

Building resilience of rural areas

Multifunctional farms and village action groups

Rebecka Milestad

Centre for Sustainable Agriculture
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



Introduction

- The need to talk about the resilience of rural areas
- My understanding of resilience and adaptive capacity
- The importance of multifunctionality
- Four Swedish cases



Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



Why do we need to talk about the resilience of rural areas?

Trends in Swedish agriculture	1950	1980	2005
Arable land in use (million ha)	3,5	2,95	2,7
Number of farms (>2ha)	282000	118000	75000
Average number of cows at dairy farms	No data	15	46

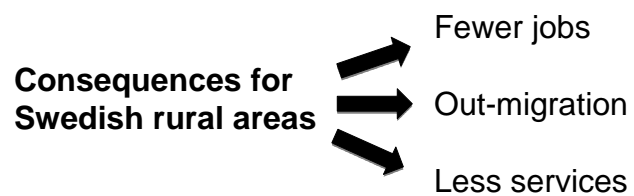
(Statistics Sweden, 2006)

Only farms with >100 ha increase

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



Why do we need to talk about the resilience of rural areas?



Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



Resilience is...

...the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance: to undergo change and still retain essentially the same functions and structure

...the capacity to cope with change

(Holling, 1986; Berkes et al., 2003; Walker et al., 2004)



Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



Resilience thinking emphasises...

... the interdependence of human and ecological systems (social-ecological systems)

... that ecosystems are dynamic

... that the management of ecosystems need to be flexible and adaptive.



Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



Resilience of what to what



(Carpenter et al., 2001)

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



Adaptive capacity...

...is the ability of actors to manage a system successfully in terms of social-ecological resilience
(Walker et al., 2004)

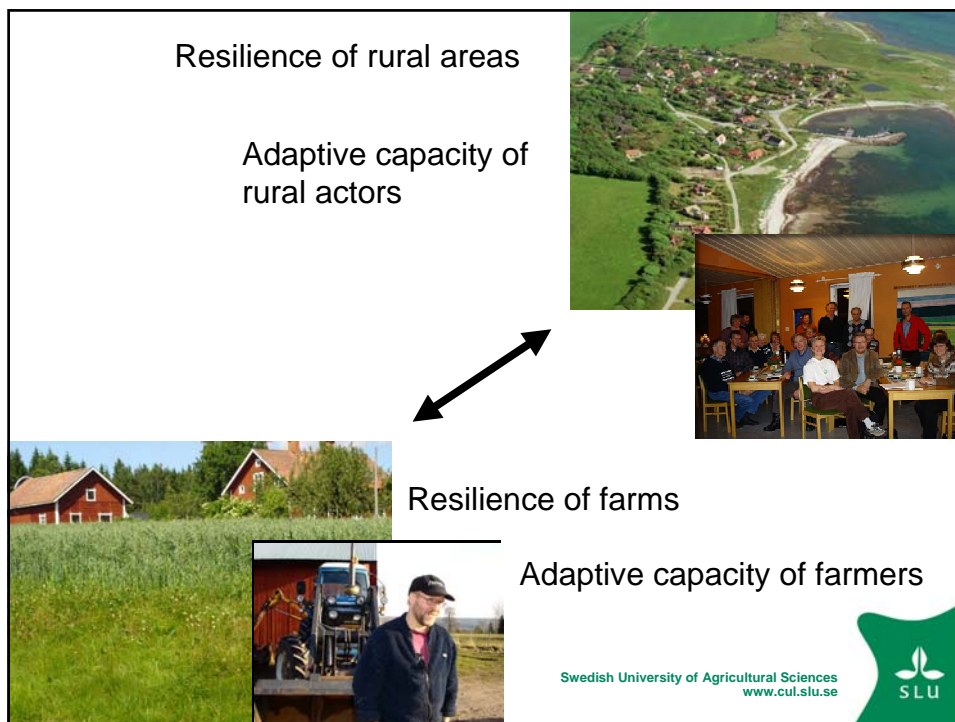


...is a prerequisite for resilience



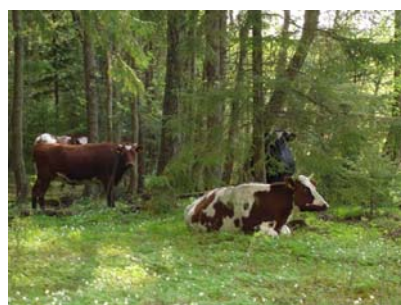
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se

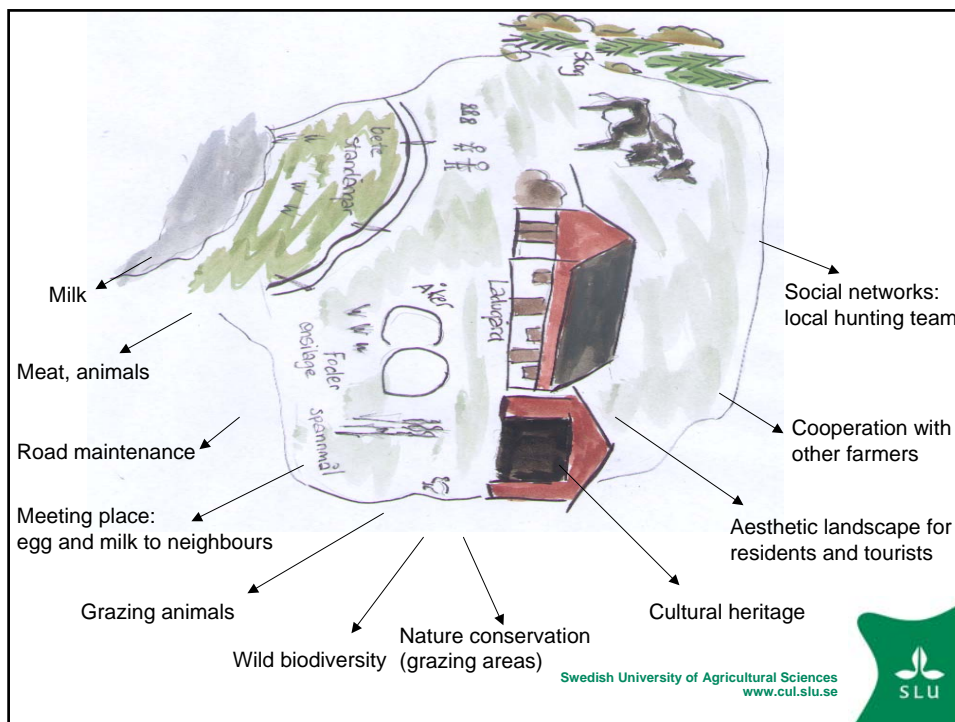




Multifunctionality is...

...an activity that has multiple outputs and that can contribute to several societal goals at the same time (OECD, 2001)





Four cases



Trönö

Tived


Hulta

Bokenäset


Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se

SLU

Trönö






- Forested valley
- Forest basis for local economy
- Farmers are forest owners
- Few animals left
- Some production of cereals
- Culture of cooperation



Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se

Tived

- Small, part time farms
- Few farmers left
- Heavily forested area
- Forest owned by state company
- Grazing animals
- Far from population centres



Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se

Hulta



- Small scale dairy and meat production
- Close to middle sized town
- Mosaic landscape
- Close cooperation between farmer and village residents

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



Bokenäset



- Close to large towns
- Mixed farming
- Coastal area
- Just as many holiday houses as residential houses

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



Village action movement

- In Finland since the 1970s
- Village action groups in Sweden since the 1980s
- Engaged citizens working for their area
- Democratic movement outside political structures
- National, regional, local levels
- Today 4 300 groups in both rural and urban areas



Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



Why village action groups?

- Sparsely populated rural areas
- Out-migration
- Less services
- Lack of jobs

Village people realised that they have to rely on their own initiatives



Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



What functions do farms have for their rural area?



In what way do farms support adaptive capacity of rural actors and resilience of rural areas?

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



Social functions

- Open landscapes
- Meeting places
- Machines and buildings for joint activities



Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



Ecological functions

- Biodiversity
- Nutrient cycling
- Ecological knowledge



Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



Economic functions

- Job opportunities
- Food with added value
- Machines and capital



Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se





Job opportunities

Locally active population

Good roads and public transports

High level of food and energy self-sufficiency


Enough residents for services

Open landscape

Viable farms



Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se




Climate change

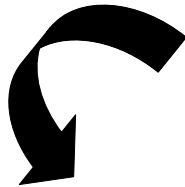
Peak oil

Changed policies

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



How can village action groups increase adaptive capacity of farmers and resilience of farms?



How can village action groups build resilience of rural areas by supporting farmers?

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



Village action groups can build resilience of farms by:

- Enhancing learning
- Creating meeting places
- Supporting networking
- Initiating cooperation
- Developing local food processing and marketing
- Creating ecological benefits



Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
www.cul.slu.se



