



All Sweden shall live!

*Hela Sverige
ska leva!*

The Village Action Movement in Sweden

The Swedish Village Action Movement consists of about 4 500 village action groups, and the number continues to increase. We estimate that roughly 100 000 persons are directly involved in village action groups and that their work affects about three million people – one third of the Swedish population.

The Swedish village action groups are spread all over Sweden. They deal with all matters, aiming for the public good at a local level. Often they take responsibility for basic services, such as running shops, improving roads or setting up windpower plants. They develop local action plans and take on increasingly complex tasks.

An important mission is to encourage local entrepreneurship and stimulate economic development. The work is usually done in cooperation with local authorities.

Working on a local level the village action groups empower people, creating a decision level below the municipal authorities. In short they vitalize democracy.

The Village Action Movement of today is an important and natural part of Swedish society and it is respected by many parties, including the government.

However, there is still room for improvement!

Action – the result of a crisis

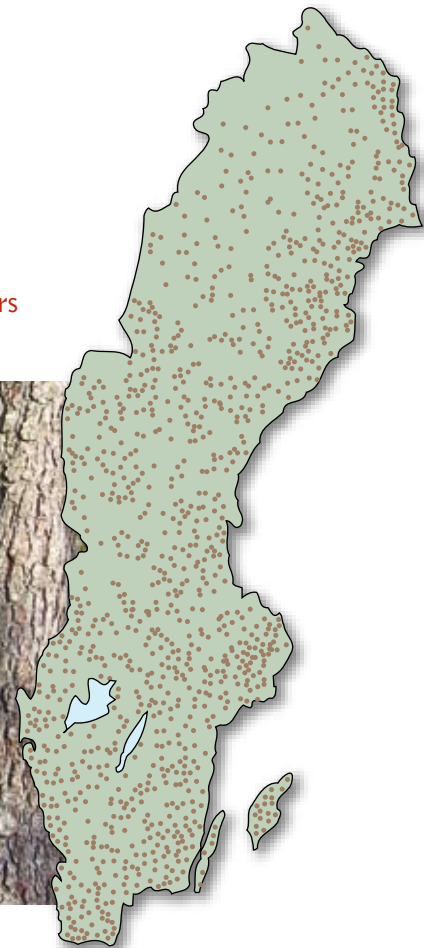
Action usually starts with a crisis of some sort, for example when a factory or school is closing down. The villagers realize the need for collective action. A few dedicated persons take the lead and others follows. The first step is often to re-establish local identity by building on the old, local culture. When this is achieved, anything seems possible!

Rural Parliament

Every second year the Rural Parliament is organised, an event that gathers around 1 000 people from Sweden and other countries. During a couple of days they meet, discuss rural matters and have fun together.

The tasks of All Sweden shall live is to

- Stimulate and support local development
- Enhance communication and cooperation between village action groups
- Act as spokesperson for village action groups
- Inform the public, as well as decision and policymakers
- Improve rural policies in Sweden





Background

The Swedish Village Movement has grown out of a troublesome situation in many rural areas especially the sparsely populated areas in the northern inland regions. These areas suffered from a lack of jobs and service facilities, as well as out-migration, especially of young people. People in the villages felt abandoned by the authorities and began to realize that they had to rely on their own initiatives and powers. No one else would take action for them.

A major turning point was the rural campaign “All Sweden shall live” that took place at the end of the eighties. It was initiated by a network of NGOs and supported by the government. Its focus was on mobilizing local people, changing the attitudes of the public and the decision-makers and improving the national rural policies.

The most important result of the campaign was the multitude of local initiatives which demonstrated the capacity of village people. From a few local initiatives in the beginning of the eighties, 1 000 village action groups had been established by the end of the campaign. The establishment of All Sweden shall live in 1989 was another result of this campaign.

International Cooperation

International cooperation is of vital interest to us. There are similarities and differences between rural areas and cultures, which make contacts over national borders fruitful and important. Cooperation is of mutual benefit to all parties.

All Sweden shall live is part of “Hela Norden ska leva” (All North shall live) and participates in PREPARE (Partnership for Rural Europe) which promotes local mobilization and support-structures in the new EU member countries.

We take part in LEADER net-working as well as in the pan-European networks of ERA (European Rural Alliance) and ERCA (European Rural Community Association).

The National Organisation All Sweden shall live

About 4 500 village action groups and 40 member organizations, most of them large national NGOs, are members of All Sweden shall live. There are 24 county networks, working with information and advisory services on a county level. These networks are formed by the village action groups of each county.

In over 100 municipalities the village action groups have formed networks, coordinating the work on a municipal level.



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