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# Resilience strategies in northern and southern Europe: towards a smart and sustainable rural development?

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- 1) Resilience as a vehicle to understand responses of rural communities to society transformation
- 2) How identified resilience strategies can contribute to or prevent smart and sustainable rural development

### **Swedish case:**

- refugee migration into rural areas and how it is met at the municipality level



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# Resilience

- ...a process involving intentional acts and strategies, a preparedness for identifying possibilities and overcome obstacles
- ...individual and community capacity to deal with economic and social transformation – the ability to adapt to but also to challenge the prevailing circumstances



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# Refugee migration as a resource

“...one of many in-migration strategies is receiving refugees. I have a job that involves the strategy of getting refugees to come to this municipality and stay here. It is a part of a long-term population strategy.”

“we should economise by speeding up”

(refugee coordinator)





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# Economy and labour market

“Most of the money is staying in the municipality. They rent flats, they buy food and most of them have no cars for travelling so they stay, and spend their money here.” (politician)

“We know that it is the foreign-born who will work at the homes for elderly in the future, we know that. Luckily enough, we have people who want to take care of our elderly.” (politician)





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## Contribution: A local formal structure becomes informal

“This is the world in miniature. This is Sweden in miniature. It is easier to get a grip on things in a smaller municipality /.../ to understand how different things are linked, and to understand different authorities and institutions. You can have direct contact, not only on the phone. You also receive first-hand information and do not have to rely on rumours and on other people telling you. /.../ you get a little map that you can superimpose on the bigger picture as well.”  
(public official)



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# Institutional learning

“It is about mass and time I think. /.../ A lot of things are getting easier for every year. In school, the labour market agency, we have got our roles to start working. /../ do your job in a normal way, even though you work with in-migration and migrants. /.../ After a while it becomes a routine.”

The National Labour Market Agency are planning to shut down one third (100/300) of their local offices.  
(sverigesradio.se, 25 March 2015)



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The library as a symbol for the community. "The symbol is for example associated with a democratic meeting-place, education and integration."

The library law states that public libraries should supply literature, technical equipment to prioritised groups such as minorities and individuals with disabilities. (Andersson 2015)

From 2009-2013, around 100 local public libraries have been closed. Every third library in Sweden is now run by a non-profit organisation.



# Resilience and the importance of state action

- Greater self-determination should not cause a greater burden of responsibilities on the local level: State action and state investment is important to initiate processes of resilience
- What could be defined as "a threat" or "a challenge" is context dependent: International refugee migration is both a challenge and might be an answer to a(nother) challenge
- Rural sustainability needs to be understood as processes involving local as well as non-local resources and interactions.



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# Thank you!

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