shared norms, and high interpersonal as well as institutional trust levels (Chan et al., [2006](#)). This social capital lowers costs of transaction, makes it easier to adhere to collective directives, and spreads public health messages easily. More importantly, it is also a source of political legitimacy for the delegation of expertise. As long as the chief epidemiologist makes an order, the citizens will not only have to comply but also have a social trust base of the established national institutions and leaders.

Quick Internal Coordination and Networked Governance: The size of the state apparatus makes it possible to quickly and informally coordinate ministries and agencies. The small size is what makes bureaucratic silos less common; key decision-makers are usually familiar with each other personally, and this simplifies the process of consensus-building and problem-solving (Bento et al., 2020). It is an important resource in agile response in contrast to a strictly hierarchical type of administration, which is known as a networked governance. This network was probably not constructed by the Icelandic legal framework but was effective in connecting with it and the authorization of actions organized in a close policy community through a rapid parliament system.

Niche Expertise and Mobilization Capacity: Small states cannot be all-rounders and experts; however, they can build the world's best in specific areas that are of interest to their economy or society. Iceland is an expert in genetics (deCODE) and data management and turned into a strategic asset in the field of public health (Fortun, 2023). Moreover, they are small, which enables deploying this niche skill fast and pooling it at the core of the decision-making process. The legal changes may be regarded as the institutional means according to which this concentrated expertise was allowed to steer the national policy.

This study employs the theory of small-state resilience to question the hypothesis that the Icelandic legal approach was a premeditated encroachment on these natural resources. Was the model of iterative amendments a typical small-state workaround, that is, to fill in the absence of large-scale bureaucratic redundancy by speed, cohesion, and expertise? It will be analyzed whether the legal structure was the official structure of turning social trust and quick coordination in official, legal state power, and in turn a potentially frail position to a position of operational stability.

Synthesis

This study is a step towards an interrelated realization by applying the two theoretical domains together. The agile governance lens offers the standards to gauge the functional design of the legal system: its modularity, feedback systems, and delegation patterns. The little-state resilience lens gives the framework the context of understanding

why the model of that kind could be created, believed in, and put into practice successfully in Iceland in particular (Arnalds et al., 2023). Combined, they enable us not to judge the Icelandic legislative agility as a one-off historical example but as a theoretically important case of crisis governance, one that strategically institutionalizes adaptive capacity in the form of law by taking the privileges inherent in the small state.

Methodology

The proposed study was based on the qualitative, comparative case study methodology that helped reveal the subtle mechanisms, reasons, and dynamics of an Icelandic legislative response to the COVID-19 crisis (Mello, 2021). This design is based on an internal comparative study of two processes of amendments of the Border Control Act and the Civil Protection Act in the limited, single-nation setting of Iceland in 2020-2021. This way of approach is intentional and effective. It does not take a monolithic approach to the law on the pandemic in Iceland but rather breaks down how specific legal tools were strategically designed and developed to regulate separate yet interdependent policy areas: the external control of risk that is brought along the border and the internal control of civil protection and restrictions in the society. The comparison between these two tracks allowed determining whether a unified body of governance logic was behind the two or different principles (e.g., sovereignty versus public health) informed the evolutions of the tracks, thus attesting to the composite design of the crisis framework of the state as a whole.

In order to conduct this comparative case study, the study takes a document-based methodological approach by use of secondary sources that are publicly available. This methodology guarantees scholastic rigor, replication, and a strong base on the official record. The data corpus includes a number of different layers of documentary evidence, which serve a certain analytical purpose:

Legislative Core: The simplest data is the entire text of all the temporary amendment acts of the Altingi. These are the chief objects of inquiry because they give the very words of the law that gave and altered powers of states.

Operationalization Documents: In order to understand the way, the law was operated, the

government regulations, directives, and official guidelines created by the Directorate of Health, the Office of the Chief Epidemiologist, and the Directorate of Immigration are observed. And these reports describe the gap between the law and the street.

Political Discourse Records: Minutes of parliamentary debate on all amendment bills are significant. They provide the invaluable background information on the political logic, the nature of democratic checks and balances, the issues of opposition parties, and the explanations of the government, which reveal the process of the legitimization of the law.

Evaluative Audits: Retrospective documents of independent organizations, in particular, the Icelandic National Audit Office and other formal review committees, provide a pointed, post-hoc evaluation of the effectiveness and administration of the framework, which is a useful source of triangulation.

Two complementary qualitative methods are used in the analysis of this corpus: structured content analysis and process-tracing. To begin with, an elaborate chronological timeline of all the amendments is built up to give a visual representation of the pace and order of legislation. All of the amendments are then systematically analyzed in terms of content and coded accordingly in a pre-existing scheme, according to:

1. the specific authority granted (e.g., to require tests, order isolation, close venues)
2. how long it is supposed to last and whether it has a sunset (or not);
3. any required reporting or justification regime under which it is to be used
4. the specific agency or office assigned to implement it.

At the same time, the process-tracing approach is being used to transition from the stagnant code to the living explanation. It entails the study of the paperwork to rebuild the cause-effect sequence of an emerging epidemiological threat or operational challenge, the response of the expert and government, the formulation and discussion of a particular amendment to the law, its enforcement, and the evaluation thereof, which was the input to the next legislative phase. The method is necessary

to empirically determine the so-called feedback loops that are the main focus of the theory of agile governance, showing how the legal framework itself supported the process of iterative and data-driven recalibration. With this hybrid approach to methodology, this study collects crude legal and parliamentary texts and systematizes them into evidence on which its key hypothesis on agile and small-state crisis management is tested.

Analysis

The analytical investigation of the amendment texts, governmental policies, and parliaments presents a complicated and highly organized system of governance (Berkovitz et al., [2023](#)). The response to Iceland was no longer a series of legal patches but a sensible design of legislative responsiveness, along with a dual-track strategy, core mechanisms, and a formalized process of iterative response, which encouraged the feeling of malleability in the legal and administrative equipment of the state.

The Dual-Track Legislative Strategy

The legal labor division was also a natural form of the strategy of the government that developed various statutes to help in various aspects of the crisis. This division enabled a specialized action of responsiveness that did not come with the creation of a unified, monolithic power of emergency.

Amendments to the Border Control Act: The history of legislation was focused on the external threats and the sustainability of the economy (Sopykhanova et al., [2023](#)). The act was amended to become a dynamic tool in border health security. They gave the very legal power to establish and, most importantly, to often raise the demands of testing, quarantine, and evidence of vaccination or previous infection of incoming immigrants. The Minister of Health was put in charge of powers, and consultation was done with the Directorate of Immigration. This hierarchy was central to agility: it enabled the executive to swiftly recalibrate border health protocols in direct individual response to rapidly changing variables, whether through the rise of a new Variant of Concern (VoC) in a particular country or a change in the global epidemiological environment, without requiring a new piece of parliamentary legislation each time.

Amendments to civil protection acts: Internal space management was a parallel and supplementary reflection of internal measures in society (Nik Lah et al., [2015](#)). Its main innovation was the legal empowerment of the chief epidemiologist together with the civil protection authorities to give legally binding orders. Such guidelines may include the requirement to collect restrictions, prohibit the activities of businesses (e.g., bars, gyms), and also wear masks and local lockdowns, which are determined by a specific and multi-level system of evaluating threats. It was a principle of expert-led sensemaking, which was codified in this delegation. The power to elaborate difficult epidemiological data and render it into definite limitations of the public health was located in the very office of that technical analysis, which significantly reduced the decision-making process of managing internal disasters.

The Basic Mechanisms of Legislative Agility

In addition to the dual-track format, the operational engine of agility was made up of the very design features of the amendments themselves. There were always four mechanisms that were connected:

Precision and Modularity: Each amendment was in force, giving blanket powers to do what was considered necessary; laws stipulated the powers to be provided to do something specific, e.g., to administer quarantine facilities or to subject specific types of travelers to testing. This modularity allowed the policymakers to add, tailor, or dismantle specific tools (modules) without interfering with the entire legal system and thus allowed a highly precise tuning of the state response.

Embodied Temporality and Sunset Clauses: The most notable feature about such amendments was the fact that all of them included some element of temporality. They were each given a fixed time, typically 6, 12, or 18 months. These sunset extensions served as a constitutional defense against the acquisition of emergency powers that would have become permanent and as involuntary institutional feedback nodes. They needed to be reconsidered by parliament before the date of expiry, and this meant that the government had to reassert the need of the remaining powers based on the fact of more recent data and therefore incorporated a regular review into the crisis governance process.

Devolution to Specified Expert Agencies: Authority was never centralized in the executive branch as a whole, but rather it was delegated to a select few agencies, which were technically expert in their respective fields. The Alþingi made data-based decision-making a formal policy through the appointment of the Chief Epidemiologist, the Directorate of Health, or the Director of Immigration in the legislation (Ćirić, [2021](#)). It legalized the discretionary power of offices, which were defined in terms of professional experience and operation mandate.

Mandated Reporting and Transparency: The various amendments also had provisions that obligated the minister or agency in charge to report periodically to the parliament on how the powers granted were being implemented and what effects they had. This was a mechanism that incorporated accountability and formal transparency into the system and established a formal channel through which the operational data could be reported to the legislative monitors to complete the governance circle.

The Iterative Feedback Loop

Process-tracing the dynamics of amendments against the pandemic illuminates a bit on how all these mechanisms have resulted in a dynamic and self-adjusting mechanism (Thomas et al., [2024](#)). The framework facilitated a familiar recursive sensemaking process by legislation:

The circle began with the creation of the epidemiological data and working problems, which the frontline health authorities identified. Then an area of demand in the law was defined (e.g., the demand to have a legal basis for post-arrival testing). It was an amendment designed to close this very hole, in which the question of proportionality and necessity was debated in Parliament, and the sunset clause was always inserted. The specified expert agencies operationalized the new powers so granted by adhering to the regulations and directives.

This institutionalized circle reveals that the law as such was not utilized as a rigid barrier or an enabling intervention once and once only, but instead it was a reactive tool of continuing regulation. It provided a steady yet flexible channel through which scientific appraisal and professional experience could be readily transformed into legal action of the state, assessed, and lastly modified in

the courts of law. This is the soul of the Icelandic agile model: a strategic scheme of controlled reaction to a prolonged crisis.

Discussion: Implications for Theory and Practice

The process of empirical study of the legislative framework in Iceland concerning the pandemic indicates that it is a model of statecraft with important implications as far as academic theory is concerned, as well as the design of practical policy. Going past the legal specifics, the findings as analyzed in this discussion can be interpreted to help in the development of a wider knowledge on the topic of agile governance, small-state resilience, and institutional readiness to future crises.

Contribution to Agile Governance Theory:

The Icelandic case study is a dramatic empirical confirmation and improvement of agile governance theory (Luna & Marinho, [2023](#)). Most of the literature imagines agility as being present in the administrative or network plane, typically working in the shadow of, or even in conflict with, more rigid formal law. Iceland illustrates that agility may be legally embedded and institutionalized to turn it into an informal administrative norm and the fundamental operating principle of the crisis response.

This model specifically solves a key dilemma in the literature on crisis governance: the dilemma between swift and decisive state action and values of legal predictability, democratic accountability, and rights protection. Through the use of modularity, sunset clauses, and delegation that had been specified, the framework of Iceland offered a space of experimentation through the creation of a safety-railed space. The law did not prescribe the determinate outcomes but induced an active process of the law circuit to constant feedback and recalibration. It is a shift from the perception of emergency law as the on/off switch (the state of emergency) to the perception of a dial that can be turned precisely. The system institutionalized what may be called lawmaking sensemaking, in which the parliament did not abandon its authority but was actively engaged in an ongoing process of learning in which the temporary legislation turned out to be the most important tool. This refines the agile

governance theory by showing that neither democratic legitimacy nor adaptability can exist independently of each other but can be co-created in a synergistic manner due to clever legal-institutional design.

A Different Small-State Model of Resilience

The success of this agile structure was not just a by-product of smart legal writing, but it was deeply facilitated by the socio-political situation of a small state, implying that a specific small-state resilience model has emerged (Mergel, [2020](#)). The discussion confirms this thesis that the Icelandic strategy was a calculated use of the natural resources of the small state to cover the structural weaknesses.

Social Trust as a Facilitating Factor: Institutional and interpersonal trust that characterized the Icelandic society at a high level was not merely a background but also a working precondition to the model (Johnsen & Sigurgeirsdóttir, [2018](#)). Assigning such a high level of coercive authority to a technocratic individual as the chief epidemiologist depended on, and was maintained by, the trust of the masses. This credibility lowered the cost of enforcement and enabled high compliance, and thus a social attribute was converted into a direct governance asset. In a bigger, more polarized society, such delegation may have caused a legitimacy crisis or non-compliance, debilitating the effectiveness of the framework.

Quick Coordination as an Operational Multiplier: The policy community of the small city was networked and situated in Reykjavik so that it coordinated swiftly the framework required (Lackaff, [2015](#)). This close feedback between data, experts' opinions, ministerial decisions, and parliamentary drafting was dependent on informal and quick communication routes that are more challenging to maintain in bigger and more dispersed bureaucratic structures. This natural tendency of coordination was effectively hardwired by the legal framework in the formal response framework of the state.

Niche Expertise as Strategic Input: Iceland has had the capacity to marshal the highest level of expertise in genetic and data science (e.g., in the form of deCODE), which imbued the high-fidelity epidemiological intelligence that justified and made effective precise, targeted legal interventions (Merz

et al., 2004). The legal amendments can thus be considered as the channel through which this specialized and niche knowledge has been given a legal impetus.

The following synthesis suggests a prescribed formula of small-state resilience:

$$\text{Agility} = \text{Legal Modularity} \times (\text{Social Trust} + \text{Rapid Coordination} + \text{Niche Expertise}).$$

It is demonstrated by the example of Iceland that small states can employ their own benefits to create more responsive and context-sensitive mechanisms of responding to crises than the larger neighbors who count on brute scale and bureaucracy or the existent and hard-written emergency decrees.

Practical and Policy Implications

The Iceland case offers a viable, practical example to policymakers, especially those in small or highly globalized states, of a proactive response in the instance of a crisis. States should not only hoard medical material in the future but also pre-engineer their legal and institutional systems to be elastic. The key practical learnings are:

Pre-Drafting "Plug-in" Legislative Modules: A number of the principal acts in such fields as public health, border control, and civil protection will have to be revised and amended in peacetime in order to include enabling clauses that permit time-limited, narrowly focused amendments to be effected by a fast-track parliamentary procedure in case of a specified crisis. This creates a simpler, a priori fashion of agility in the legislation, even without the need to compose highly complex bills at the last moment.

Delegation Protocols, Pre-existing: There is a need to have laws on crises that explicitly delegate to whom certain agencies or offices (e.g., the Chief Medical Officer, a particular scientific committee) which particular powers would be devolved in case of emergency. This assists in clarifying chains of command, publicly pre-vets the responsible bodies, and also possesses technical expertise at the top when a crisis strikes.

Unification of Mandatory Reporting and Review Cycles: Mandatory reporting requirements and sunset clauses should be treated and regarded as standard parts of any emergency laws, and they will not be negotiated. This is logical democratic control and value-of-facts in the mechanism of crisis

government as such, in case the governmental powers of the short term become the powers of the long term and necessitate the repetitive adjustment of policy and output.

Thus, one may suggest that the model of legislative agility in Iceland may be thought of more as a historical case study since it is an experimented form of the efficiency and accountability balance between governance and crisis governance. It is theoretically demonstrating that agility has democratic roots and answering practically how small states may construct legal frameworks to convert natural social and structural resources into an effective source of resilience. At a time when the world is in an era of mounting transnational crises, be they in the shape of pandemics or in the shape of disruption of climate, the ideas this model is based on offer an immeasurable blueprint of how to be not only any state but also a state that is profoundly responsive.

Conclusion

This research project affirms that the Framework of Legislative Agility was a multifaceted and deliberate assumption in the reaction Iceland demonstrated to the COVID-19 epidemic. Through a comparative analysis of the amendments of the Border Control Act and the Civil Protection Act with regard to their iterative amendments, the report demonstrates that Iceland succeeded in applying a far stronger legal solution than a dressing. It was a proactive governing body that was geared towards flexibility.

The significant innovation that was linked to the framework was that it institutionalized a continuous feedback loop. The agile, data-driven mechanisms of recalibration became part of the personal legislative framework of the state through precision, sunset, expert delegation, and needed transparency. This was a good means of balancing two imperatives that would otherwise easily contradict each other, i.e., the need to have expedited and decisive action on the part of the executive and the need to have a robust parliament and democratic legitimacy. As such, it offered a viable and publicly plausible alternative to the declaration of a blank cloak, a constitutionally extraordinary state of emergency.

In theory, the case makes a strong contribution to the existing body of knowledge on agile governance, as it offers a strong empirical framework on how the concept of adaptability can

be formalized instead of being informally handled. It also distils a very specific vision of small-state resilience, demonstrating how countries can use intrinsic source strategies to transform structural weaknesses into operational capabilities by capitalizing on social trust, speedy coordination, and industry expertise through specific legal-institutional design.

In practice, the Iceland model provides a replicable model, especially to small and highly

globalized countries. It puts a strong case in favor of pre-engineering of legal frameworks to address crises in the future through incorporating modular amendment processes, pre-established delegation mechanisms, and mandatory review periods into major laws. Further studies are needed to expand this observation by assessing the Icelandic legislative agility against other legal approaches to other small states and monitoring its role in the long-term legal and administrative reforms in the post-pandemic world.

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