The Nature of Rural Development:
Towards a Sustainable Integrated Rural Policy in Europe

Katarina Eckerberg & Jessika Wide

Actors, Institutions and Attitudes to Rural Development:
The Swedish National Report

December 2000
Preface

This is a scoping study in a project initiated by WWF and partners into the nature of rural development in Europe. The project analyses rural development policies and practices in a range of countries with a view to developing a more robust model for sustainable, integrated rural development in the European Union.

The scoping study has been supported by WWF and the British countryside agencies and undertaken by IEEP, CRE and a consortium of independent consultants in 10 different European countries, over the period May to December 2000. The countries chosen include 6 EU Member States (Austria, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, UK), 3 accession countries (Hungary, Latvia, Poland) and Switzerland, which has pursued its own approach outside the EU.

The aim of this study has been to investigate actors, institutions and attitudes towards rural development, in order to help clarify key issues in working towards sustainability. It has started with a broad list of potential areas of interest, as follows:

- The driving forces for rural change
- Institutions and institutional arrangements for rural development
- National perspectives on rural development principles and policies
- The role of the environment in rural development policies and outcomes
- The role of social values (participation, equity, etc) in rural development
- The resourcing of rural development policy
- The role of the urban–rural interface
- Accountability versus flexibility and innovation, in policy delivery

Each national research team has assembled basic information on rural development policy and practice, including an examination of actors and institutions, and has explored attitudes and institutional behaviour through a series of semi-structured interviews with key officials, stakeholders and expert observers in the field. This has resulted in the production of 10 national reports describing and analysing rural development from this perspective, of which this is the Swedish case study. All of the above-mentioned areas may therefore not appear in this particular case study. The draft report was discussed at a workshop on 28 September 2000 at WWF Stockholm, bringing together a range of relevant stakeholders and experts. All informants, including those who attended the workshop, are listed in the reference section of this report. The national reports along with a synthesis report from the co-ordinating team were also presented in Brussels on 4 December 2000.

---

1 World Wide Fund for Nature is a non-government organisation working with nature conservation programmes at both national and international levels.
3 Institute for European Environmental Policy, London.
4 Centre for Rural Economy, Dept of Agricultural Economics and Food Marketing, University of Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne.
1. Introduction

In the 20th century Sweden developed from an agricultural country to a service society. There are however big differences in economic structure and population – and even in culture – between different parts of the country. Internationally Sweden is – and has always been – a very sparsely populated country. In the beginning of the 19th century there were only three Swedish towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants. By the year 1990, 55 percent of the population lived in the 110 biggest population centres with more than 10,000 inhabitants (National Atlas of Sweden 1994:54-55).

Conceiving rural and sparsely populated areas as a social problem is a rather late phenomenon. After the Second World War the Swedish industrial sector expanded greatly, while agriculture and forestry were rationalised and mechanised. Thus depopulation started in large parts of the countryside, especially in remote districts. Northern Sweden was especially affected because of the large part of the population employed in agriculture and forestry. Together with the depopulation, the typical problems of sparsely populated areas began: shortage of work, closure of schools and shops and an ageing population. The problems of sparsely populated areas can be seen as an inevitable consequence of the industrialisation and urbanisation of Sweden (Weissglass 1975:9-11).

Today there are signs for a changing role of rural areas and a renewed interest in their development. Social movements for local development are expanding greatly in the more sparsely populated areas of Sweden. Rural areas have also gone through a rebirth and in some parts of the country the rural population is in fact increasing. An important aspect in rural development is that it should be sustainable. That is, one important aspect is the survival of the local community itself but another aspect is that the natural environment, cultural heritage and landscape must survive as well. At the same time there are new environmental demands among the citizens in the society, for example that the agricultural sector must be environment-friendly.

The purpose of this paper is to describe and analyse this development in Sweden considering the following questions:
- What is sustainable rural development in a Swedish perspective?
- Which are the actors involved in sustainable rural development in Sweden?
- Which are their perspectives on and priorities for a sustainable rural development?
- Which projects and programmes are taking place within the area?
- Which are the challenges of rural sustainable development in the Swedish context?

In this report, we have tried to have a broad perspective on rural development, but with a particular focus on agriculture even if this constitutes only a minor part of rural development in Sweden. Our focus depends on the comparative effort of the project with a European perspective. We realise that in Sweden forestry, fishery, reindeer husbandry, tourism, mining, hydropower and small enterprises of various kinds are also central and

5 If nothing else is said, the sources used in this paper are materials from the mentioned organisations and authorities. The material consists of written documents and information from relevant web pages as well as personal discussions.

More information about specific issues, institutions, organisations and projects can be obtained by contacting the actors listed in appendix 3 or by visiting the actors’ web pages (see appendix 3 for full addresses). All organisations and institutions have at least some information in English in their web pages and also full contact details.
very important to the survival of rural areas, if not even more crucial than agriculture, in particular in economic terms.

1.1 Rural and sparsely populated areas – definitions

Sweden is, considering the area of 449,946 sq. km (410,934 sq. km excluding of lakes and other watercourses) one of the largest EU countries. Only Spain (504,750 sq. km) and France (544,000 sq. km) are larger. More than a third of the country consists of mountains, lakes and swamps. Just 7.5 percent of the land area is cultivated and 1.5 percent is used as pasture. Forests cover 59.5 percent of the total land area.

There is no widely established definition of the two concepts “rural area” and “sparsely populated area” in Sweden. Instead there are several definitions that are commonly used, but within different contexts and with different purposes. In many cases the concepts rural areas and sparsely populated areas are used as synonymous. Moreover the concepts are often linked to the geographic location of the area. The most commonly used definitions will be mentioned here together with the share of the population living in the areas.

According to Statistics Sweden a densely populated area has more than 200 inhabitants and less than 200 metres between the houses. Everything else is a sparsely populated area. According to this definition, 16 percent of the population lives in sparsely populated areas. The County Administrative Boards define a sparsely populated area as a large continuous area that is sparsely populated and with long distances to larger population centres, employment and services (9 percent of the population). A rural area is similar, but has shorter distances to larger centres and services (19 percent of the population). The Swedish Association of Local Authorities defines nine different groups of municipalities. A sparsely populated municipality has less than 20,000 inhabitants and less than 5 inhabitants per sq. km (3 percent of the population). In rural municipalities less than 70 percent of the population lives in densely populated areas and more than 7 percent are occupied within agriculture and forestry (4 percent of the population). According to the National Rural Development Agency, a sparsely populated area has more than 45 minutes drive to a population centre of more than 3,000 inhabitants (2 percent of the population). Urban adjacent rural areas have 5-45 minutes drive to a population centre with more than 3,000 inhabitants (22 percent of the population). Categorising the 289 Swedish municipalities by the type of area where the majority of the population lives, makes 7 percent of the municipalities sparsely populated and 56 percent urban adjacent rural (The National Rural Development Agency).

Despite its size, Sweden has only about 8.8 millions inhabitants. The population density is therefore one of the very lowest in Europe with about 21 inhabitants per sq. km (map 2: appendix 1), which might be compared to the one of France (105 inhabitants per sq. km), Germany (227 inhabitants per sq. km) and United Kingdom (238 inhabitants per sq. km). The population density in the EU overall is about 114 inhabitants per sq. km. Although the area covered by Sweden represents 14 percent of the total EU territory, Sweden is home to a mere 2 percent of the population of EU. In the seven forest counties of Sweden (map 1: appendix 1), the population density is 9 inhabitants per sq. km, while it is less than 4 inhabitants per sq. km in the three most northern counties. The county of

6 However these countries also have a much bigger population than Sweden, which has only about 8.8 millions inhabitants: Spain has about 39.6 millions inhabitants and France about 58.0 millions. United Kingdom – which is half the size of Sweden – has a population of 58.7 inhabitants.
Stockholm represents only 2 percent of the total area of Sweden, while 20 percent of the population live there (Statistics Sweden 1999, Eurostat 1995). The largest part of the rural population lives in the interior part of northern Sweden. However 16 percent of the rural population live on islands without a bridge to the mainland. Thus, even the metropolitan areas, such as Stockholm and Gothenburg, include of rural areas. For example, in the county of Stockholm there are about 30,000 islands and islets and 11,000 inhabitants in the archipelago.

Sweden is however not only a rather sparsely populated country, but also a very long country with long distances. From the south to the north, Sweden measures about 1,600 km (appendix 1). That is the same distance as between Brussels and Algiers, between London and Lisbon and between Paris and Tirana.

1.2 Agriculture, forestry and their subsidiaries

In Sweden about 90,000 people are occupied within agriculture, forestry, hunting and fisheries. That is less than three percent of the population. Agriculture represents about 2 percent of the GDP. The biggest farms are found in south Sweden and the smaller ones in the northern parts. A central aspect in Swedish agriculture is that about 70 percent of the farms are combined with forestry. However agriculture and forestry must be seen as quite important in many rural areas since they complement other economic activities. Also hunting and fishing are fundamental to many households.

Structural developments over the last decades have led to fewer but larger farms. In 1961 the number of agricultural holdings was 232,920, in 1970 155,364, in 1994 90,102 and finally – in 1999 80,435. The area of arable land was at its peak during the 1930s. Since the Second World War the area has steadily decreased, even though reclamation of land was still taking place throughout the 1950s in northern Sweden. It is however important to consider that even though there has been a decrease in agricultural holdings during the 90s, the decrease of the area of arable land has slowed down. Today arable land is mostly found in southern and central Sweden. In northern Sweden it is mainly located along the coast and in the river valleys (National Atlas of Sweden 1992a:26-29). The number of farms with livestock has decreased as well during the post-war period. Those remaining have increased their number of animals, while it has also become increasingly common to have only one species per farm (National Atlas of Sweden 1992a:72).

The climate of Sweden sets limits to agriculture and it is especially hard in the northern parts of the country. The average temperature in Sweden during summer varies between 8ºC in northern Sweden and 16ºC in the southern parts. In winter the average temperature varies between 0ºC in southern Sweden and −16ºC in the north. In northern Sweden the winters are not only colder, but also darker and longer. The period of the year when the plants are most active, i.e. the vegetative period, is defined as the period when the average temperature goes above +5ºC. The length of the vegetative period

---

7 In map 2, appendix 1, the population density is shown for each municipality.
8 Because of the limited extent of this report and its focus, we have chosen not to deal with the archipelagos even though we consider them to be important parts of the rural areas in Sweden. The archipelagos have however specific economic, social and environmental problems and possibilities and other actors and institutions are central. For example, fishery is the most important branch of industry. We consider that including the archipelagos would demand a much wider study. For more information about the Swedish archipelago, see for example The Archipelago Foundation (Skärgårdsstiftelsen), <http://www.skargstift.se> or the Government Commission Report on a Living Archipelago (SOU 2000:67).
varies between 220 days in southern Sweden and less than 100 days in the most northern parts.

During the post-war period, Swedish agricultural policy became characterised by detailed regulation and large government subsidies to increase the size of farms, and promote mechanisation and measures towards intensification of land-use. However, a breakthrough for agri-environmental policy occurred in 1990 with the new food policy, which included deregulating its internal market for agricultural products with effect from 1991. At this time, all subsidies were abolished except those that favoured environmental protection. Although there were several goals in the new food policy that could lead to notable reduction in farming landscapes (such as decreasing milk and grain production by one-sixth of the total number of cows and hectares of farm land respectively), for the first time environmental goals were introduced that included subsidies to reducing nutrient leaching, as well as preserving natural habitats and traditional man-made landscapes. Similar introduction of environmental goals had already happened in forestry policy in the mid 1970s and early 1980s, although not accompanied by any government subsidies to environmental protection goals. Protection of biological diversity and traditional farming practices became prioritised issues. The early 1990s can thus be characterised as a new era for Swedish agri-environmental and forest-environmental policies, which again took a sharp turn with the EU membership in 1995 by re-introducing large subsidies to agriculture along with detailed regulation.

1.3 The labour market in rural and sparsely populated areas

One of the biggest changes in Swedish working life during the post-war period is that the workforce has grown. The major change involves women whose intensity of economic activity has increased during the period 1970-1990 from 60 percent to 85 percent. However, there are great regional variations in the economic activities of women. In Greater Stockholm and in the western and southern parts of Sweden, the percentage of gainfully employed women is very high, while it is lower in the northern parts of Sweden, especially inland (National Atlas of Sweden 1993:50-51).

Another big change during the post-war period is the development of the public sector. In Sweden a large number of services are organised via the public sector, which grew rapidly in the 1970s and the 1980s. Almost all education, health care and social care are organised within the public sector with the local authority as the most important employer. Thus there is an overwhelming dominance of women among the public employees. In some localities, however, other public branches dominated by men can be crucial, such as the National Defence that has lately faced major cutbacks. The share of the labour force working in the public sector is higher in northern Sweden and lower in southern Sweden, and in the interior of Norrland (north Sweden) it is more than 40-50 percent, especially among women where over 70 percent might be public employees (National Atlas of Sweden 1993:55-59).

Sweden had a low rate of unemployment in the 1970s and the 1980s compared to international standards. During the period 1974 to 1979 unemployment (proportion of unemployed in the total labour force) was 1.9 percent in Sweden compared to the average 4.6 percent for what are now the 15 EU member-states. During the period 1980 to 1989 it was 2.5 percent in Sweden and 9.2 percent in the EU15. In the early 1990s Sweden began to come up to Western European levels of unemployment. During the period 1992-1997 it was 7.6 percent in Sweden and 10.6 in the EU15 (Statistics from OECD). Unemployment levels differ, however, greatly both between and within the counties of Sweden. Unemployment in the seven forest counties (map 1: appendix 1) is
always higher than the national figure, and the reverse is true of the metropolitan counties, i.e. the counties of Stockholm, Skåne and Gothenburg (National Atlas of Sweden 1993:80-81). According to the Swedish Labour Market Board, in June 2000 unemployment in Sweden was at 6.5 percent. In the forest counties it was 8.2 percent and in the county of Stockholm it was 4.0 percent (Statistics from the Labour Market Board).

Employment in manufacturing industry has been the economic backbone of Sweden for a very long time. These industries are mainly located in southern and central Sweden. Many municipalities, especially small industrial towns but also some sparsely populated municipalities, are very dependent on manufacturing, some even totally dependent (National Atlas of Sweden 1993:54).

In the rural and sparsely populated areas of Sweden, agriculture is thus only one employment opportunity among several. There are also great differences between the rural and sparsely populated areas in southern and central Sweden on the one hand, and northern and western Sweden on the other. In southern and central Sweden the distances are shorter compared to northern Sweden. Commuting is thus possible. The local labour market is usually more diversified compared to northern and western Sweden, where the local labour market often is very tight, with dependency on one sector or even one company. The public sector is generally very important as employer, but locally also hydroelectric power and mining can provide work. Especially in northern Sweden the distances between population centres are very large. Many municipalities – especially in northern Sweden – span very large areas, of several thousands sq. km (map 2: appendix 1), but with only a few thousand inhabitants and a single population centre. One example is the municipality of Jokkmokk in the county of Norrbotten, which has an area of 18,100 sq. km and a population of 6,305 inhabitants. The municipality of Sorsele in the county of Västerbotten has an area of 7,500 sq. km and a population of 3,281 inhabitants. This might be compared to for example Belgium, which has an area of 30,500 sq. km and 10.1 million inhabitants.
2. Institutional and political framework

In this chapter the Swedish institutional and political framework will be described (see appendix 2 for an institutional diagram and appendix 3 for full contact details). The chapter consists of three parts: Firstly, political institutions, authorities and parties; secondly, non-governmental organisations; and thirdly, rural development programmes.

2.1 Political institutions, authorities and parties

Swedish Government and Politics

Since 1970 Sweden has a unicameral parliament, the Riksdag, with 349 seats. Elections are held every fourth year. In relation to the size of the population Sweden has a disproportionately large parliament. One reason for this is to ensure that the sparsely populated constituencies in northern Sweden will be adequately represented. All legislative matters must be referred to committees that serve as fora for achieving compromises and agreements. There are 16 committees, each responsible for a specialist area. Each committee has 17 members appointed in proportion to the strength of the parties (Petersson 1994:60-73). The committees working with issues concerning sustainable rural development are the Committee of Environment and Agriculture (Miljö- och jordbruksutskottet) and the Committee of Business and Industry (Näringsutskottet).

The Government Chancery consists of the Cabinet Office, the Government Administrative Office and the 13 ministries. Directly subordinated to the Government are the Central Administrative Agencies. The head is normally a director-general appointed by Government. A board normally runs the Agency (Petersson 1994:86-100).

The Government fixes policy objectives and lays down the general outline for the department or agency activities. It also distributes the budget. Ministries and the various administrative bodies in the form of Agencies generally focus on one sector. While the Ministry has a more overall view and responsibility, the Agencies are often more specialised. The Agency implements policy decisions within its designed field of activities and also monitors, analyses and reports to the Government on developments in their areas of responsibility. The Ministry is responsible for analysing proposed bills. The Agencies are responsible for the current activities. Even though the Ministry imposes the duties on them, the Agencies might act rather independently, formulate own problems, and make decisions. Thus, the relation between the Ministry and its Agencies goes both ways.

The state has three different options to implement its policies across the country as a whole. Firstly, the Government may transfer the responsibility for certain issues to the local and regional government authorities. For example, the municipalities and the county councils administer central aspects of the welfare state. Secondly, the central administrative agencies construct a nation-wide administrative organisation under their control, often with one board in each county. Thirdly, responsibility for nature conservancy, environmental protection, construction and planning and civil defence is transferred to the County Administrative Board (Länsstyrelsen) in each county. The County Administrative Boards are regional organs of the state that implement nationally determined objectives. However, over time they have also developed into bodies for promoting the interests of the counties and have thus a double role (Petersson 1994:101-102).
At local level, there are 289 municipalities or local authorities (kommuner) in Sweden (map 2: appendix 1). The municipalities became a primary force in social life when the welfare state expanded during the 1960s and 1970s. In addition, they have considerable autonomy, both legally and in terms of financial resources. At regional level, there are 21 county councils (landsting). The areas under the authority of the county councils are identical with the geographic boundaries of the counties (län, map 1: appendix 1). There are both mandatory and voluntary duties of the municipalities. Voluntary duties are those any local authority may take upon itself, provided that it lies within the general area of local authority competence. Mandatory duties are those that the state imposes on the local authorities by special legislation. Elected councillors make decisions on all matters of importance to the municipal or county councils and constitute the highest decision-making body of the local government activity. The councillors appoint an Executive Committee as well as other committees in order to prepare and implement decisions. The Executive Committee is in practice the body with the greatest power (Petersson 1994:124-131). The municipalities have an Environment and Health Protection Department, responsible for environment protection at the local level. Municipal environment and health inspectors work there to monitor various local activities (including agriculture) and their effect on the environment. The municipalities also have an Economic Development and Business Department, which in many cases is the coordinator of financial support to local development projects in the municipality.

Both the municipalities and the county councils have formed organisations of their own to look after their interests. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities (Svenska kommunförbundet) and the Swedish Federation of County Councils (Landstingsförbundet) are voluntary associations. However all municipalities and county councils are members of their respective association which have in fact acquired a semi-official status as the representatives of the local government authorities. Their role is to represent the interests of the municipalities and the county councils, mainly in relation to other political bodies but also to influence public opinion in a more general way (Petersson 1994:138).

A special feature of Swedish policy-making is the consensus processes. This includes the remiss system, by which various public agencies, societal organisations and interest groups are consulted before a government policy is laid down in parliament. Hence, there is a tradition of public openness to inputs from various experts and interests as a method for reaching a common understanding to policy problems and their solutions. Environmental groups are consulted through this mechanism and they also participate in various informal meetings to lay down new government policies. Although the Swedish remiss system has been recently challenged by its EU membership, by which decisions must be taken in other forms and with greater speed than before, the tradition of consensus-making sometimes overrules even EU directives (as was the case for the first round of Natura 2000). Moreover, the rule of public access to official documents facilitates exchange of information from government bodies to those affected. Hence, in general, the channels between government ministries and agencies and various interest groups are well established in Swedish policy-making.

Which ministries and agencies at the national level are important in the area of sustainable rural development?

Ministries and agencies responsible for environmental and rural issues

**The Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications** (Näringsdepartementet) is responsible for promoting the development of regions, business, communications and individuals in the labour market. The objective is a sustainable and strong growth
combined with a low unemployment. It is an important actor within rural development since it bears the main responsibility for regional development policy, regional economic policy and the Structural Funds. The ministry is responsible for 42 agencies and boards, of which three will be mentioned here. The main tasks of the National Rural Development Agency (Glesbygdsverket) is to co-ordinate and develop initiatives in rural areas, especially the forest counties’ inland areas and the archipelago areas, by reporting on rural needs to the Government and monitoring how well authorities and corporations meet them. The Agency also promotes good living conditions and developmental opportunities in rural areas and it sits on committees and participates in decision-making groups in order to interject the concern of rural areas and impact decisions. In some ways the Agency thus acts more as an interest and pressure group than as a traditional public authority and that makes it both unusual and interesting. It also supports the rural developmental work of the County Administrative Boards. The Swedish National Board for Industrial and Technical Development (NUTEK) is responsible for industrial policy issues. It bears the main responsibility for co-ordinating the support to companies wanting to establish and grow in areas with a high priority in the regional policy and it works with the Regional Growth Agreements. It also enlightens companies in the area of environmental work. The National Board of Forestry (Skogsstyrelsen) is responsible for implementing the national forest policy, which promotes the principles of sustainable management of forests and conservation of biodiversity within forests. The Board is also involved in tourism cooperation. The idea is that tourism – based on the forest – in rural areas shall increase and thus offer new jobs.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (Jordbruksdepartementet) is responsible for agriculture, horticulture, fishery, reindeer husbandry, and food production. Its responsibility includes environmental concerns within these sectors. It is responsible for the Environmental and Rural Development Plan for Sweden and for several agencies. Two will be mentioned here. The Swedish Board of Agriculture (Jordbruksverket) is responsible for agriculture, horticulture and reindeer husbandry. Its task is to promote competitive food production, compatible with the protection of the environment and animal welfare. The Government has laid down the objective that Swedish agriculture is to be ecologically sustainable. The Board is thus working to promote a rich and varied agricultural landscape with biological diversity and as little negative impact as possible on the environment. The National Board of Fisheries is the central governmental agency working with fisheries and fisheries conservation matters.

The main task of the Ministry of Environment (Miljödepartementet) is to carry out the Governments priority tasks in the field of the environment, which is to push the adaptation to sustainable development and to solve the environmental problems in Sweden. It is responsible for 13 agencies. One of them is the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Naturvårdsverket), whose tasks are to co-ordinate and drive forward environmental work and to promote ecologically sustainable development both nationally and internationally. It is responsible for promoting sustainability in trade, industry, products, waste and infrastructure in co-operation with the sector authorities as well as regional and local authorities. It also follows up and evaluates the conditions of the environment and the work done to form the basis for further development of environmental policy.

Political parties in Sweden

By the time universal suffrage was introduced for both men and women at the beginning of the 1920s, the system of political parties had developed an organised structure, and the principal features are still recognisable today. Conservative and moderate groups formed the Moderate Party (Moderata samlingspartiet) at the beginning of the 20th
The Liberal Party (Folkpartiet) originally evolved out of groups advocating free trade and other liberal issues in the Riksdag of the late 19th century. It is primarily a party of white-collar workers, especially from the private sector. The Christian Democrats (Kristdemokraterna) were formed in 1964 as a reaction to the secularisation of society, but it was not until 1991 that it entered the Riksdag. The ideology is based on Christian values and the party has a particularly strong core of support among Christian voters. The Centre Party (Centerpartiet) has its origins in the Farmers’ Movement, which was first organised during the 1910s. It was united under the banner of the Agrarian Party – as it was called then – in 1921. When the number of agricultural workers started to decline, it subsequently lost support. At the beginning of the 1970s the Centre Party however started to win considerable support on issues such as decentralisation, the environment and opposition to nuclear power. The voters are still found mostly in rural areas with farmers as a key group (Petersson 1994:139-150).

The Social Democrats (Socialdemokratiska arbetarpartiet) was formed in 1889 as a part of the Labour Movement’s struggle for political power. Their strongest support is to be found among trade union organised workers and a vital electoral group is made up of women working in the public sector. The Left Party (Vänsterpartiet) is the former Communist Party. Originally it was a workers’ party, but today the core support is made up of public sector employees, notably in health, education and welfare. The Green Party (Miljöpartiet de gröna) has its origins in the campaign against nuclear power, and was formed for the referendum on that issue held in 1980. The party entered in 1988, was turned out in 1991 and re-entered the Riksdag in 1994. Electoral support for the Greens, which has an ecological programme, is fairly evenly distributed across the country and among different population groups, but with a slight preponderance among public sector salaried employees. To avoid an organisation controlled from the top, the party has two spokespersons leading the party for a year at the time, instead of a party leader (Petersson 1994:139-150).

The Swedish party system can be seen as originally one-dimensional, with all the parties on the classic Right-Left scale. This conflict dimension is the economic conflict between labour and capital. In the end of the 1960s the environmental issues reached the political agenda and in the 1980s the Green Party was founded. The development gave rise to the emergence of a Growth-Ecology Scale that cut across the Right-Left scale. This new dimension of political conflict is about the level and type of welfare, while the traditional Right-Left scale is about the distribution of welfare (Vedung 1989:140-142). There is however also a third political dimension, between modern and post-modern issue preferences. The post-modern preferences are post-material, while the modern ones are traditional. The reason for this emergence is the tension between traditional and post-material objectives, shown by the New Social Movements and new parties. They have shown new social power structures, and challenge the traditional politics in several different ways. Thus the area of politics has expanded (Inglehart 1997:237-266). The emergence of the Green Party may also be seen in this perspective.

2.2 NGOs working with environmental and rural issues

In the end of the 20th century, the Swedish parties experienced difficulties in interesting the ordinary citizens in party politics. The background was a decline in the number of members as well as in the participation in the elections. However, at the same time the citizens have – to a large extent – participated in other forms of political activities, such as organisations and movements. Thus, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can be seen as important actors in rural and environmental politics in Sweden.
Movements and organisations in four waves

The civic movements and organisations have been very important in Sweden throughout the 20th century, both in politics and in social development. The development of civic society is normally described as “waves”. In Sweden there have been four such waves, reflecting fundamental social, economic and political changes in the country (Micheletti 1994:29-31).

The first wave, in the middle of the 19th century, includes the Temperance Movement, the Free Church Movement and the Women’s Movement. They struggled for religious and political freedom, peace, women’s rights and universal suffrage, and protested against the Establishment and abuse of alcohol. The organisations in the second wave, from the 1860s till the 1920s, fought for their members’ economic rights and security. This wave includes the trade unions, the employers’ associations, the Agricultural Cooperative Movement, the Consumers’ Cooperative Movement, the Cooperative Housing Society and other economic interests’ organisations. The third wave of organisations, which developed during the 1910s and the 1920s, wanted to expand the power and the influence of the citizens, mostly by individual change, personal development and empowerment. It includes different recreational organisations, such as the Scout Movement, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, the Swedish Touring Club, the Sports Movement, the Local Heritage Movement and the Adult Education Associations. In the end of the 1950s till the beginning of the 1990s developed the fourth wave with new social movements, such as the Environmental Movement, the Women’s Movement, the Local Development Movement and the Peace Movement. They struggled for personal integrity and opposition to all infringements of individuals, the environment, groups etc. These organisations demanded social change and political actions in a way, which to a great deal distinguish them from earlier established organisations. Thus, they both emanate from and challenge the earlier movements (Micheletti 1994:29-31).

However, the concept “organisational waves” is problematic if it implies that the earlier waves have lost importance in society, or that all organisations in one wave are similar to each other (Wide 1998:7). “Organisational waves” is a useful concept since it sorts the organisations, but we do not want to use it literally. Most organisations in the earlier waves are still important in the Swedish society today and some have transformed and might fit also into later waves, such as the Federation of Swedish Farmers.

We start the introduction of relevant organisations by looking at the Local Development Movement and how it has changed over time, since we consider it central to rural development.

2.3 Rural organisations and movements

The Local Development Movement in Sweden consists mainly of about 4,500 active local community groups (byautvecklingsgrupper) spread all over the country, operating locally under the municipal level to develop their districts and villages (Herlitz 1998). These local groups are organised in different ways, for example as local associations, co-operatives or networks. Mostly, their activities are triggered by a local crisis, for example the closing down of the shop, post office or school. The movements often develop from a focus on

---

9 In Sweden, ‘locally’ normally refers to the level below the municipal one, for example a village, a local district or a neighbourhood. There are thus four levels: National, regional, municipal and local. ‘Centralised’ can therefore refer both to centralised in the country as a whole, i.e. centralised at the capital, and centralised in the municipality, i.e. centralised at the main population centre. In both cases, there are conflicts between the centre and the periphery.
special and single issues to bigger and more complex tasks. What all the local development groups have in common is the aim to develop the village or local district and make it survive by collective efforts. Another common character is the holistic perspective of the groups (Bond 1998).

At the beginning of the 1980s the situation was critical for large parts of the rural areas of Sweden, especially the small villages in the sparsely populated areas in the northern part of the country. Depopulation was increasing so heavily in many areas that the basic functions of the local communities were threatened. The inhabitants also felt a lack of influence on decisions concerning the local communities. This was the starting point for a national effort for the countryside, a campaign called “All of Sweden shall live!” in which many popular movements participated. In 1987 the Council of Europe launched a campaign for the development of rural Europe. Sweden joined the European campaign well prepared because of the national action that had already been planned. The aim was to stimulate and support local mobilisation, to change the opinion among decision-makers and public, to start pilot projects to exemplify possibilities and to influence and change the sector policies and the regional policies. The most important result of the campaign was the powerful local mobilisation process that created new vitality in the countryside (Bond 1998, Herlitz 1998).

In 1989 about 50 large and small NGOs established the Popular Movements Council for Rural Development (Folkrörelserådet Hela Sverige Ska Leva!). The local development groups, which were formed during the campaign, were soon joining. In the late 1980s there were about 1,000 such groups and now there are 3,500 associated groups. The purpose of the Council is to stimulate and support local development, enhance communication between local development groups, co-ordinate NGOs rural work and influence the public opinion and decision-makers. Every second year the Council arranges a so-called “Rural Parliament” that focuses rural matters and gives guidelines for the Council’s coming work (Bond 1998, Herlitz 1998).

Both in the campaign and in the local mobilisation process the most frequently used method has been the study circle, which is a traditional way in Sweden of meeting, discussing and learning. It is a form of adult education organised by NGOs and political parties through national popular education associations and supported by the authorities. There are twelve such education associations and some of them are very active in rural development. The study circle has always had a central role in empowering the citizens and supporting participative democracy. The participants meet in small groups of about ten persons in the participants’ homes or a community centre in an unpretentious way. The study circle is based on sharing experience and a collective will to solve the problems the group is facing. One purpose with the study circle might be to form a local action plan (Bond 1998, Herlitz 1998).

The folk high schools have another important role in rural development. They offer very flexible studying opportunities and have often been used as gathering points for rural activists. Today there are a total of 147 schools spread around the country. Most of them are run by NGOs while the rest are run by county councils or municipalities. The folk high school is for adults and the schools normally favour the admission of people with short earlier schooling. The freedom allotted to the folk high schools to create their courses according to the special profile and direction of the school, allows the course participants ample opportunities to influence the aims and contents of their course, according to their

---

10 Three of them are mentioned in appendix 3: The Workers’ Educational Association (ABF), the Study Promotion Association (Studiefrånåndet) and the SV (Vuxenskolan).

11 Thus, both study circles – and folk high schools – are also important to other NGOs and social movements, such as the environmental movement.
current knowledge, interests, and needs. Folk high schools have courses on different levels and with differing aims and directions. Every school has long courses, which will qualify for university studies.

One problematic aspect in rural development is the relation between the local community and the municipalities. What the municipality does, especially in physical planning, is of vital interest to the local development groups. It is therefore important to make both the politicians and the officials more sensitive to the rural population and their ideas and engagement. This requires a change in the balance of power, favouring a bottom-up approach in municipal politics and also a new “unpolitical” way of acting in certain issues, i.e. both a change of attitude and a change in methods of working and planning in the municipalities (Bond 1998). In the 1990s two village political projects were conducted to develop the municipal politics. The projects were a continuation of the “All of Sweden shall live!”-campaign. In the first project (1990-1993) 20 municipalities participated. The aim was to strengthen the influence of the local population on the development of their own community. In the second project (1994-1996) 71 municipalities participated. Here the aim was that the municipalities and the local development groups should together work out an organised model for co-operation, considering local conditions and ambitions.

The final models that derived from this project can be defined into three groups of “village political profiles”. In the first model, the municipality and the villages are equal. The co-operation is characterised by dialogue and exchange of knowledge based on experience. The second profile is characterised by a centralised (i.e. municipal) top-down perspective, possibly with some consultation with affected interest groups. The municipality has an active role in the rural development as an initiator and organiser. However, while the rural development is stimulated, the municipality also sets up limits to the co-operation. In the third profile there is no strategy or purpose at all that is expressed by the municipality. In the first two profiles a formal institution is designed for the co-operation to take place, for example a rural development board, a common working party for the municipality and the villages or representation for the villages in the development group of the municipal executive board. The villages are then often the bodies to which a proposed measure is referred to for consultation. The village political profile often depends on the initiatives and activities of an individual person acting as a catalyst. There might be one or several such “fire brands” that in practise can be regarded as a prerequisite for the co-operation to take off (Bull 1998). These three models may as well be used to describe more generally what the situation of collaboration over rural development between GOs and NGOs is like in Sweden today.

Besides the Popular Movements Council, there are also other NGOs that are important in rural development. One is the National Federation of Rural Community Centres (Bygdegårdarnas Riksförbund). The rural community centres movement began to develop during the beginning of the 20th century and has increased considerably since then. A rural community centre is a building, often a traditional one like the closed village school but sometimes a newly built house, which has become an important place of meeting for the local population. It is used for education, such as study circles and libraries, as well as cultural activities of all kinds. In most areas the rural community centre serves as a model for environmental work. Since it is a way to co-ordinate initiatives and create solidarity it might also have consequences for the development of many different issues of local importance. For example in some cases the centre plays a crucial role in maintaining services and preventing depopulation since they have developed from a public meeting place to a forum for people who want to do something together.
The Swedish Local Heritage Federation (Sveriges Hembygdsförbund) is also important. Its main task is to preserve the popular cultural heritage and support the local heritage societies in questions relating to cultural as well as environmental issues. Another task is to generate positive interest in local heritage activities on the part of Government (on national, regional and local level) and the general public. The local heritage movement emerged at the end of the 19th century because of the great social changes taking place in the society during the industrialisation. The prevention of man-made landscapes is an important part of the work. Without it many of the open landscapes in the countryside would quickly be overgrown with brushwood. Since the local societies have a deep knowledge of their home communities they also take active part in the planning of the modern community. It is not unusual for a local heritage society to be consulted by the local authority on the planning of new housing areas, the rerouting of roads, developments affecting the countryside etc.

The Swedish Federation of the Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies (Hushållningssällskapen) somehow falls between two chairs. It is a kind of an NGO, but cannot be seen as an ordinary NGO for individual members. It is however important both in rural development and in agriculture. The Federation is an independent members’ organisation dedicated to enhance an entrepreneurial spirit in rural areas and promote a healthy environment in the countryside as well as in the cities. A healthy rural economy is seen as a benefit to the nation as a whole, and the natural surroundings are seen as more important than short-term commercial interests. The Federation offers expertise for rural companies as well as consumers. It conducts courses, training sessions, seminars, exhibitions and development projects for companies, organisations and individual members. Environmental sustainability is seen as very important. The Federation thus conducts surveys and environmental consequence descriptions; coordinates Agenda 21-work at local level; offers environmental services for companies and agriculture; conducts development projects and works within different environmental issues; offers advice, courses and training in ecologically sound agriculture and the maintenance of biological diversity; assists farmers who want to switch to or enhance their ecological agriculture operations etc. The Federation also functions as an interest group for farmers along with LRF (the latter organisation is described below).

In some parts of Sweden, notably in the south, the Swedish Federation for the Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies has an important role in both giving advice to farmers and in representing their interests in local policy-making. In addition, they implement various EU-funded initiatives such as Carrefour and LEADER.

The Federation of Swedish Farmers

The Federation of Swedish farmers (LRF) can be seen as a central actor within rural development in several ways. LRF was founded in 1971 as a result of the amalgamation of the Farmers’ Professional Organisation and the Farmers’ Economic Association. It is the interest and industry organisation for everybody who owns and/or cultivates land and forests in Sweden. It is also the basis for the agricultural cooperative movement. The largest co-operative associations are the Swedish Dairy Association (Svensk mjölk), the Swedish meat producers (Swedish Meat) and the Swedish Farmers’ Supply and Crop Marketing Association (Lantmänna). LRF also includes a range of other associations (see appendix 3 for some examples).

LRF consists of some 137,000 individual members and has gained 15,000 members in the last three years, which is quite a remarkable growth. Activities in LRF are organised on the basis of 1,350 local branches, 24 county associations and the national federation. There is the LRF Youth Association for the participation of young farmers and the LRF
Women’s Association for involving women in rural issues. The highest decision-making body is the annual National Congress, which is made up of 200 representatives. Half of them represent individual members and the other half-organisational members. LRF focuses on strengthening the competitiveness and profitability of farmers through an aggressive business policy at national and European level and by supporting agriculture co-operatives and also on creating a positive opinion for the products and activities of Swedish farmers and for Swedish rural communities. LRF is also focused on achieving sustainable output with good animal welfare and a high environmental standard in order to attain the aims of the programme entitled “Heading for the World’s Cleanest Agriculture”. In recent years, the image of LRF has changed from a previous ‘production’ to a new ‘ecological farming’ emphasis. It is now a member of the international ecological farming network, and even its chairman is in the process of becoming registered as an ecological farmer. Likewise, the organisation has changed its main role from being a partner in negotiations with the state on the pricing of agricultural products (prior to the 1990 food policy when these negotiations were abolished) - to becoming a modern lobby organisation in national and EU policy-making. Other important tasks include developing the skills of members and elected representatives and offering members a personal service and acting as a forum for fellowship in the countryside. LRF thus works with rural issues in a wide perspective. It can be seen as the creative arena for everybody who is interested in developing enterprises in rural areas with natural resources as a base.

In addition to the interest organisations for farmers, there are also a long list of forestry associations both with national coverage and more regional focus. However, for the purpose of this paper we have chosen to not go into depth on the forest issues since this would deserve its own analysis.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Agenda 21 in Sweden}

In many cases local development and environmental work goes hand in hand within Agenda 21. By international comparison, Sweden is a forerunner in local Agenda 21 implementation (Lafferty and Eckerberg, 1998; Lafferty 1999). Most Swedish municipalities have an Agenda 21 co-ordinator and have formulated Local Agenda 21-programmes\textsuperscript{13}. Many villages in the rural areas of Sweden have made their local actions plans with sustainability as a guiding star. The rural development movement can thus be seen as an important resource in the development towards a sustainable society, since Agenda 21 implies local mobilisation (Bond 1998).

One of the main factors explaining this ‘success story’ is the comparatively high level of support towards LA21 from the national level of government, in the form of campaigns, finance and co-ordination. The financial inducements for municipal action have increased further from 1997, through the government’s investment programme for local initiatives towards ecological sustainability (LIP). This is part of the Social Democratic government’s


\textsuperscript{13} By the end of 1998, 56 per cent of the 289 municipalities had formally adopted local Agenda 21 plans, the majority of which had been discussed in the Municipal Councils. More than 70 per cent of local authorities had employed a full-time or part-time Agenda 21 co-ordinator (Brundin & Eckerberg, 1998).
programme to build a Sustainable Sweden. The rapid growth of LA21 in Swedish municipalities could thus be attributed to a top-down strategy from the national government, quite contrary to the notion of bottom-up initiatives and participatory approaches that characterises the LA21 concept. At the same time, the importance of grassroots’ initiatives and involvement has been emphasised in the Swedish response to Agenda 21. The two main co-ordinating bodies for Agenda 21 are described below.

The activities included in LA21 have expanded over the past years from being focussed largely on waste and water management and ‘green purchasing’ to a range of issues including renewable energy, biological diversity, environmental management and auditing systems, and sustainability indicators. About half of the local authorities have initiated grassroots’ activities, while quality of life and social welfare issues are present in one-third of their LA21 work. Almost all municipalities have tried to involve local citizens. Still, however, most of the persons who are responsible for LA21 are environmental officers. There is a clear tendency to emphasise the ‘green’ aspects of Agenda 21 rather than the social and economic aspects, both at the local level and in national programmes. Agenda 21 is largely perceived as a renewal, and expansion, of environmental policy.

*The Association for Agenda 21 and Sustainable Development in Sweden (Föreningen för Agenda 21 och hållbar utveckling)* is a network aiming to promote Agenda 21-work in Sweden at all levels. It organises meetings and provides information and exchange of experiences on a web-site for local Agenda 21 co-ordinators, different public authorities at national and regional level as well as business and industry. The partners in the association thus represent both public and private interests.

*The National Co-ordinator for Agenda 21 and Habitat*14 with a secretariat are appointed by the Ministry of Environment with a special task to communicate suggestions from the local authorities to relevant national bodies and propose policy measures to spur implementation of the UN agreements. Also, it should provide updated information to all interested parties on what is happening at the international level concerning the implementation of sustainable development.

**Environmental organisations**

Environmental work is also pursued by pure NGOs. In Sweden there are four main environmental NGOs. Two of them, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation and Friends of the Earth Sweden, are principally members’ organisations where the activities of the members are the essence of their work. The other two, WWF and Greenpeace, have individual members too, but the role of the members in those organisations is more of a supportive function. What the environmental organisations have in common is the goal of promoting a change of attitudes within agriculture and forestry, as well as other commercial activities affecting the rural environment. From being seen as very harmful to the environment, agriculture is now viewed as an important contributor to sustainable rural development. The work of the environmental organisations has thus changed from almost ignoring the positive role of agriculture, to co-operating with farmers and developing special agricultural landscape programmes. Also in forestry, biodiversity and landscape protection have become issues that bring environmental NGOs and forest companies together.

*The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (Svenska naturskyddsföreningen)* was established in 1909 with nature conservation as its chief task. It has its own specialists

---

14 Habitat refers to the UN Habitat II conference on sustainable cities and urban environments in Istanbul 1996.
and experts carrying out investigations within energy, traffic, genetic engineering, environmental economics etc. The results of the investigations are often used as background for action at local, regional and national level. Politicians and other decision-makers are lobbied in order to influence decisions for the benefit of the environment. The voluntary work of the local branches is, however, regarded as most important to the Society. Depending on the particular environmental problems in the locality and the interests of the members in the local groups, the issues that are dealt with vary quite substantially. The Society has an independent youth branch formed in 1947, The Swedish Youth Association of Nature Studies and Environmental Protection (Fältbiologerna), also called The Field Biologists.

The Environmental Association Friends of the Earth Sweden (Miljöförbundet Jordens Vänner, an amalgamation of the Friends of the Earth formed in 1972 and the Environmental Association formed in 1976) aims to protect the environment and build solidarity between people. However, it does not have any activities concerning rural development. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF – Världsnaturfonden) was introduced in Sweden in 1971. WWF Sweden is organised as a foundation guided by a Board of 50 trustees. Half of the Board consists of representatives of Swedish organisations, institutions and authorities. With the financial backing of its members – or supporters – it funds some hundred nature conservation projects in Sweden, aiming to safeguard biodiversity, ensure sustainable use of renewable natural resources and minimise wasteful consumption. The nature conservation work is concentrated in five programmes: The Agricultural Landscape; Environmental Education and Youth; Freshwater and Wetlands; Forests (Boreal and Tropical); and Oceans and Coasts. Besides practical work with nature conservation projects, it also works with research, lobbying and negotiation. Greenpeace, which is an environmental organisation active all over the world, was introduced in Sweden in 1983. So far, it has only taken action a few times in relation to rural development, in particular relating to the cutting down of old-growth forests.

The environmental movement in Sweden also consists of a large number of community associations and campaigning groups of a more temporary type. Many of them, such as tree-huggers and river-rescuers, have been formed to safeguard natural environments from exploitation. In several cases, public opinion in itself has exerted stronger pressure on harmful industries than the authorities have been able to bring on their own. This was for instance the case concerning chlorine-bleached paper. The industries gradually became convinced that it was in their own interest to take environmental protection work further than the law required to increase their environmental image in view of the public and to prevent more stringent regulation. It happens that ordinary people’s commitment to the environment has been expressed in more overt action. For example local groups or individual citizens may use public demonstrations or even more physical action like civil disobedience to try to stop the construction of roads, felling of forests etc. In several cases such actions have been successful.

After this review of the political and institutional framework in Sweden, we will continue with a description of plans and programmes for rural development.

2.4 Plans and programmes for rural development

The Environmental and Rural Development Plan for Sweden 2000–2006

The Environmental and Rural Development Plan for Sweden 2000-2006 (Miljö- och landsbygdsprogrammet) is made up of financial support measures, which will contribute
Aim and Strategy: The Environmental and Rural Development Plan builds on an integrated course of action towards rural development. An integrated course of action means that a number of individual measures work together to contribute to the realisation of long-term goals. The extent and direction of the measures in the Environmental and Rural Development Plan are also affected by the different prerequisites for agricultural and rural development that exist in different parts of the country. It is important to maintain agriculture in areas with particularly difficult conditions for carrying on agriculture in order to preserve the landscape and environment. The measures in the Environmental and Rural Development Plan are divided into two priorities:

- Environmentally Sustainable Development in rural areas.
- Economically and Socially Sustainable Development in rural areas.

Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture conserves resources, is adapted to the environment and is ethical. A fundamental requirement is that the rural environment is maintained and preserved for future generations. The measures will contribute to achieving Swedish environmental quality objectives as well as specific environmental objectives for agriculture. An important part of this strategy is to compensate agriculture for its production of so-called collective services, which are not compensated for by other means. Examples of such collective services are maintenance of biodiversity and of cultural heritage values such as open and varied landscapes.

Economically and Socially Sustainable Development in rural areas requires a competitive rural economy where production is geared towards quality rather than quantity. It is important that the farmer produces food of high quality at reasonable costs for the consumer and that the farmer obtains reasonable compensation for his or her production. The agricultural sector must also take advantage of opportunities to develop and adjust to new conditions and become an integrated part of rural development as a whole. The measures will contribute to modernising, increasing the efficiency of and strengthening agriculture and its competitiveness. For the farmer it may be difficult to earn sufficient income from his or her holding. Therefore it may be necessary for the farmer to earn complementary incomes from other activities. Diversification of agriculture means that the farmer takes advantage of opportunities the farm offers in order to create incomes from alternative activities such as small-scale food processing and on-farm tourism activities. It is also important to take advantage of women’s competence in rural areas.

Geographical coverage: The Swedish Environmental and Rural Development Plan’s agri-environmental measures and compensatory allowances in less favoured areas are covered for the whole country. For other measures, the plan is applicable in the whole country outside of the Objective 1 area (see below). Some of the measures in the plan have a regional dimension and are implemented only in areas that have specific structural problems, environmental problems or natural handicaps. Examples of such measures are compensatory allowances in less favoured areas as well as some of the agri-environmental measures.

Organisation: The Swedish Board of Agriculture is the paying agency for all the measures in the plan and managing authority for the agricultural measures. The National Board of
Forestry is the managing authority for the forestry measures. For most of the measures in the plan the County Administrative Boards are the decision-making authorities.

During its work on the Plan, the Government held a number of consultations with bodies concerned, both in the form of a hearing and through consultation procedures. The participants in the consultation process included The Federation of Swedish Farmers, the Swedish National Audit Office (Riksrevisionsverket), the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, the County Administrative Boards, the Swedish Board of Agriculture, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, the WWF, the Foundation for the Promotion of Horse Husbandry (Hästhållningens främjande), the Organic Farmers’ Organisation (Ekologiska lantbrukarna), the National Horticultural Organisation (Trädgårdsnäringens Riksförbund), the Swedish Central Board of National Antiques, the National Board of Forestry, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities, the Federation of Swedish County Councils, the Swedish Federation of Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies, the Popular Movements Council for Rural Development and the County Forest Boards.

**Regional policy and other public rural development programmes in Sweden**

Before Sweden became a member of the EU, some counties had developed their own rural development programmes. When Sweden joined the EU, the work continued with the Structural Funds Programmes that complemented and replaced earlier local programmes. However, the Government Bill of Regional Policy has laid down the general outlines for rural development in Sweden since the 1960s.

The Structural Funds Programmes – during the period 2000-2006 – in the rural and sparsely populated areas of Sweden are as follows:

In Sweden 51 municipalities and about 970,000 inhabitants are affected by the *Objective 1-programmes* (co-financed by the EU with 772 Million Euro during the period). There are two programmes carried out in two areas: Northern Norrland and the Southern Forest Region. The programmes mainly aim to develop the local economy and industry (especially high-technology), prevent depopulation, establish new companies and support traditional Saami culture. To achieve all that, issues concerning environment, education, infrastructure, culture and rural development are emphasised. In each area one of the Central Administrative Boards is responsible for the programme.

The *Objective 2-programmes* aim at stimulating economic development in exposed rural and industrial areas. In Sweden the Objective 2-programmes (co-financed by the EU with 354 Million Euro during the period) affect 76 municipalities in 11 counties and 300 islands without any bridge to the mainland. Altogether 1,2 million inhabitants live in these areas. There are four programmes: Northern, Western, Southern and the Islands.

The aim of the Interreg-programmes is to develop co-operation across the national borders. The EU co-finances the Swedish Interreg-programmes with a total of 154 million Euro during the period. Interreg IIIA supports co-operation in border districts. There are six such programmes in Sweden (The Sound, Sweden-Denmark; The Archipelago; The Kvarken Straits, Sweden-Finland; The Arctic area; Kolarctic in the Barents sea area; and finally Sweden-Norway). The purpose of *Interreg IIIB* is to support co-operation in transnational areas to achieve a better co-ordination at national, regional and local level within the region to reach a balanced and permanent development. In Sweden there are three programmes: The Baltic Sea, The Northern Periphery and The North Sea. The aim of *Interreg IIIIC* is Interregional co-operation between regions in the EU and neighbouring regions.
countries. By working in networks, politics and tools for regional development and solidarity can be made more efficient.

The EU co-finasces the programme of LEADER+ with 38 million Euro during the period. LEADER+ supports rural development based on local conditions and initiatives, especially innovative development strategies. In Sweden the National Rural Development Agency is the responsible national authority. Under the LEADER programmes, Local Actions Groups (LAGs) implement rural development plans, approved by the Swedish Government. The LAGs are essentially local partnerships composed of the community sector, local enterprises and various local and regional authorities. The rural development plans are integrated strategies that aim to support various innovative projects. A nationwide LEADER network exists to ensure the transferability of the activities financed by LEADER. It builds successfully upon previously existing networks and activities.

In an evaluation of the Swedish LEADER II experience, it is emphasised that LEADER has been a positive experience. In many cases LEADER has managed to create proper conditions for rural development in Sweden. Both the bottom-up perspective and the untraditional construction of LAGs, have made LEADER an attractive development opportunity for the rural areas. LEADER as one of the Structural Fund programmes has also influenced a reorientation of regional policy in Sweden. The development of regional partnerships has made local and regional commitment to development partly replace the dominating re-distributive policies employed of earlier years (Larsson 2000: 20-21).

In 1998 an experiment with developing Regional Growth Agreements (Regionala tillväxtavtal) began. All 21 County Administrative Boards decided to participate by co-ordinating the drafting of an Action Programme, which will serve as the platform for the Agreements. The aim is that the Agreements will become the principal instruments for co-ordinating and adjusting the policies of the various sectors and for exploring new approaches to the promotion of regional and local industrial development. In the drafting and implementation of the action programmes, Regional Partnerships – i.e. groups compromising representatives of municipalities, local business associations, universities and colleges and regional authorities – play an active role. These Partnerships analyse the potential for and threats to economic growth and industrial development in their respective region, and formulate programmes of measures designed to take greater advantages of the opportunities identified. Finally the parties involved negotiate and agree on funding. One purpose with the Partnerships is to encourage regional and central government actors, which run programmes that influence and support regional development, to closer and more structured collaboration. It is also important in regard to the active participation by the private business community to ensure that its view and needs are given attention. There have not been any investments of State Funds in the Programmes or Agreements. Instead the purpose is a more effective and creative use of certain appropriations in the Budget, for example resources within regional policy, labour-market policy, environmental policy and educational policy. There have been two horizontal objectives with the Programmes: both gender equality and an ecological sustainable development shall permeate the Programmes. More recently, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has provided some funding in pilot activities to promote the environmental dimension in some counties’ Regional Growth Agreements. The EU Structural Funds Programme has served in part as a model for the structure of the Action Programme and it is expected that the programmes will be integrated.

More information about LEADER in Sweden and examples of projects can be obtained from the Swedish LEADER Network: <http://www.leader.bygde.net>.
Regional and local programmes for sustainable rural development

In addition to the national key players, there is a myriad of different priorities and perspectives at the regional and local levels. The diversity of activities, projects, programmes and campaigns arranged by local development groups, the municipalities and the County Administrative Boards are not possible to describe in detail here. Instead a short description of the work performed by the local development groups will be given.

All the work performed by the local development groups can be seen as important to rural development and in many cases also to sustainable development. The activities of the groups varies, but in an inquiry where 1,660 local groups participated the following fields of activities were the most common: festivities (78% of the groups), culture (68%), meeting-place (49%), study-circles (47%), roads (45%), tourism (39%), fairs and sales (37%), bathing-beach or bridge (35%), environment and nature (34%) and magazine (34%) (Herlitz 1998). The activities in the field of Environment include for example ecological cultivation, sorting waste, a common compost, preserving the open landscape, ecological tourism, campaigns to stop exploitation of the river, car-pooling, study-circles and developing Local Agenda 21. In addition, activities for preserving the cultural environment and heritage are central, for example restoring buildings and activities within theatre, art and handicrafts. Theatre groups are common as a social activity. The plays often have a close connection to the district and its traditions. Also cultural days and fairs are arranged. One popular tradition is to arrange a “return home-day” once a year for persons who have lived in the area or with relatives from there. In some districts traditional handicrafts are preserved by women making it their gainful employment, often in a collective.

One example of a local development group is Järja Society in Vilhelmina municipality in northern Sweden. Järja works in a district with about 180 inhabitants, about 25 km from the population centre with about 4,000 inhabitants. The closed-down school is nowadays the meeting-place of the local population. The society runs a youth hostel, which complements the other forms of rural tourism in the district: wilderness camping, beaver safari, fishery, canoeing, sleeping in Lapp cot etc. The society also leases allotments to the inhabitants and it has several dwellings. There is also a co-operative day nursery. The society has built a baking house. Baking thin flat unleavened bread in a baking-house is an old tradition in northern Sweden and nowadays a social activity. The baking-house is let for the local population and visitors, but the society also bakes bread that is sold in the shop. The society has also built a pool, warmed with a sun panel. One of the latest projects is a small-scale thermal power station for wood chips. In close connection to the society, a company has started, Järja Gårmé. It runs the shop and a catering business, and it also cultivates ecological vegetables in a greenhouse. Besides this, the society also arranges social activities such as theatre and “return home-days”. The aim of the local development work is a society with a local economic and ecological cycle and with all perspectives integrated: social, economic, ecological and cultural (Wide 1998, Herlitz 1998).

2.5 Concluding remarks

The Swedish interests organisations mentioned above belong to different “organisational waves”, reflecting fundamental social, economic and political changes. LRF belongs to the second wave, while the National Federation of Rural Community Centres and the Local Heritage Federation belong to the third wave as does the Society for Nature Conservation. Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth belong to the fourth wave together with the Local Development Movement. This means that they have different origins and
different aims and strategies. As previously discussed (see Section 2.2), it should be noted that the borderlines between the four waves are not absolute and several of these organisations may fulfil more than one function.

However, public bodies can also take on the role of interests groups. It is obvious that the National Rural Development Agency often acts as an interest group, defending the interests of the rural population. Moreover, the local and regional authorities have formed national associations, which have developed into powerful pressure groups towards the state. The County Administrative Boards increasingly appear as regional interest groups. Moreover, individual local authorities may act as independent political agents concerning issues such as industrial policy and regional development. In many cases it is possible to talk about a form of “local corporatism”, in which local politicians, officials, trade unions, companies and interest organisations collaborate in defence of their own district (Petersson 1994:144).
3. Perceptions and perspectives of the key players

3.1 What is sustainable rural development?

The informants describe sustainable rural development as a long-term, stable development – *economically, socially, culturally and ecologically* – in rural areas and rural economic sectors. Rural areas include both the countryside and sparsely populated districts as well as population centres. The traditional rural economic sectors are agriculture, forestry, fishery and reindeer husbandry. Rural development refers, however, also to "new" economic sectors such as telecommunications and tourism, to population issues, infrastructure, and the interplay between urban and rural areas. It is emphasized that there is not one rural area but many different rural areas. They are all different considering development possibilities, people, culture, environment etc. It is therefore important to pay attention to these differences from above, and local solutions are required in most cases. Another important aspect is that urban and rural developments are interdependent. It might thus be better to talk about *local* development rather than rural.

An *economically* sustainable rural development should be sustainable through its own unaided efforts, which means that the rural areas should not consume more resources than are created or renewed. On the other hand, government subsidies are seen as necessary to sustain, for example, agriculture, but these subsidies should not be seen merely as subsidies. Instead they may rather be regarded as compensation to the farmer for performing collective services, such as keeping the landscape open and preserving unique cultural and environmental values. Additional sources of income must be added to the traditional rural sectors. These new sources include tourism, handicrafts and a variety of small manufacturing enterprises. Small-scale business is overall seen as important, while distance working is another opportunity to develop further.

The *social* aspect is close to the economic one but is more focused on the quality of life of the rural population. It includes, for example, providing jobs for the population as well as social and commercial services near by. To obtain this, decentralisation of services, authorities, business and industry might be required. For example, care of old people and children must not necessarily take place in the population centres but instead as close as possible to the affected population. The *cultural* aspects can be regarded as one part of the social dimension. While the social aspect is more general for the country as a whole – what are decent living conditions? – the cultural aspects are specific for different communities and villages.

An *ecologically* sustainable development is centred on conservation of natural resources through reuse, recycling and ensuring an ecological perspective on all societal activities. The population and nature should not be threatened by environmental pollution, and the rural environment and biodiversity must be preserved. Natural resources – i.e. water, land, fish and wildlife stocks – should be used in a sustainable, long-term perspective. Finite resources should be replaced by renewable sources of energy and biotechnics. Such sustainable rural development includes an ecologically sustainable agriculture that produces food with high quality at reasonable price. It should be resource preserving,
economically adjusted and ethically acceptable. The development and adjustment of agriculture is seen as a great asset in an ecological society.

There is, however, also a democratic aspect embedded in the term sustainable development. Several respondents mention the necessity of a bottom-up perspective and that the local population must be involved in decisions about their own future. The development process should preferably be initiated from below, that is by active and competent citizens. Citizens’ participation is thus as important as is the support from the authorities.

3.2 Which issues are given priority?

The organisations and authorities involved in rural development are of course giving priority to and concentrating on various issues within their area of responsibility and action, which imply a broad range of interests. In the following, we summarise a number of common issues, divided into four categories: quality of life in rural areas, agriculture, environmental protection and democratic issues.

**Quality of life:** Issues given priority concerning quality of life in rural areas include employment, infrastructure, communications and social and commercial services etc. This might also stimulate people to move to rural areas to a greater extent. Tourism is seen as an important economic sector for the future. Moreover, small-scale enterprises must be stimulated to create new jobs.

**Agriculture:** It is seen as important to adjust agriculture to the new conditions in society. Future food production must be sustainable. The positive effects of agriculture should be developed, while its negative environmental consequences must be minimised. Agriculture is also very important for employment, like forestry. Some respondents see the agricultural subsidy system – CAP as well as national subsidies – as problematic. The goal is to move away from production subsidies and instead aim more at creating incentives for environmentally friendly agriculture.

**Environmental protection:** Since the focus of this European research project is on the role of agriculture in sustainable rural development, the preservation and protection of the open landscape, biodiversity, semi-natural habitats and traditional land-use are emphasised. Maintaining an open landscape is seen as important not only to the environment but also because of cultural values and for recreation. Moreover, the informants view overall environmental protection in society as important, even though it is not further discussed here.

**Democratic issues:** Local democracy is seen as necessary to obtain a sustainable rural development. It is important to include the local population and to encourage participation in organisations and projects, as well as to apply a bottom-up perspective in public policy-making and implementation.

3.3 How do the key players work?

It goes without saying that the different actors work in very different ways, depending on their different roles, aims and resources. (This is described in Section 2 and also in Section 3.4 below.)

17 For more information, see chapter 2 and chapter 3.4.
Most agricultural and rural development NGOs work with advice, guidance and adult education within their area of activities. They also participate in national and international groups and projects concerning rural development, and might initiate and support research projects. Co-operation with other organisations and support among the local population is considered important. It is not unusual that public authorities – both at local and national level – and NGOs co-operate with each other. The rural development organisations emphasise local mobilisation and the need to stimulate local commitment in order to create an active interest in developing the local community. The authorities emphasise the importance of the environmental legislation and its protection of the nature that lay down the general outlines for the work. Within agriculture the political control – i.e. rules and regulations through legislation – and the economic control – i.e. various subsidies – are seen as fundamental to achieve sustainable development.

3.4 Examples of collaborative projects

In the following, we have selected a range of ongoing projects and programmes to give a more in-depth understanding of the collaborative nature of most rural development initiatives. We are aware that these do not represent the full spectrum of current activities towards sustainable rural development. For example, there are many projects within fisheries, forest industry, tourism, cultural heritage and handicrafts as well as small-scale enterprises of various kinds that are not described here, but which may be as important (and in some cases perhaps even more crucial) for the livelihoods of local communities. For the purpose of being able to compare the Swedish situation with the other European case studies included in this research endeavour, however, we have concentrated on those projects that connect more directly to sustainable agriculture and rural landscapes.

A rural policy for Europe

‘A Rural Policy for Europe’ is a common platform of the Popular Movements Council, the Federation of Swedish Farmers, the Association of Co-operative Development Agencies and the Federation of Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies. In the policy programme a bottom-up perspective is advocated since the activities and engagement of the rural population is seen as necessary to achieve the specified goals in a successful and effective way. Local influence is thus advocated in issues concerning rural areas, including local natural resources. In this way natural resources can be used in a more effective and careful manner. Agriculture and its subsidiaries are seen as cornerstones of the rural economy. However, to become visible, they must be complemented with other economic activities for the population. The economy in the rural areas should also be built up by both individual and co-operative businesses, mainly on a small scale. Entrepreneurs and innovative business are seen as central. The local manufacturing and processing should be increased together with new primary produce within industry. Biofuel is also advocated to make use of local resources. New companies in areas such as services, tourism and recreation and protection of the cultural heritage and landscape must be supported. The rural areas are regarded as the key to an ecologically sustainable society, and the towns and the countryside are seen as dependent on each other. An ecologically sustainable development focussed on local communities is seen as central in the future society. Rural policy must be based on an overall view, co-operation and a new approach that includes involving the rural population and considering the varying local conditions.
The rural community centre in the modern society

The Community Centre in the Modern Society is the policy programme of the National Federation of Rural Community Centres and thus of the Rural Community Centres Movement. The rural community centres are often old buildings with a traditional architecture and a long history. This is a cultural heritage that must be preserved. The Movement wants the society – at national, regional and local level – to subsidise the centres financially to increase the accessibility also for old-aged and disabled persons and to increase the environmental adjustment. The Movement wants to offer a meeting-place for local public discussions in the centres, but also for a place for culture and adult education. Another aim is to achieve a lively local cultural life all over Sweden, with the centres as a place for cultural diversity and quality as well as cultural activities of the local population. By co-operating with adult educational associations, study-circles, cultural programmes and lectures can be arranged. The Movement also wants to be a part in the struggle for a surviving Swedish countryside by making each centre a place for discussions about the future of the village. A goal is to increase the local influence over democratic decisions affecting the local districts. The Movement wants to offer environmentally certified centres, where the energy supply, management and choice of material contribute to sustainable development. The centres should also be forerunners and guides in the local environmental work and stimulate a style of life in harmony with the environment.

The Farmers’ Culture Programme

LRF has a Culture Programme with the aim to create a positive opinion for a lively rural culture, to strengthen the social and cultural identity, to increase the knowledge about the cultural heritage and to develop the rural culture. A range of activities are promoted towards this end, such as art exhibitions, production of novels and books, theatre, food fairs and collecting old farmers’ memories and stories. There are also projects to preserve the names of old farms and villages and to preserve native breeds and plants under threat of extinction. Culture is seen as crucial for the development of society and comparable with the importance of environmental issues. In each county there is an elected representative who is responsible for cultural issues. Their tasks include creating networks with other relevant organisations and arousing enthusiasm in the local population to support rural culture.

Safe Pesticide Use

Safe Pesticide Use is an information and education campaign, launched in 1997 at the initiative of the farmers’ organisations in collaboration with the Pesticide Producers’ Organisation, the National Chemical Inspectorate, the Swedish Board of Agriculture and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. The project will last for three years. So far, about 30,000 farmers have participated. The focus of the project is to raise awareness amongst farmers on the environmental and health risks when using pesticides. It also brings into focus alternative and preventive crop-protection measures. It presupposes a comprehensive transfer of know-how, training and counselling as key elements, but also an exchange of ideas among the participating farmers. The project can be seen as an example of the changing climate in Sweden where authorities and the agricultural sector closely work together. The EU largely finances the project.
The Watershed Groups

The Watershed Groups is a project arranged by LRF aiming to reach the political goal for agriculture of a more efficient use of plant nutrients and decreased use of mineral fertilisers. It is an example of how LRF believes that it is important that agriculture takes its own initiatives to solve environmental problems associated with farming. Within the project workgroups, which are established within catchment areas, farmers co-operate on a voluntary basis. A catchment-based watershed group may consist of 20-30 farmers and rural residents within the watershed catchment area. This small size of the group makes it possible for everybody to make their voice heard, and at the same time they can acquire an increased knowledge of environmental problems. Together with a co-ordinator the group works out a locally adapted plan to reduce nutrition leakage in the area. To finance their projects groups can get economic aid through different national and EU subsidies. Currently, there are 19 groups within the project, but a lot more working outside of it.

Diversity of the Land

Diversity of the Land is an information campaign about the importance of biological diversity within cultivated land and values of the cultural environment. At national level the Swedish Board of Agriculture is responsible for co-ordination of the campaign in consultation with LRF, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and the Swedish Central Board of National Antiquities. At regional level each Central Administrative Board has a regional co-ordinator, co-operating with LRF, municipalities, local museums, the Federation of Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies and local rural societies and development groups. Traditional customs such as pastureage, haymaking and traditional agriculture have created open fields in the well-forested Swedish countryside. This favours many plants and animals. However, within modern agriculture the richness of species and the diversity of the land are no longer obvious. The target-group consists of the farmers and the landowners with families. The purpose is to motivate measures among the target-group. Old and new knowledge is presented as a background and for practice. In each county free activities are arranged for the target-group, for example on-farm advice, education through study-circles and courses, visits at demonstration farms, excursions and practical activities such as how to use a scythe.

Greener Forests

Greener Forests is a training and information campaign carried out by the National Forest Administration in close co-operation with many partners, including the Board of Agriculture, LRF, the forest and sawmills industries, WWF, SSNC, the Local Heritage Federation, the Swedish Association for Hunting and Wildlife Management etc. The EU and the National Forest Administration finance the project. The aim is to achieve a forestry that effectively combines high economic production with advanced environmental benefits. The target-group consists of forest-owners and others who work in the forest industry. The campaign consists of courses with a mixture of indoor study and forest excursions. The course is free for all forest-owners. An important part of the training is visits to Greener Forest areas and demonstration properties. The course gives examples on how one can work with long-term objectives for different stands on a property and how to obtain high and valuable wood protection while safeguarding and creating quality plant and animal habitats. Especially important questions on wood production, nature conservation and cultural heritage are given priority and are also demonstrated out in the forest.
Semi-natural Grasslands

Semi-natural Grasslands is a “market-mediated” conservation project started by WWF Sweden together with Sweden’s largest food retailer ICA. The aim of the project is to increase the area of well-managed semi-natural grasslands and in this way preserve the species richness of the land. This can be done both by increased maintenance of lands that are used today and through restoration of overgrown semi-natural grasslands. In order to achieve this the number of grazing animals must increase. Farmers are therefore offered collaboration with WWF, ICA and agricultural co-operatives to make it more profitable to pursue meat production on semi-natural grasslands. In the campaign, WWF co-operates with the National Environmental Protection Agency and the County Administrative Boards in identifying areas with high natural values worth protecting. Thereafter the landowners are contacted. The farmer is offered help and information in exchange for a five-year agreement that the land will be kept grazed. The EU offers the farmer economic compensation and support via the Swedish agri-environmental scheme. Several model projects run by WWF (in the archipelago, on Öland, in northern Sweden and in Estonia) have combined development of quality meat production on semi-natural grassland with handicraft and tourism to enable local people to increase earning opportunities.

Sustainable Agriculture

The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) has an information campaign, Sustainable Agriculture, which also aims to influence public opinion. The aims of the campaign are to save and restore biodiversity in the Swedish rural landscape, to promote biodiversity in crops and domestic animals and to stop unwanted use of genetically modified organisms (GMO) in food production. The target group of the project is mainly the members of SSNC, but also new members that are attracted by the opinions of SSNC and worried about the environmental consequences of intensive agriculture. The purpose of the campaign is to increase the members’ knowledge and awareness of the problem. The campaign will be concentrated on activities for one day or one week in the year. Examples of the activities are “The Day of the Meadow”, “The Environmental Friendly Week”, “GMO in the Shop” and “Excursion in the Agricultural Landscape”.
4. Challenges for sustainable rural development

4.1 Environmental problems

Since the 1960s, both agriculture and forestry have undergone a period of intense mechanisation, an enlarged scale of management, and a proliferation of monocultures. These changes have led to substantial negative impacts on the environment, and to an obvious transformation of rural landscapes, such as an increase in the size of fields, fewer natural meadows and grazing fields, and the conversion of many agricultural fields into forests.

Modern forestry has also altered the landscape. Old-growth forests and old and dying tress have become scarce as a result of short rotation periods (compared to natural rotation) and fewer forest fires (which normally increase diversity). The drainage of wetlands and moist forest land has diminished species-rich forests, and broad-leaved forests have been replaced by conifers. Furthermore, the regeneration of planted seedlings has resulted in less varied genetic material compared to that produced by natural variation. In addition to these changes associated with new management practices, forests suffer from air pollution, especially nitrogen and sulphur oxides.

Governmental policy has been responsible for the promotion of modern forestry and agricultural practices in Sweden. In particular, government support was given to increase agricultural production through enlarged animal stocks and intensified land use. Pastures were abandoned, giving rise to high concentration of manure. This subsequently caused environmental problems, in the form of leaching and run-off of nutrients, ammonia evaporation, and decreased biological diversity through more frequent monocultures, the chemical extinction of weeds (some of which are threatened species) and fewer unfertilised meadows and pastures.

Environmental problems associated with agriculture vary greatly between regions. In forested areas of Sweden, agriculture is already extensive and not so environmentally harmful and the main concern is how to preserve cultural landscapes. In the fertile plains of central and southern Sweden, however, agriculture is intensifying and the main concern is the leaching of pesticides and nutrients. There is also regional and local variation, dependent upon the type of soils and the vicinity of water reservoirs. Environmental damage from highly mechanised agriculture has also resulted in the creation of condensed and poorly structured soils (due to heavy machinery), elimination of hedges and border-zones, the drainage of fields and the straightening of watercourses, all of which have contributed to increased run-off and leaching.

While forestry activities had been a focus of concern in the 1960s and onwards, similar debates in agriculture were to emerge a few years later, initially focusing upon the use of chemicals (fertilisers and pesticides). Although the loss of nutrients and chemicals to surface and ground water had already been identified by researchers as an environmental problem, not until the mid 1970s did it become an issue of public concern. And more recently, concern for biological diversity (preservation of indigenous populations of plant and animal species) has emerged on the political agenda, gaining considerable momentum from the 1992 UN Conference in Rio. The decline in biodiversity is mainly caused by the fragmentation of biotypes through exploitation, monocultures, use of pesticides and herbicides, and pollution of different kinds. Additionally, the abandonment of traditional farming practices such as extensive grazing and hay-making also

18 This section builds upon Eckerberg, 1994.
aggravates the situation for many species. As in other parts of the world, the figures for disappearing species are high in Sweden, where some 10 % of wild animals and plant species are being threatened and some 20 % are on the red list\textsuperscript{19}. Changes in agriculture and forestry management systems present the greatest threat to plant and animal species in Sweden.

There is now a growing consensus among all relevant agencies and interest groups that these environmental problems must be addressed in future rural development policy. In 1998, the Swedish Parliament adopted fifteen new environmental quality objectives, of which nine apply directly to this policy area, namely\textsuperscript{20}:

- \textit{High-quality groundwater}; today, about 100,000 people in rural areas take their drinking water from wells that contain water with some pollution (emanating partly from agriculture)\textsuperscript{21}.
- \textit{Sustainable lakes and watercourses}; environmental considerations must be taken within forestry and agriculture management in road building, drainage, leaving border-zones along waters etc.
- \textit{Flourishing wetlands}; environmental considerations within road building, drainage operations, peat extraction, agricultural and forestry management.
- \textit{A balanced marine environment, sustainable coastal areas and archipelagos}; protection of cultural values and landscapes, reduced use of chemical compounds.
- \textit{No eutrophication}; energy efficiency, alternative energy sources, environmental technology for reducing nutrient loading, manure handling and storage, agricultural management, rural sewage treatment.
- \textit{Sustainable forests}; increased protection of natural (old-growth and broad-leaved) forests, environmental considerations in forest management, measures to increase biodiversity.
- \textit{A varied agricultural landscape}; reduced use of pesticides and fertilisers, and reduced conversion of species-rich biotopes into agriculture/and or forest land. Increased traditional management practices and ecological farming. Improved knowledge about the risks of using genetically modified organisms.
- \textit{A magnificent mountain landscape}; Improved local management regimes for sustainable reindeer husbandry, fisheries, hunting, tourism, and use of snow-mobiles. Environmental considerations should be improved within infra-structure development, mineral, hydro-power and energy exploitation, and tourist resorts.

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{19} The red lists are under constant updating, and the mentioned figures should be seen as the most recent estimates from 2000 according to the definitions by IUCN, see also the Swedish Threatened Species Unit (ArtDatabanken) and Centre for Biological Diversity of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala.
  \item\textsuperscript{20} Ministry of the Environment, Summary of the Bill 1997/98:145 ‘Swedish Environmental Quality Objectives’, Stockholm.
  \item\textsuperscript{21} The causes and main problems and/or solutions listed under the respective environmental quality objectives are extracted from the Government Commission Report SOU 2000:52 “Framtidens miljö - alias ansvar!” (The Future Environment – Everyone’s Responsibility!), Ministry of the Environment, Stockholm.
\end{itemize}
Increased support to the Saami cultural heritage and to traditional mountain agriculture.

- **A non-toxic environment**: Reduced total use of chemicals, improved knowledge of and techniques for handling toxic substances. Increased recycling mechanisms and improved final storage. More information to consumers about the risks.

This list concerns the environmental policy objectives, rather than the objectives for sustainable development. Nevertheless, they indicate the kinds of environmental problems and the ecological challenges for sustainable rural development in the future.

The government’s programme for *Sustainable Sweden* includes not only the above policy objectives, but also a range of policy measures within all sectors. As established by the EU in Cardiff 1998, strategies should be developed for integrating environment and sustainable development issues into the transport, energy and agricultural sectors and another six sectors were added to the list in the following meetings in Vienna and Köln. Public procurement policy is one area where the Swedish government has initiated a special programme for green purchasing, and over 130 public agencies are currently working with environmental management systems. The state budget became ‘greened’ three years ago, which means that environmental objectives and measures are explicitly followed up. Between the years 1998-2002 a total of 6.5 billion SEK (about 750 million ECU) has been allocated by the national government towards local investments that will contribute to ecological restructuring of the economy. To date, 81 of the 289 municipalities have received subsidies towards such investments.

### 4.2 Implementation problems

Sustainable rural development cannot take place unless the different levels of government (national, regional and local) as well as non-government organisations and interest groups support the new directions in policy. Generally, implementation problems relating to sustainable development concern the interaction between environmental policy on the one hand, and economic and social policy on the other hand. Much can be learned from the attempts in Sweden to initiate sustainable development from local communities within the Agenda 21-movement. At present, however, the rural development movement has largely developed parallel to local Agenda 21, and with a slightly different profile. Whereas the environmental emphasis has been strong in local Agenda 21, rural development initiatives have rather been spurred by the wish to retain job opportunities in the countryside. However, the need for integrated and co-ordinated policy-making remains the same in both movements. In the following, we draw some conclusions from our ongoing research in this area.

According to our studies on local Agenda 21 (LA21)\(^2\), the most cited obstacles to implementing LA21 are (1) lack of resources (time, staff and money) at the municipal level. This is, however, a question of how to strike a balance between different tasks. Several of our investigated municipalities\(^3\) claim that they are giving less priority to LA21 now compared to a few years ago, and that this affects their possibilities of making an impact. Other frequently mentioned obstacles include: (2) lack of knowledge within the local society on what sustainable development and Agenda 21 is all about, (3) lack of interest and engagement among local politicians, civil servants and local citizens, (4) short-term political decision-making in which the long-term nature of Agenda 21 is.

---

\(^2\) This section builds upon Eckerberg and Brundin, 2000.
\(^3\) Out of the ten municipalities that were examined in-depth, five are located in rural areas.
suppressed, (5) conflicting political goals from the national government and lack of support to LA21, and (6) structural hindrances in the form of prevailing attitudes and beliefs in large-scale solutions, as well as dependency on traditional industry, traffic and energy policies. Our municipal informants suggest that the situation could be improved through more frequent national follow-up and dialogue with local authorities. In addition, they propose increased support to education and awareness-raising to complement physical investments (notably within the Government’s Local Investment Programme for Ecological Sustainability, see Section 4.1).

In all our studied municipalities, efforts have been made to integrate LA21 within various sectors. These activities go well beyond traditional environmental work. They include projects to improve social and ecological dimensions within neighbourhood environments, coupling LA21 with public health projects, integration of immigrants, and working with schools and day-care centres. The majority of local authorities claim that LA21 will become integrated in the municipal structure planning in the next few years. Only two, however, have made such attempts in practice by concentrating on involving their citizenry in the planning process. We find it difficult to assess to what extent and how LA21 really connects to the structure plan since both processes are quite open-ended. In addition, municipal plans for energy, eco-cycling, and environmental goals are sometimes made in parallel rather than integrated into structure plans and LA21 plans. This might be an increasing problem in that one may question what is the purpose of all those plans.

Public participation in LA21 has been promoted in all the ten studied municipalities. Still, most of the attempts to support local democracy are aimed at increasing awareness and information among local citizens and interest groups about environmental issues rather than involving them in the decision-making processes. Hence, there is a plethora of examples from all of these municipalities ranging from study circles, seminars, information brochures, internet home pages, special excursion buses for environment, ‘Environmental Ambassadors’, Green Schools, to exhibitions and environmental calendars – all supported with great enthusiasm within LA21. When it comes to increasing legitimacy for LA21 and creating a base of effective implementation, however, many of our informants report that it is very difficult to maintain an interest over longer periods of time. Often, citizen participation is achieved when LA21 action plans are developed, but fades away if these plans never materialise. The third type of public participation strategy is to stimulate individuals to change life-styles through membership in various networks and ‘Environmental Homeguards’. Such networks seem to have already had their peak in the mid-1990s in terms of number of households involved. Perhaps they also suffer from a declining public interest in environmental issues. With less municipal resources for outward LA21 activities, there are also fewer chances that public participation will be upheld. Finally, it should be noted that local firms and businesses have so far been only marginally involved in LA21, but that their role is growing. Municipal efforts to engage the private sector in LA21 are also spurred by the government’s investment programme.

4.3 Challenges according to our informants

The main problem that emerges out of our investigations into what could be seen as the challenges to sustainable rural development is perhaps the sectorisation of the issues that emanate largely from the present institutional set-up. While numerous government commission reports have been produced within this policy area (see our list of references), and our informants have also contributed to the understanding of what are the problems and how might the situation be improved, it is quite obvious that all of those originate from quite different perspectives. Hence, the problem picture varies from more of socio-economic concerns (seeing rural development from the potential of a self-sufficient population in the countryside) to focusing on the environmental benefits of rural
landscapes (in terms of biodiversity, nature conservation, and other ecological functions). Hence, the perceptions of what are the challenges to creating sustainable rural development also vary greatly according to these different perspectives.

There is a risk, according to several of our informants, that the present sectorisation of the issues implies that the ecological considerations contained in the concept of sustainability might be forgotten in the multi-level and multi-sectoral political and administrative handling of rural development issues. If the system becomes too complicated to grasp for the concerned government bodies and numerous interest organisations, there is always a danger that short-term and more narrow sectoral interests will prevail. For example, the farmers who have to deal with the agri-environmental programme within CAP, might not be able to fully use its potential if the system is too difficult to follow and understand. Also, creating possibilities for new jobs in rural communities is often so urgent that long-term sustainability concerns are easily overlooked.

All informants note that it will be important to provide possibilities for rural populations to survive economically, and that measures must be taken to ensure the existence of public service and facilitate mobility. The new government commission on rural development presenting its report in late September 2000 (SOU 2000:87) is proposing a number of measures towards this end, such as tax reduction for work travel and increased support to infrastructure and public services in rural areas. In addition, possibilities for subsistence within tourism, agriculture and forestry (combined) together with other forms of income (small business and industry, distant work etc.) must be secured.

With this view, co-ordination and collaboration between the various interests is crucial for the survival of the countryside. Environmental, cultural and business interests must work together using a range of policy instruments from public planning to economic incentives – something that is not always happening today. An obvious problem is the multitude of actors (as this report describes) that have stakes in this policy area. It is particularly important that infrastructure development goes hand in hand with the other concerns since infrastructures (transports, communications, IT-technology, basic services) largely set the scene for what is possible to achieve in many of the sectoral areas. The Regional Growth Agreements, LEADER+ programmes, and Interreg are attempts in this direction that should be further refined to meet the present challenges.

Under these problems of lack of co-ordination lies, perhaps, a more fundamental lack of visions for the sustainable society. There is no clear understanding of what such a society would look like, at the same time as there is general awareness of the dependency on international developments (including the EU and CAP) which are difficult to influence even from a national government perspective – let alone from the rural society’s perspective. Many of the present laws and regulations favour large-scale production systems rather than the small-scale and flexible production that is often most relevant in rural areas. Even public procurement policy currently undermines all attempts to support local production. In some instances, there might even be alliances between (urban based) environmental interest groups and representatives from large-scale investments that set aside local socio-economic interests. Local Agenda 21 could be a way to channel local priorities if this movement is supported by various means from the national level.

Often, ownership and usufruct rights can also be obstacles to achieving sustainable management within land use. Natural resources are generally either private- or state-owned, although the right of common access secures certain uses of the land for recreation. Currently, Swedish forests and wilderness areas are seen as potential gold-mines for attracting foreign (as well as Swedish) tourists for various recreational activities. However, this development is not without problems, and can be questioned both as to the
sustainability aspect (what is the limit of the ecosystem to provide for such activities in a long-term ecological perspective) and to the distributional aspect (to what extent are the economic benefits of such exploitation returned to the local society). An issue of current debate is the lack of influence from local communities in the management of such resources – a question that has not yet been solved.

Another potentially important source of revenue in rural areas is the currently ongoing substitution of fossil fuels and nuclear energy in Sweden for (more or less) renewable energy (bioenergy, wind, solar, thermal energy). This development could provide new opportunities for work in many rural areas.

A further conclusion that can be drawn from the informants’ views on the major challenges to sustainable rural development is that the Swedish approach has favoured centralised solutions rather than local ones. Hence, there is a general trend to attempt national co-ordination and detailed regulations also within rural development although many of the problems might be better formulated and resolved either regionally or locally according to the particular circumstances. In this respect, local Agenda 21 – if it is supported and legitimised among the local citizens - is a real challenge to the national government’s programme for ecological sustainability.

In the recently published government commission report on regional development policy the problem of sectorisation coupled with a multitude of non-coordinated measures is acknowledged and a new type of policy is proposed (SOU 2000:87). Further decentralisation of policy goals as well as policy means is required, according to the commission, in order to increase efficiency and leave room for local priorities. Moreover, the commission points to the need for a shift from providing various forms of economic compensation from the national state to stimulating the basic potential for long-term economic growth in all regions, including those affected by depopulation and unemployment. Today, people move into urban areas not because they are forced to, but because they want to change jobs and/or get access to more opportunities such as a rich cultural life. Perhaps it is time to do away with regional policy as a separate policy area and instead reflect over how all types of policy-making can take regional variation into account when providing infrastructure and welfare to citizens from all parts of the country (Ibid, page 18). Thus, a new regional policy for economic growth and welfare distribution should move away from the national level into the regional and local governments (Ibid, page 271).

Finally, looking from the EU perspective, the CAP would be improved considerably if more consideration could be given to national contexts. In Sweden, as we have described earlier in this report, there are different preconditions for sustainable agriculture and rural development than in most other EU Member States. With a low population density, and relatively lower environmental pollution loading in rural areas, Swedish policy for sustainable rural development is not as much about decreasing chemical use and management intensity as it is about creating ways for survival in remote areas. Sweden has already moved to a “post-agricultural society” with extremely few active farmers, in which other types of measures might be required to sustain the rural population than various subsidies to agriculture that are largely designed for a different kind of land use management situation.
5. Helping and hindering sustainable rural development

- It is important to recognise the environmental and cultural diversity of different regions in Sweden. The problem situation therefore varies greatly from south to north and from the more expansive urban centres, such as the Stockholm or Öresund regions, to the predominantly depopulated areas of the periphery. What may be appropriate solutions in one context – such as remediating environmental problems emerging from intensive agriculture in parts of southern Sweden – may not address the prevailing problems in another part of the country – where agriculture in itself is disappearing which in turn creates new challenges. Similarly, organisational solutions that are successfully applied in one region, may not at all work in other environments.

- The nine environmental quality objectives adopted by the Swedish government that relate to rural development set high targets for the future. However, they are not yet integrated with economic, social and cultural dimensions of sustainable development. Moreover, the objectives have been largely developed by the (public) environmental sector even though their attainment depends on other sectors and on a range of public and private actors. Creating new arenas for policy integration and co-ordination among the many interests, agencies and organisations involved in rural development will be an important contribution towards a more comprehensive policy in this field.

- The general situation in Sweden is that agriculture plays only a minor role in rural development. Firstly, the cultivated area is very small compared to, for example, forestry. Second, the income generated from agriculture can no longer support rural populations in most parts of the country. By tradition, most Swedish farmers also rely heavily on forestry for their income generation. Sustainable rural development policy thus requires a much broader perspective than that provided by agri-environmental measures alone. Forestry, fisheries, reindeer husbandry, tourism, mining, hydropower and various kinds of small enterprises are probably more crucial to the survival of rural areas. Agriculture can thus largely be seen as a social and environmental contribution to the diversity of the rural landscape rather than an economic one in the Swedish context. Hence, the role of agriculture in sustainable rural development policy is mainly to provide for locally and ecologically produced food, preserve biodiversity and the rural landscape.

- From a Swedish perspective, the design of future EU policy in this area should move away from the strong emphasis on farmers as main targets of policy measures and recipients of subsidies since the number of active farmers is rapidly declining. Instead, new structures need to be developed for making communities survive in the countryside, for maintaining open landscapes and for managing renewable resources. It is neither realistic nor possible to rely on farmers alone to carry out these important tasks. In the present Environmental and Rural Development Plan for Sweden 2000-2006, the focus is still on the farmers and it is difficult for other groups to get access to existing funds.

- The multitude of actors and the sectorisation of rural development policy has been emphasised in this report. According to the most recent government commission on regional development policy, a major shift is required from the present large number of national sector programmes to more general policy-making in the areas of infrastructure development and welfare distribution. This new regional development policy should provide for prioritisation of goals and means at the regional and/or local level rather than the present centralised and sectorised approach.
• The co-operative approach seems to work well in the Swedish situation, which can be characterised by a high level of trust both between the various interest groups and between the public and private sector. The local Agenda 21 movement together with the rural development groups provide a good foundation for future actions. New funding opportunities for sustainable rural development have become successful when building on this tradition, as is the case for the LEADER programme and other similar initiatives.
References

Informants

Andersson, Kjell, *The Centre Party*.
Arvidsson, Sven, *Swedish Environmental Protection Agency*.
Berndtsson, Leif, *Swedish Federation of Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies*.
Blom, Göran, *Swedish Environmental Protection Agency*.
Cederwärn, Jan, *National Rural Development Agency*.
Dahlström, Mats, *Federation of Swedish Farmers*.
Gladh, Lennart, *WWF Sweden*.
Hagström, Louise, *Federation of Swedish County Councils*.
Jennersten, Ola, *WWF Sweden*.
Lindqvist, Lennart, *Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries*.
Liss-Larsson, Nicklas, *Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications*.
Marcelind, Rangwi, *Christian Democratic Party*.
Mattisson, Andreas, *Swedish Board of Agriculture*.
Nordström, Mia, *Swedish National Board for Industrial and Technical Development*.
Persson, Sören, *Federation of Swedish Farmers*.
Rudqvist, Lennart, *National Board of Forestry*.
Sjöblom, Bengt, *Federation of Swedish Farmers*.
Westman, Bengt, *Swedish Association of Local Authorities*.
Åberg, Mats, *Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries*.
Ångström, Yvonne, *Swedish Liberal Party*.

Printed Material


Appendix 1. Maps

Map 1. Administrative borders – the 21 counties of Sweden.

Source: Statistics from Statistics Sweden.
Appendix II  Institutional framework

**GOVERNMENT**

**CENTRAL LEVEL**
- Ministry of Environment
  - Swedish Environmental Protection Agency

  - Ministry of Agriculture,
    Food and Fisheries
  - Swedish Board of Agriculture
  - National Board of Fisheries

- Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications
  - National Rural Development Agency
  - National Board for Industrial and Technical Development
  - National Board of Forestry

**REGIONAL LEVEL** (Counties)
- County Administrative Boards
  - County Councils

**LOCAL LEVEL** (Municipalities)
- Municipality Councils

**NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS**

**Swedish Federation of County Councils**

**Swedish Association of Local Authorities**

Examples of NGOs within rural development, agriculture and environmental issues:

- Swedish Federation of Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies
- Popular Movements Council for Rural Development
- Swedish Local Heritage Federation
- National Federation of Rural Community Centres
- Federation of Swedish Farmers

- World Wide Fund for Nature Sweden
- Swedish Society for Nature Conservation

Most of them work on central as well as both regional and local level.
Appendix 3 – Actors in sustainable rural development in Sweden

Parliament

Riksdagen – The Parliament of Sweden
SE-100 12 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.riksdagen.se>

Ministries

Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications (Näringsdepartementet)
SE-103 33 STOCKHOLM
<http://naring.regeringen.se>

The Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications is responsible for promoting the development of regions, business and individuals in the labour market. The Ministry is also responsible for the existence of good and safe communications all over the country. The objective is a sustainable and strong growth and a low unemployment.

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (Jordbruksdepartementet)
SE-103 33 STOCKHOLM
<http://jordbruk.regeringen.se>

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries is responsible for agriculture, fishery, reindeer husbandry, horticulture and food production, and environmental concerns within these sectors.

Ministry of the Environment (Miljödepartementet)
SE-103 33 STOCKHOLM
<http://miljo.regeringen.se>

The main task of the Ministry of Environment is to carry out the Government’s priority tasks in the field of environment. The Ministry is responsible for environmental protection, natural resources, biological diversity, community planning, water and air pollution control etc.

Government agencies

Swedish Board of Agriculture (Jordbrukssverket)
SE-551 82 JÖNKÖPING
<http://www.sjv.se>

The Swedish Board of Agriculture is the Government’s expert authority in the field of agricultural policy and has the responsibility for agriculture, horticulture and reindeer husbandry. The tasks include monitoring, analysing and reporting to the Government on developments in these areas and implementing policy decisions within its designed field of activities. The overriding objective is to promote competitive food production, compatible with the protection of the environment and animal welfare. According to the objective laid down by the Government, that the Swedish agriculture is to be ecologically sustainable, the Board works to promote a rich and varied agricultural landscape with
biological diversity and as little negative agricultural impact as possible on the environment.

Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Naturvårdsverket)
SE-106 48 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.environ.se>

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is a central state agency, under the Swedish government, working for an ecologically sustainable society. The tasks of Swedish EPA are, according to the instructions laid down by the Swedish government, to co-ordinate and drive forward environmental work and to promote ecologically sustainable development both nationally and internationally.

National Board of Forestry (Skogsstyrelsen)
SE-551 83 JÖNKÖPING
<http://www.svo.se>

The National Board of Forestry is a central governmental authority, which is responsible for implementing the national forest policy and ensuring that the condition and the development of the Swedish forests are satisfactory. The forest policy promotes the principles of sustainable management of forests and conservation of the biodiversity of forests.

National Rural Development Agency (Glesbygdssverket)
Samuel Permans gata 2, SE-831 30 ÖSTERSUND
<http://www.glesbygdsverket.se>

The Swedish National Rural Development Agency is a central state agency, under the Swedish government, working for development in the rural areas of Sweden and promoting good living conditions and developmental opportunities. The main task is to co-ordinate and development initiatives in rural areas by reporting on rural needs to the government and monitoring how well authorities and corporations meet them. The National Rural Development Agency is also sitting on committees and participating in decision-making groups in order to interject the concern of rural areas and impact different decisions.

National Board of Fisheries (Fiskeriverket)
Box 423, SE-401 26 GOTHENBURG
<http://www.fiskeriverket.se>

The National Board of Fisheries is the central, governmental agency working with fisheries and fisheries conservation matters. The Board devotes itself to a responsible use of the fish resources in a way contributing in a long-term perspective to the Swedish food supply and general prosperity. The Board also works for biological diversity and thereby for abundant and diverse fish stocks. Other important tasks are to contribute to the establishment of an efficient fishing industry including aquaculture, to work towards increased and adequate fishing opportunities for the public and furthermore to ensure that the supply of fish with good quality is beneficial to the consumer.

Swedish National Board for Industrial and Technical Development (NUTEK)
SE-117 86 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.nutek.se>

NUTEK is Sweden’s national authority for industrial policy issues. The main task is to stimulate industrial development throughout in all parts of the country by taking initiatives,
co-ordinating, and building networks in order to stimulate industrial growth and renewal. NUTEK enlightens companies in the area of environmental work and runs a project named Environment Control in Small Companies. They also have an important role in regional policy by for example co-ordinating the support to companies wanting to establish and grow in areas with high priority in regional policy.

The County Administrative Boards (Länsstyrelserna) <http://www.lst.se/karta1.htm>
Addresses to all County Administrative Boards in Sweden.

Swedish Central Board of National Antiquities (Riksantikvarieämbetet) Box 5405, SE-114 84 STOCKHOLM <http://www.raa.se>
The Central Board of National Antiquities is a central government authority responsible for protection of the cultural environment. Together with the Central Administrative Boards and the County Museums, The Board is responsible for the protection and using of the cultural heritage.

Universities and research institutes

Swedish Institute for Regional Research (SIR – Statens institut för regionalforskning) Kyrkgatan 43B, SE-831 34 ÖSTERSUND
Swedish Institute for Regional research is a governmental institution, whose prime directives are to initiate, co-ordinate, undertake and disseminate regional research.

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU – Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitet) Box 7070, 750 07 UPPSALA
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences is a university with a clearly defined role in society: To take responsibility for the development of learning and expertise in areas concerning biological resources and biological production. University activities are spread between several departments in three faculties: Faculty of Agriculture, Landscape Planning and Horticulture, Faculty of Forestry and Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. A total of 3,300 people are employed at the University.

Local and regional authorities

Swedish Association of Local Authorities (Svenska Kommunförbundet) SE-118 82 STOCKHOLM <http://www.svekom.se>
The Swedish Association of Local Authorities represents all 289 municipal authorities in Sweden. Its main tasks are to support and develop the system of local self-government, defend local authorities’ interests, promote co-operation between local authorities and assist local authorities through service and expert advice. Addresses to all 289 municipalities can be found at: <http://www.svekom.se/adr/adr1.htm>.

Federation of Swedish County Councils (Landstingsförbundet) Box 70491, SE-107 26 STOCKHOLM
The Federation of Swedish County Councils represents the governmental, professional and employer-related interests of its members who are the 18 county councils, two regions and one municipality. The Federation works to uphold and develop the county councils’ role as directly elected democratic bodies at the regional level. Efforts to inform and shape public opinion, monitor professional developments and disseminate information are important elements of the Federation’s work. Addresses to all 21 County Councils can be found at: <http://www.lf.se/overgripande/landstingskarta.htm>.

**Political Parties**

The Centre Party (*Centerpartiet*)
Box 22107, SE-104 22 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.centerpartiet.se>

The Green Party of Sweden (*Miljöpartiet de gröna*)
Box 2136, SE-103 14 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.mp.se>

Swedish Social Democratic Party (*Socialdemokratiska arbetarpartiet*)
SE-105 60 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.sap.se>

Left Party of Sweden (*Vänsterpartiet*)
Box 12660, SE-112 93 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.vansterpartiet.se>

Swedish Liberal Party (*Folkpartiet liberalerna*)
Box 6508, SE-113 83 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.folkpartiet.se>

Swedish Moderate Party (*Moderata samlingspartiet*)
Box 1243, SE-111 82 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.moderat.se>

Christian Democratic Party (*Kristdemokraterna*)
Box 451, SE-101 29 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.kristdemokrat.se>

**Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)**

**Rural Development Organisations and Movements**

National Federation of Rural Community Centres (*Bygdegårdarnas Riksförbund*)
Box 26017, SE-100 41 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.bygdegardarna.se>

The National Federation of Rural Community Centres is the nation-wide organisation for rural community centres and association centres, with 1,200 affiliated associations. Rural
Community centres are important in rural development, serving both as meeting-places and local museums. Since 1996 the National Federation of Rural Community Centres distributes environmental certificates those centres working in an environmental-friendly way and also engaging the surrounding community in environmental work.

Swedish Federation of Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies (Hushållningssällskaperi)
Klarabergsgatan 37, SE-111 21 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.hush.se>

The Swedish Federation of Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies is an independent members’ organisation dedicated to enhancing an entrepreneurial spirit in rural areas and promoting a healthy environment in the country and in cities. A healthy rural economy is seen as of benefit to the nation as a whole and the natural surroundings are seen as more important than short-term commercial interests are. Environmental issues are thus seen to have a crucial role in the development. Expertise is offered for rural and agricultural companies.

Swedish Co-operative Development and Research Institute (Kooperativa Institutet)
Box 200 63, SE-104 60 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.koopi.se>

The main tasks of the Swedish Co-operative Development and Research Institute are to strengthen and develop the position of consumer co-ops, to promote the co-operative philosophy and organisational forms among opinion-leaders and decision-makers, and to participate in strategic alliances with other organisations that have similar economic and social goals.

Swedish Local Heritage Federation (Sveriges Hembygdsförbund)
Box 6167, SE-102 33 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.hembygd.se>

The Swedish Local Heritage Federation is the national organisation of the local heritage movement, consisting of 1,700 local heritage societies. It deals with questions affecting all local communities; generates positive interest in local heritage activities on part of government and general public; and gives advice and service to the local associations. Half a million people working on a voluntary basis to bring their local areas and surroundings to live sustain the Swedish local heritage movement. The local heritage societies are active nation-wide, in town and country alike. The aim is to preserve the popular cultural heritage.

Swedish LEADER-Network (Svenska LEADER-nätverket)
Box 787, SE-451 26 UDDEVALLA
<http://www.leader.bygde.net>

The Swedish LEADER Network was established in spring 1997 with the aim to diffuse information about the experiences of LEADER to rural Sweden and to the rest of Europe. The Swedish LEADER Network publishes newsletters and leaflets about LEADER in Sweden, arranges seminars about important subjects for LEADER and acts to establish contacts between LEADER in Sweden and the rest of Europe.

The Popular Movements Council for Rural Development (Folkrörelserådet)
Klarabergsgatan 37/2 tr, SE-111 21 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.bygde.net>
The Popular Movements Council consists of fifty NGO:s and more than 3,500 local development groups. The purpose of the Council is to stimulate and support local development, enhance communication between local development groups, co-ordinate the rural work of the NGO:s and influence the public opinion and decision-makers.

**Environmental organisations**

World Wide Fund for Nature Sweden (Världsnaturfonden)
Ulriksdals Slott, SE-170 81 SOLNA
<http://www.wwf.se>

WWF Sweden is an independent member of WWF International, the world’s largest independent nature conservation organisation. It has 150,000 supporters and works primarily with practical nature conservation projects (annually about 100 projects). WWF Sweden acts in the field, in the research laboratory, around negotiation tables and in the corridors of decision makers.

The Association for Agenda 21 and Sustainable Development in Sweden (Föreningen för agenda 21 och hållbar utveckling)
<http://www.agenda21forum.org>

The Association for Agenda 21 and Sustainable Development in Sweden is a non-governmental organisation, aiming to promote Agenda 21-work in Sweden at all levels. Special attention is given to the local level.

Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (Svenska naturskyddsföreningen)
Box 4625, SE-116 91 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.snf.se>

SSNC is the biggest Swedish nature conservation and environmental organisation with 138,000 members and 275 local branches all over the country. SSNC has its own specialists within many environmental areas and lobbies against politicians and other decision-makers to influence decisions for the benefit of the environment. Most important is however the local voluntary work.

Swedish Youth Association of Nature Studies and Environmental Protection (Fältbiologerna)
Box 6047, SE-102 31 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.faltbioogerna.se>

The Swedish Youth Association of Nature Studies and Environmental Protection – also called the Field Biologists – is a youth detached branch to the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation. The members of the Association are between 7 and 25 years old and also the leaders are below 25. The activities are carried out within local clubs and include camps, excursions, study circles and evenings with lectures.

Friends of the Earth Sweden (Miljöförbundet Jordens Vänner)
Box 7048, SE-402 31 GOTHENBURG
<http://www.mjv.se>

Friends of the Earth Sweden is an organisation aiming to protect environment and building solidarity between people. The goal is to build an ecologically and socially sustainable society and to take action in specific issues. It consists of individual members
as well as local groups. It’s a part of Friends of the Earth International, which is the largest world-wide democratic environmental organisation with sister organisations in over 50 countries.

Greenpeace Sweden (Greenpeace)  
Box 15164, SE-104 65 STOCKHOLM  
<http://www.greenpeace.se>

An international environmental organisation.

**Agricultural organisations**

Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF – Lantbrukarnas riksförbund)  
SE-105 33 STOCKHOLM  
<http://www.lrf.se>

The Federation of Swedish Farmers is the interest and industry organisation for Swedish farmers, forest owners and the agricultural co-operative movement. It consists of 122,000 individual members along with 50 incorporated associations that make up the agricultural co-operative movement (with approximately 300,000 memberships) and 16 industry organisations. Its task is to create the conditions for efficient, market-oriented and competitive companies. By advancing the economic interests of farmers and developing rural communities, the conditions are also created for promoting and satisfying social and cultural interests. One goal is to achieve a sustainable output with good animal welfare and a high environmental standard. LRF includes a range of co-operatives and other associations, for example:

Swedish Dairy Association (Svensk Mjölk) <http://www.svenskmjolk.se>  
Swedish Meats <http://www.swedishmeats.com>

Swedish Farmers’ Supply and Crop Marketing Organisation (Lantmänn)  
<http://www.slr.se>

Kronägg (egg companies) <http://www.kronagg.se>

Association of Swedish Seed and Oilseed Growers (Frö- och oljeväxtodlarna)  
<http://www.oljevaxtodlarna.se>

Association of Swedish Potato Growers (Sveriges Potatisodlares Riksförbund)  

Swedish Starch Producers’ Association (Sveriges Stärkelseproducent)  
<http://www.lyckeby.com>

Swedish Sugar-Beet Growers’ Association (Sveriges Betodlares Centralförening)  
<http://www.betodlarna.se>

Swedish Association of Horticultural Producers (Trädgårdens Riksförbund)  
<http://www.trftradjgard.se>

Association of Swedish Vegetable Growers (Grönsaksodlarnas Riksförbund)  

LRF Forest Owners Association (LRF Skogsägarna) <http://www.skogsagarna.se>
Swedish Fur Breeders’ Association (Sveriges Pälsuppfödares Riksförbund)

Swedish Beekeepers Association (Sveriges Biodlarens Riksförbund)
<http://www.biodlarna.se>

Swedish Federation of Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies (Hushållningssällskapen)
Klarabergsgatan 37, SE-111 21 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.hush.se>

The Swedish Federation of Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies is an independent members’ organisation dedicated to enhancing an entrepreneurial spirit in rural areas and promoting a healthy environment in the country and in cities. A healthy rural economy is seen as of benefit to the nation as a whole and the natural surroundings are seen as more important than short-term commercial interests are. Environmental issues are thus seen to have a crucial role in the development. Expertise is offered for rural and agricultural companies.

Swedish Ecological Farmers’ Association (Ekologiska lantbrukarna)
Sågargatan 10 A, SE-753 18 UPPSALA
<http://www.ekolantbruk.se>

The Swedish Ecological Farmers’ Association is an important forum for all ecological producers. The main objectives are to work for positive development of ecological agriculture and for the interests of ecological farmers. Most of the 1,700 members are active farmers but also others which support the ideas of an ecological agriculture.

Other NGOs

Swedish Association for Hunting and Wildlife Management (Svenska Jägareförbundet)
Box 1, SE-163 21 SPÅNGA
<http://www.jagareförbundet.se>

Hunting is a popular sport in Sweden. There are more than 300,000 hunters, of whom more than 190,000 have chosen to join the Swedish Association for Hunting and Wildlife Management. The association is a voluntary body whose main task is to look after the interests of hunting and hunters. Many hunters are also landowners but more than half lease shooting rights or belong to co-operative associations.

Swedish Fishing-Waters Owners Association (Sveriges fiskevattenägareförbund)
LRF Näringspolitiik, SE-105 33 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.fiskevatten.org>

The Swedish Fishing-Waters Owners Association – with 16 county associations representing 110,000 individual members – is an independent interest organisation with the aim to safeguard the interests of the fishing-waters owners. It works for the development of the fishery and the preservation of the fishing-waters with an economic and sustainable use of the fish and water resources as the purpose. Its activities includes guiding and counselling towards the members as well as lobbying and active participation in environmental and economic policies.
Archipelago Foundation in the County of Stockholm (*Skärgårdssstiftelsen*)
Box 7669, SE-103 94 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.skargstift.se>

The Archipelago Foundation in the County of Stockholm was founded in 1959 in order to preserve the landscape and wildlife and to provide continued opportunities for the general public to use the land in the Stockholm archipelago. The Foundation is working to maintain a living archipelago by further developing the management of the land and guaranteeing its present areas of use for tourism and outdoor activities.

Swedish Ornithological Society/Birdlife Sweden (*Sveriges ornitologiska förening*)
Ekhangsvägen 3, SE-104 05 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.sofnet.org>

The Swedish Ornithological society – the Swedish partner of Birdlife – is a members’ organisation, which is active in bird watching, bird protection, bird research and also promotes a general interest in birds to the public.

Swedish Organisation for Promotion of Outdoor Activities (*Friluftssträmföreningen*)
Instrumentvägen 14, SE-126 53 HÄGERSTEN

The Swedish Organisation for Promotion of Outdoor Activities is the biggest outdoors recreation organisation in Sweden with about 100,000 individual members participating in any of the 60,000 activities arranged yearly by 10,000 leaders. The activities are directed towards children as well as adults, and include different outdoor activities and sports.

**Adult educational organisations**

Information Service of the Swedish Folk High Schools (*Folkhögskolornas informationstjänst*)
Box 740, SE-101 35 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.fin.fhsk.se>

There are 147 Folk High Schools in Sweden. Despite being separate, Folk High Schools are now a popular, important and established part of the Swedish education system. 99 of the schools are run by various popular movements, organisations and associations (NGOs), whilst the remaining 48 are run by county councils or regions. Each year about 30,000 students participates in long courses (at least 1 term). Many courses have an environmental, cultural or rural theme, and some courses about rural development are especially important to inhabitants in rural areas.

National Council of Adult Education (*Folkbildningsrådet*)
Box 730, SE-101 34 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.folkbildning.se>

The National Council of Adult Education is a non-profit association for the liberal adult education organisations. The Council distributes government grants to study associations and folk high schools and follows up and evaluates the activities. The council also surveys liberal adult education’s policy and co-ordinates international contacts.

Workers’ Educational Association (*ABF*)
ABF is one of the biggest Swedish adult education associations with 1 million participants of study-circles per year and 55 affiliated associations. It is the education association of the workers’ movement.

Study Promotion Association (Studiefrämjandet)
Box 49013, SE-100 28 STOCKHOLM
<http://www.sfr.se>

The Study Promotion Association is one of the biggest Swedish education associations with about 2.5 millions participants a year. It is independent of political parties, religion and trade unions. Its 18 affiliated associations are found within the profile areas of the Study Promotion Association – i.e. nature, environment, animals, culture, music and youth.

SV (Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan)
Box 1109, SE-111 81 Stockholm
<http://www.sv.se>

SV is one of the leading non-formal adult education associations in Sweden, and the largest in terms of territorial coverage with 300 local branches in 22 districts. Among the affiliated associations are the Federation of Swedish Farmers, the Centre Party, the Liberal Party and the National Federation of Rural Community Centres.