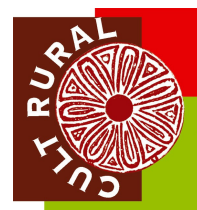




**Culture 2000**



**CLT2006/A2/SE-2030**

**Cult Rural: Promotion of a Cultural Area Common to European Rural Communities**

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## **INSPIRATION, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY IN A RURAL PERSPECTIVE**

### **THEME 2**

**Swedish Local Heritage Federation**

**Sweden**

## **Research report for the interim report by May 2008**

### **General information**

The final research report will not be finished until the end of the Swedish exhibition period of “Save our sources”. Parts of the activities connected with the exhibition will provide new information to be included in the report. The research so far has been directed mostly towards the sectors chosen for the exhibition of topic 2. The discussions around these themes, however, have been very wide and intense and the direction changed time after another. Therefore the range of research field – or fields - has changed several times.

There is also an important work going on, gathering and editing material for a book of inspiration about traditional skill. This is a part of the research activity and promoted especially by a Swedish national co-financier (NAPTEK – a six year long governmental mission to document, preserve and transfer traditional skill and the know-how of local communities. This is a part of the national implementation of article 8(j) in the Convention on biological diversity.

Stressing the aspect of regional/local rural areas, we have chosen to pick most of our exhibition items and phenomena from the province of Hälsingland and the regions nearby this. The region consists of (river) valleys separated by rounded mountain ridges. The villages (which mostly means farms scattered over a large area) situated on the slopes down to the bottom of the valley, while the summer farms and –pastures are situated higher up in the mountains. Transhumance has dominated the area in earlier days.

The text will later be translated into proper English.

### **Background – Sweden**

The historical/cultural/geographical background

#### **Geography**

Sweden is a part of the Scandinavian peninsula. The surface is 449.964 km<sup>2</sup> (of which 410.943 land areal); population 9,15 miljons, 21 persons/km<sup>2</sup> land areal. The total length of the land from the north to the south is approximately 1700 km, breadth at most 400 km. The country shares much of its natural character, climate, history and culture with the other Northern countries, Finland, Norway and Denmark. But going back 300 – 400 years, there also used to be a close link to the Baltic nations and northern Germany, links that are now after the removal of the iron curtain being revived in many ways. Above all in the northern part, the old east – western connections are growing, especially in the Barent region.

The country has borders to Norway in the west and north, to Finland in the east. It also has maritime borders with Denmark, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Russia (Kaliningrad).

Due to the outstretched landmass from the north to the south, there are great variations in natural conditions and climate. The main bedrock is primary rock and granite but with a very rich amount of different, smaller parts of other rocks. The large access of rivers has promoted an almost total exploiting of the water falls for electrical power dams. The real big agricultural corn areas are to be found in the southern parts of the country while in the northern part there is still more of a mixed kind of agriculture with cattle husbandry and forestry. In the most northern provinces, there is still some reindeer husbandry in use by the indigenous groups of Sami people (Laplanders).

The export economy is based primarily on wood, hydroelectric power and iron/steel but also on electronic devices and popular music.

While there is almost a sub-arctic climate in the north, the very south usually have a much warmer weather. The last decade there has been a very sharp change of climate, however, with less snow and cold generally.

### **History**

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy and has been so since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Even before that there were kings, but the definition of “Sweden” varied over time. The country is a member of European Council and since 1995 also of the European Union. The nation has not been at war for 200 years.

Traditionally, until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Sweden was a country of agriculture based on a variety of activities, as solely growing corn was not enough at all to provide the population with food. Also fishing was extremely important, both on a more professional basis and a small scale one for the households. Along the coasts, it was usual with a combination of farming and fishing.

A large part of the farmers were independent, owing their ground or renting it from the state. There was a kind of weak feudalism in the provinces near Stockholm, the capital since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and also in the former Danish provinces in the very south of the country.

During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a massive process of industrialization transformed the country. This development was started by rich private factory –owners, but later, above all after the Second World War, it was also promoted and prompted by the government. There was a very deliberate policy to transfer people from the agricultural sector to the industries. This was also the beginning of the “rural exodus”. To-day that tendency has been strengthened by the “withdrawal of the public bodies from rural areas” (Det offentligas reträtt från landsbygden).

In the late 1960ies and 1970 there was a strong contra-movement, called the Green Wave (Gröna vågen). Young people left the cities and towns and moved out to old, often forlorn farms in the countryside, where they established some kind of self-supporting household farming. Among these groups you could find both young families and collectives of people. It perhaps a kind of protest against the rather intense propaganda for city life and a wish to live in a more natural, ecological and sustainable

way, not to abuse or over-exploit available resources. The movement was not considered as a positive thing by the government; the minister in charge accused the participants of not taking responsibility for the development of society. But the Green Wave was a real genuine “popular” phenomenon – there was no leader, no “prophets”, no common rules or agreement, just an intense wish to live a life without over-consumption. The movement died in the 1980ies. The pioneers had grown older, their children had other plans for their lives, and above all, the Tjernobyl catastrophe put a very brutal end to all dreams of a society and life in balance with nature. The areas in Sweden that were struck hardest by the radioactive downfall also happened to be the provinces with most representatives for the Green Wave. However, many of them stayed in the countryside, where they have contributed to the development, above all through skills they brought with them or which they gained during the years as “natural farmers”. Most of them did not know anything about farming or rural life when they arrived, but patient (and surprised!) neighbours often took pain to teach them what was necessary.

To-day there is a new movement or rural re-dynamisation. Families in towns and cities want their children to grow up in more healthy environments or they are all exhausted by the turmoil of the cities. They even come from other countries like the Netherlands and Germany. Normally they have no intention of picking up old countryside life-styles, but they still have a connection with farming, as a vast number of them wants to keep horses. Which means grazing fields, fences, fodder crops etc. But there are also several, often young, families, that start new agricultural enterprises, using ecological methods and/or agrotourism.

It is above all in these groups that you will find the “souls on fire” (eldsjälar) and rural entrepreneurs, persons that give their time and energy to save and develop the countryside.

### **Culture**

To define the culture of a nation, a region, a community, a parish – or of certain groups of people – in a few words is a somewhat presumptuous task. It is difficult to find *one* specific culture. It is not even possible to describe some kind of common rural culture. As other countries, Sweden has its specific traditions in music, dancing, theatre, literature, story-telling, food, drinking, attitudes – everything. The international and global impact is large today, even in the most traditional parts of the culture and provinces. This influence has weakened the more traditional cultural expressions.

But a phenomenon that unites the country and also is common in our neighbouring countries, is the great number of NGO:s and voluntary work. The social capital, the trust between people, is essential and necessary condition for the survival of the Swedish countryside. And this social trust is probably more dominant in the rural areas than in towns and cities. What concerns remaining use of and skill in traditional methods, it varies greatly but seems to be less significant in towns/cities and areas close to these than in more sparsely populated areas.

In the province chosen for the Cultrural exhibition of topic 2 (Inspiration, innovation and technology; the rural perspective and global pressure) is in the middle part of Sweden but regarded as being the southern province of the northern part (södra Norrland). Here the culture is still characterized by traditional folk music, especially by young people, traditional handicraft, attitudes, food etc.

The core concepts of the theme.

The topic 2 group, consisting of Cultrural members from France, Hungary and Sweden, has had a hard time to find a way to demonstrate in an exhibition the theme of “Inspiration, innovation and technology; the rural perspective and the global pressure”. The theme, or topic, is in itself too broad and unspecified – which on the other hand opens for almost any approach. There has also been the difficulty of very different rural culture and social history between the partners. The work has been made more difficult through the change of project coordinator and a period of long illness in the Swedish part of the project.

Another topic of discussion has been the question of target groups. Both the French and the Hungarian team have expressed their need to address the exhibition to very young people, whereas the Swedish standing point has been an exhibition for all ages.

#### *Historical continuity.*

At the transnational workshop in Hungary in May 2007, the group decided that each country should choose three things, phenomena or items that would give a good example of the topic title or part of it. Sweden then chose *spinning fibre* (flaxen and wool from sheep and goats), *wood* (with special stress on birch) and *traditional cattle breed/races*. Then we added two sub-themes – *social capital (example folk-music)* and *documentation by listening*. Different aspects were discussed during a group meeting in Florence in November 2007 and a first “edition” of exhibition concept was produced.

In Sweden a special working group was established after the Florence-meeting, containing specialists within the fields chosen.

The *spinning fibre* has a long history – in Sweden as in most other European countries. And in the region, used as base for the exhibition discussions, the tradition is still very strong, concerning flaxen and sheep wool. There are several new areas of use for the materials added to the more traditional ones. For instance that both flaxen and wool are better as fire protection than any modern material, wool keeps you warm even when it is wet, the isolation factor of these textiles in building contexts are extremely high, flaxen or woollen sheet facilitates the treatment of ill people. There we had the possibility to both strengthen the traditional use and to point at new branches of use. As spin-off effects there is the effect on levels of positive cholesterol in blood serum from eating meat from sheep and goats and also that the grazing of these animals helps to preserve the biodiversity of old grazing areas, now lying abandoned.

Concerning goat wool – and goat skin – much of the former know-how had disappeared, despite the fact, that goats were once extremely important both on the

family and national level, especially in this special region. As late as during the Green Wave, the goat had a renaissance as the households preferred them to cows. The research has so far pointed at the fact, that the wool of the goat is in some aspects even better than the more common one from sheep, that the meat from young goats surpasses lamb, that the milk, apart from giving material to excellent soft cheeses, also is very healthy for children with cow milk lactose –intolerance. Also it seems to be a fact, that the goat in historical times made it possible for young mothers to join the work in the fields very soon after giving birth, as the goat milk turned out to be a good substitute for the baby when the mother could not feed it.

Concerning *wood*, there were a lot of facts still known and used and many forgotten. Wood is a condition for life in the area in many ways – as building material, of course, for houses and equally important in historical times, for miles and miles and miles of wooden fences. The fences kept the cattle away from fields and meadows for hay-harvesting. Most of the tools and household utensils were made from wood. The birches sap in springtime is like a vitamin shoot. The bark is good for making shoes, for water-protection etc. And apart from scientists, specialized in these matters, facts like the antiseptic effect of the bark are more or less forgotten.

Old/*traditional cattle races* are threatened by extermination. “Modern” cows, for instance, give much more milk than traditional races – but of much lower quality. The traditional races do not need compound feeding stuff/mash fodder, they live well on the natural grazing grounds and roughage from the local hay (salt/mineral must always be added, due to the lack of mineral in the soil in Sweden), they can carry and give birth until old age and miscarriage is unusual. They are intelligent, can find their own way between home and good grazing plots in the forests, they handle predatory attacks better than the modern ones, they do not demand veterinary treatment as often. And their meat, especially when grazing on higher parts of the landscape during the summer, has a much lower amount of cholesterol. The fact that they feed only from natural grazing and hay also have the effect, that they produce very little methane gas. They promote the grassland, which is quickly disappearing all over the world. Grasslands are said to be efficient both in preventing and dissolving the CO<sub>2</sub>-pollution.

The *folk music tradition* is extremely strong in the province. Especially young people are engaged in playing and developing the traditional pieces. A great difference from the neighboring province is the attitude, that you can adopt every piece of music to your own taste, while the musicians on the other side of the provincial border keep very strongly on playing as it has always been done. The folk-music is a strong temptation for young people to settle down in the rural areas of the province, as there are constant meetings and festivals about the music. In line with the musical culture, the folk dances are also getting more and more popular and now also old songs.

The Swedish wish to put in *documentation by listening* is due to the fact, that museums have a tendency to tell their visitors things but seldom have a policy how to listen and document the knowledge of the visitors, not even when the aim of the exhibition in

question is to awaken the memories and reactions of people. To use written sources or references only, is a sign of scientific poverty. Our wish was to find a method of encouraging dialogue between visitors and museums.

As there were parallel processes – one in each country and one in the combined group from France, Hungary and Sweden – the route of the exhibition changed on the international scene and much of the research done in Sweden were not useful in a the new concept. Due to the title and topic of the exhibition, more and more has come to concentrate on environmental matters. The discussion still goes on and research is now being done in new fields. The process of producing the final exhibition concept is not yet quite finished, even if great progress was done in an extra mini-workshop in Poland in May. Therefore the result of the lately performed research is not quite ready yet.

*Material and immaterial heritage that demonstrates the development of the selected components.*

The choice of items, photos and other illustrations and texts are not yet finished where Sweden is concerned. The above mentioned items or phenomena – spinning fibres, wood, traditional cattle breed, folk-music as an illustration of social capital and documentation by listening – will all be included in the exhibition, even if not dominating the message. More space will be given to these things in material connected with the exhibition.

At the moment the research is more directed towards energy and ecology per se. Until the on-going discussion is finished and the exhibition has got its final dress.

*Messages for sustainable development.*

The relevance and importance of the theme and its components to sustainable rural development. (Conclusion)

The result of the research, the exhibition as planned and above all, the programmes and activities in the connection with the exhibition will show possible ways to use traditional skills and know-how in new ways and in new contexts. It will also awake alarm around the big problems with the environmental destruction and climate change of to-day but at the same time show, that every one can do something to improve the situation – and that every one also has that responsibility. Much of the necessary resources for this improvement is to be found in the rural areas and in the traditional skill.

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Content in the book of inspiration. The book is under editing by Anna Westman for the Cultrural projekt, Swedish Local Heritage Federation and NAPTEK. Publishing date planned to the end of year 2008.

### **About traditional skill and knowledge, ethnobiology and local history.**

*Natural resources, biology and traditional landscape.*

*The objects and the landscape.*

*Mapping and calendars as a method for finding specific knowledge about use of natural resources over time and space.*

*Language memories – information from names of places, plants and animal and the use of them.*

*Interviews, transferring knowledge.*

*Pictures as source of knowledge of traditional use of natural resources.*

*Food – local conditions and specialities and global influences.*

*Folk medicine – traditional knowledge and health.*

*Guidance, tips about documentation etc.*

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This list is not complete. References used by other researchers involved in the project shall be added as will the references within the specific topic of environmental protection; here the work is still going on.

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