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Abstract

World Heritage is considered to bring development potential but such expectations also drives questions concerning regional image and identity. In the image-making processes in rural context with focus on cultural heritage there are also ideas pushed forward regarding traditions, history and search for sustainable lifestyles. Impacts from such values are, beside effects related to tourism, often strong in argumentation for investments in cultural heritage.

The Farms of Hälsingland is a strong positive symbol in the Swedish province of Hälsingland and object for a nomination process to be accepted on UNESCO world heritage list. The province of Hälsingland stands in front of a severe structural transformation and there is a regional-image campaign that drives a dichotomy between a previous identities connected to industrial production towards perspectives dominated by aesthetic values. These transformations correspond to a "cultural turn" from being a region of industrial production towards a more experience-oriented economy. The traditional industrial economy connected to agriculture and forestry is by the local population although considered to be very successful.

Self-images of being rural and traditional also foster a strong regional identity and are regarded to push confidence in front of future development challenges. Despite this, local and national media and other publication often emphasizes aesthetic values in relation to historical assets and tends to neglect its regional development potentials. In Sweden there are also certain processes that shape images of the farms into a set of "regional out-door museum".
With examples from two sets of World Heritage nominations of the Farms of Hälsingland, this paper discusses how such regional transformation forces also gain support from the nomination processes in the construction of World Heritage and an public debate in local and national media dominated by an aesthetic discourse. These new images do implicate two sides of the coin. Aesthetic images could gain a new economy based on social values but on the other hand this cultural turn could simultaneously undermine common industrial productive identity in the region. In this perspective it could be argued that certain heritage images puts obstacles to meet future development challenges.

By using World Heritage nomination acts and media representations of the Farms of Hälsingland, this paper examines empirically how the image-making of a province, the world heritage nomination process correspond with different development discourses in Hälsingland.

References


