



Marketing Sense of Place

Recruiting people to Resele

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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SLU
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Marketing Sense of Place. Recruiting people to Resele

Resan hem. Platsidentiteten i platsmarknadsföringen i Resele

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Sammanfattning

Den här kandidatuppsatsen inom landsbygdsutveckling syftar till att undersöka relationen mellan platsidentitet och platsmarknadsföring på en plats prisad för sitt arbete med att attrahera nya invånare. Materialet har samlats in genom marknadsföringsmaterial i tryckt och webbaserat format, observationer i byn och gruppintervjuer med engagerade bybor. Centrala teoretiska begrepp under hela processen har varit platsmarknadsföring, platsidentitet och gemenskapande aktiviteter för identitetsbyggande. Marknadsföringen riktar sig främst utåt mot inflyttade men används även gentemot offentlig sektor, och inåt mot byborna. Resultaten visar att innehållet i marknadsföringen ämnar attrahera personer som liknar de som redan är i aktiva i byn, samt att de flesta av de kvaliteter som värdesätts bland byborna också är de som syns i marknadsföringsmaterialet. Det lämnar aspekter, individer och grupper som inte uppfyller de högst värderade kvaliteterna osynliga i marknadsföringen och i byggandet av platsidentiteten. Gemenskapande aktiviteter för att reproducera platsidentiteten sker även genom flera processer utöver själva marknadsföringen, både genom vilka sociala arenor som finns tillgängliga och genom vilka berättelser deltagarna berättar om sig som by.

Keywords: platsidentitet, platsmarknadsföring, narrativ, Resele, inflyttning, migration

Abstract

This Bachelor's thesis in rural development aims to examine the relationship between place identity and place marketing in a place prized for its efforts to attract new comers. The material has been collected through print and web-based marketing materials, observations in the village and group interviews with active members of the community. Central theoretical concepts throughout the process have been place marketing, sense of place and community as a process of joint 'sense of place'-making. The results show that marketing is mainly directed outwards to prospective new inhabitants but is also used towards the public sector and inwards to the villagers. The content of the marketing is aimed at attracting people who are like those already actively engaged in the village. Most of the qualities valued by the villagers are the same as those visible in the marketing materials. This leaves aspects, individuals and groups who don't fulfill these qualities invisible in the marketing and in the building of the joint sense of place. Community activities to reproduce the sense of place are also conducted in other ways than the marketing, both by what social arenas are available in the village as well as the narratives the participants tell about themselves as a village.

Keywords: sense of place, place marketing, narrative, Resele, migration

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1. Introduction

The struggle to keep a vibrant community in the face of urbanization and depopulation of rural areas is an issue not only in Sweden but in many industrialized countries. Not only is attracting new inhabitants important for these villages but also to maintain the selling-points that attracted them in the first place. In this thesis I will take a closer look at a village which has focused heavily on these two points of attracting new inhabitants and maintaining the active community and can-do attitude that they market themselves with.

In this thesis I will gather material through collecting marketing material on the Internet, do group interviews in the village and observe the place as I go about my interviews. I will use the concepts of place marketing and sense of place as lenses through which I look at how Resele is produced, re-produced and performed in the marketing and in the village.

1.1 Background – Resele and Me

The first time I saw Resele being marketed was in 2013, when the In-migration group had a stand outside the festival area in Näsåker. The inside of their tent was covered with posters of Resele and smiling people in green t-shirts talked excitedly about their village. The same year they had showed up in the magazine Land a few times since they had been nominated to the Stora Landpriset 2013 prize. When they were mentioned as the winners of the Stora Landpriset at the prize ceremony at the Swedish Rural Parliament 2014 in Sandviken the name Resele was no longer news. They had made themselves a name as the village people moved to.

Here is a recollection from my four-day long fieldtrip, which illustrates how the place came into existence in my mind as I learned about it as part of my research:

I turn off route 90 onto the winding dirt road down into the river valley, continue along the valley upstream, houses start dotting the side of the road until the trees open up to reveal a towering large white building. A church. A few houses around it and a small insignificant red building across the road. Further down the road through the intersection I saw the bridge across the river to the other half of the village on the other side, the fairly new school that I recognized from the picture in the brochure, and the winding river and village stretching further upstream. That was my first impression of Resele. A village in the forest and along the Ångerman river in the Västernorrland region of Sweden. But as I started interviewing the residents of the

village, what was an important landmark and what was so insignificant that my mind's eye almost started editing them out of the landscape, changed. I quickly realized that the church was of little importance to my informants, and that the small red building opposite it took up a much more active space in their idea of the place. It was the local grocery store, with its notice board, coffee station with a few chairs and most importantly the only grocery store around you didn't have to drive a car to get to. The school kept its prominence as much in the landscape as in the informant's sense of place, just as the brochure had indicated. But so too did the, at first less noticeable yet quite wide, building next to it. Mhyregården, a seasonally open restaurant of some local and regional fame. Even later, as my fieldwork brought me across the bridge to the other side of the village some of the less visible places came onto my radar. Perhaps the refugee housing and its activities most prominently among them. As my research into Resele as a place, an identity and a branded item for sale, Resele also developed in my mind from a dot on a map to include the many aspects a place inhabits, location, locale and sense of place (Cresswell 2015). Through this I cannot claim to have anything but a subjective idea of my area of research, but also have the smallest bit of insight into the process that becoming a place entails. - field journal notes 2014

1.2 Purpose statement

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how people living in the village of Resele work to attract new inhabitants, what qualities about the inhabitants that are marketed and what qualities that are appreciated in the community.

I also aim to investigate how the local identity, i.e. sense of place, in Resele is reproduced in the shared social arenas by new inhabitants.

1.3 Research Questions

- How does the place marketing of Resele align with what is important to the inhabitants of the village, i.e. with their sense of place? Who is represented in the marketing, who is attracted by the marketing and who is invisible in it?
- How are the feelings of belonging and a shared sense of place reproduced in the community?

2. Method and Material

My starting point for this thesis was a chapter by Stewart (1996) where sense of place was explored through observations and interviews with the local inhabitants of a small place in the American coal country. Their method and analysis emphasized narrative, i.e. the stories the informants told about their place and the people in it, which guided me heavily in my own fieldwork on what to look for and ask about in my interviews. From there I continued to build my theoretical framework, mainly from Cresswell (2015), Agnew (1987) and Syssner (2012), which guided my collection and analysis of my fieldwork material.

In preparation of my four-day fieldwork I did a text analysis and image analysis of the promotional material, i.e. the folder and the website, to get an idea of which aspects were promoted to attract prospective inhabitants.

Before the fieldwork I had set up an interview with the in-migration group who produced the promotional material (see interview 1 below) and found my informants through the snowball method, i.e. I set up interviews with some of the recommendations I got from the initial interview. This did lead to my informants being more active in the local community than the average inhabitant might be, but also that my informants are the ones doing or receiving most of the marketing for Resele. To cover as many different kinds of stories as possible about the place I chose my informants from the initial group's recommendations strategically based on age, family structure and length of time living in the village.

The interviews were semi-structured as I had prepared no questions but some broader themes I wanted to cover in each interview. This method was chosen to ensure both that the informants covered the central themes as well as gave them space to direct the interviews to also cover important areas I might have missed entirely in my initial review of the promotional material.

My observations were conducted on my way to and from my interviews as well as alongside the informants when doing my interviews. The one exception to this was when I briefly visited the grocery store on my own.

My gathered empirical material was analyzed once I had returned from my fieldwork through a narrative analysis method (Johansson 2005) to determine what the informants stories, both explicitly and implicitly, emphasized about their place and their community. At the second stage of analysis these statements were

organized thematically to reveal commonalities and contradictions in the informants' stories.

This case study makes no attempts at generalized results since I have deliberately focused on a specific place, its people and contemporary circumstances. As such it is rather an application of generalized theoretical models developed by Agnew (1987) and Syssner (2012) on this particular case.

Resele was chosen specifically as an interesting place of study since it has many of the common characteristics of a small, remote, rural village which struggles to maintain their number of inhabitants. What sets them apart and makes them especially interesting in this context is their prized efforts to attract new inhabitants (Östholm 2013) and their marketing emphasizing not the nature so much as the people and the spirit of them.

As this is an ideographic study (Kvale et al. 2009; Teorell & Svensson 2007) I have followed the suggestions of (Jerolmack & Murphy 2019) and chosen to not anonymize the informants or the location. All informants have had the option but chosen to have their names used in this study.

I did four interviews with 1-3 individuals in each based-on availability at the time of study and on which categories of informants I needed to complement my picture of the place. Interview 1: Jenny, Helene and Emelie active in the Immigration group, women with husbands, and children in the local school. Interview 2: Ibe and Maike, moved to Resele from the Netherlands about two weeks ago, a couple with two pre-school-aged children. Interview 3: Sonja and Gunilla active in the Asylum-seekers group, retired. Sonja lives in Resele, Gunilla lives in Uppsala but spends large parts of the year in her vacation home in Resele. Interview 4: Mats, creative person, and member of the local community council, moved to the village about 2 years ago, semi-retired, has a child in the local school.

For the interviews I had a semi-structured approach where I asked the participants to elaborate on some themes I had gathered from the study of the marketing materials and the parts of a place concept presented by Agnew (1987). My interview-guide themes were: The folder, The adjectives on the last page of the folder, Reception of new inhabitants, Finding your way there, Well-being, Community-building activities, Livelihood, Before/History, Contacts, Housing. For the sake of consistency in my gathered material and in turn ability to see patterns in my material I kept the themes the same in all interviews, however the participants elaborated more or less depending on their interests and my follow-up questions on each theme which may have skewed the patterns I found but also kept me more true to my aim of studying what the informants valued about their place, community and activities.

3. Theory

My guiding concepts from the outset were 'sense of place' and 'place marketing'. The aim was to map the characteristics in the place marketing and compare my findings to the characteristics of importance to my informants. i.e. their sense of place. To better understand this interplay, I used concepts from narrative and performance theories: reproduction, retelling and arenas (Liepins 2000). To look at place as a process of both identity and marketing we have to define the core concepts: place, sense of place, place marketing and community building. Neither of these concepts are all that easily defined with any certainty, or as (Cresswell 2015) puts it: "Given the ubiquity of place, it is a problem that no one quite knows what they are talking about when they are talking about place." (Cresswell 2015:24)

However one of the more comprehensible descriptions of place can be found in Agnew (1987):

Interwoven in the concept of place adopted here, therefore, are three major elements: locale, the settings in which social relations are constituted (these can be informal or institutional); location, the geographical area encompassing the settings for social interaction as defined by social and economical processes operating at a wider scale; and sense of place, the local 'structure of feeling.' Or, by way of example, home, work, school, church, and so on form nodes around which human activities circulate and in which in toto can create a sense of place, both geographically and socially. (Agnew 1987:28)

My focus in this thesis has been on the last part of this concept: sense of place, especially in relation to place marketing and community activities. I.e., sense of place as a social process, both deliberately and unintentionally. Despite sense of place being in focus, this does not mean that the other two aspects of place (locale and location) are disregarded or in any way unimportant when observing what and how people talk about a place. Sense of place is my focus here because it relates to the place marketing and the arenas where sense of place is shaped.

In order to talk about place marketing one has to define two ubiquitous terms: place and marketing. (Syssner, 2012) defines place branding as "...a long-term, strategic work aiming to change, improve or strengthen the image of a place.". By this definition place branding is always a deliberate process, as implied by it being 'strategic'. Whereas Syssner (2012) differentiates between place marketing and branding I have here used them interchangeably to refer to the place branding definition used by Syssner (2012).

The image being projected does not only aim to attract possible new inhabitants. In Syssner's (2012) figure of place branding the activities are aimed in multiple directions at the same time but with different purposes. Outward to visitors, potential new inhabitants, investors, and trade partners; inward to the own population with the purpose of creating unity, a shared identity and a local pride; and finally, to decisionmakers in various levels of government to inspire decisions favoring the village. To expand this communication model for the case of Resele I have added the local community council and their place marketing activities to show how the communicated image is both affecting and being affected by the local organization and activities the inhabitants engage in. I.e., the image is not a static product but being actively reproduced and reiterated as a continuous process.

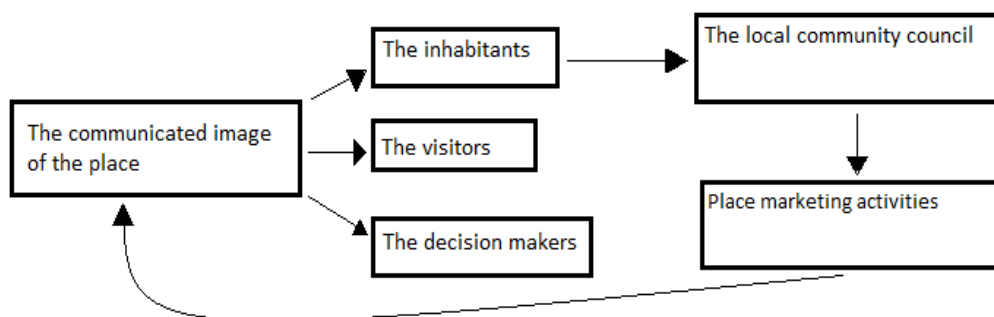


Fig.1. Adapted from Syssner (2012:12)

From this figure the image of the place is both a packaged product for consumption and a common frame of reference for feelings of community. Liepins (2000:29) defines community as "a social construct about human connection that involves cultural, material and political dimensions" which is both performed and reproduced by people in a place. I here look specifically at place marketing as a practice and sense of place as a meaning, both created by the people in Resele and the interaction between them as the community is performed and reproduced there.

The concept of community does bring up the issues of representation, stereotypes, inclusion and participation since to market a place successfully a few qualities need to be singled out and emphasized, while others (that are not as marketable) take a backseat, which in turn can make some of the inhabitants of the place not identify with the simplified image of the place that is marketed (Bjelland 2012).

These core concepts were essential for me already in gathering of my empirical material in helping me know what to look for and forming the foundation for my interview themes. Later, when analyzing my material, the concepts and their definitions were useful not only in locating the explicit statements about the

informants' sense of place and their activities but also to see the more unconscious or implicit areas of importance to them. In comparing the published promotional material from the village to the statements made by the informants the place branding model presented by Syssner (2012:12) helped make the intended direction of the promotional material clear as well as point out the discrepancies between the images being communicated in each direction.

4. Place Marketing - to prospective inhabitants

“I’ve thought about it’s really nice to say ‘ok, we want to keep these people here, they are also young families’ young families is the whole thing, as long as you have children then you are [thumbs up]. And they have young children so ‘let’s try to keep them here’.” – Maike

In this chapter I look at the strategy for marketing Resele as a place and how it aligns with the three-pronged marketing model from (Syssner 2012) described in the theory chapter. First by analyzing the folder produced by the In-migration group, then how my informants first contact with Resele commonly occur and finally how the In-migration group work from that first contact to get new inhabitants to the village.

4.1 The Folder - a text and images analysis

One of the first ways I first came into contact with Resele, and one which is not entirely uncommon, was through their folder (Norström 2013) handed out to prospective inhabitants at various fairs and markets. It is therefore of interest to analyze the text and images to see what this curated first impression says about Resele and the people they want to attract. I here make an analysis of this folder to gain insight into what aspects and qualities are valued and marketed.

The text and images in the folder focus mainly on young families, the high quality of the school and the entrepreneurial spirit of the villagers. A little less emphasis but still an important selling point is the beautiful nature as well as the various clubs and associations for recreational, faith-based or socio-political interests. The families pictured are predominantly white and opposite sex couples with children of school-age or younger. The showcased sources of income are small-scale and family-based companies in primary production or on-line businesses. The features of the natural landscape mentioned are the river running through the village, the forest and the hills surrounding the valley.

Based on Syssner's (2012) model the folder has a clear intended receiver in potential in-migrants to the village. The target audience are people who can identify with the people already living in the village who are pictured in the folder. A less

obvious but also likely recipient of this folder are the municipality, regional government, and other public organizations for which the organizations in Resele might want to showcase their work and successes as a way to attract their interest and investments. Both uses were later confirmed in my interview with the immigration group.

The folder is heavily based around the desire to keep the local school, as is evident in both the analysis of the folder and the discussion of it with the immigration group. Therefore, the target audience is mainly young families, preferably with small children or children of school-age, i.e. 5-12, and the municipality who set the school budget. Referring back to the model by (Syssner 2012) this one folder can be used for two different target audiences. Since the aim is ensuring the continued support for the village school, both the potential new families and the municipality are important target audiences and can to some extent be convinced with the same arguments, i.e., the folder.

The two main arguments above are then further supported by other traits valued in new inhabitants as well as the existing ones featured: an entrepreneurial spirit and active engagement in the local organizations. These are important traits since there are not a lot of jobs in Resele, even if Sollefteå is within commuting distance, so those who move there need to have the dedication and courage to start their own business if they want to support themselves and be able to stay in the village. It is understandably also important for the recruiters to attract dedicated and active people who want to contribute to keep the sense of community and local pride alive by volunteering in the various local associations and groups.

What I noticed not appearing in the folder were older people, people without children or grandchildren in the area, and those with low socioeconomic status, e.g., young adults, retirees who don't have previous connections to the village and recent immigrants.

The adjectives referenced both by the informants and the introduction section are on the last page of the folder. As this is the first and still only time I have seen the strengths of the people living in a place mentioned as part of their place marketing I found this especially interesting to take a closer look at:

Strengths among the inhabitants of Resele: Pride, drive, enterprise, cooperation, hospitality (Norström, 2013:9)

This list of qualities are in both the Swedish and the English version of the folder so I have used their translations as defining in how I have used these words throughout this thesis. The traits were both a recurring theme for discussion in my interviews and guiding in the analysis of the inhabitants sense of place in chapter 5.

4.2 Finding the way to Resele - first contact

According to the In-migration group most of the people who move to Resele grew up there and move back as adults, the second largest group are partners and/or children of those who grew up there. The importance of the outward-facing place marketing efforts (Syssner 2012) on these people are likely less important than for people with no previous connection to the village. This said, several of the informants still mentioned the positive and entrepreneurial spirit of the people as a factor when deciding on moving back to the region or following a partner there.

I think that the inward-facing place marketing (Syssner 2012) have more of an effect here as these prospective inhabitants already have a connection to the village through more regular contact with people already in the community. Thus, they indirectly get some of the place marketing aimed at the inhabitants to create a more cohesive sense of community. A benefit here is that the preference for families with children of school-age or younger is prominent both inward-facing and the outward-facing marketing, so this message comes across to the people with prior connections to the village as well as those without.

For unconnected prospective inhabitants targeted in the marketing beyond the folder the In-migration group use several channels but similar methods in each.

The in-migration group and the local community council board maintain a few web-based marketing avenues: a website with information about the village and upcoming events, a Facebook page, and a Facebook group for both local residents and potential new inhabitants. Here the inward-facing marketing and the outward-facing marketing (Syssner 2012) are presented on the same places and largely present the same content and values expressed.

For more direct in-person marketing the in-migration group or various representatives of the local community council have also attended migration fairs, both locally and internationally. The international migration fairs have been in collaboration with the Västernorrland region in places like Belgium and the Netherlands. At these fairs they have been telling their stories about how they found their way to live in Resele, showed pictures of the landscape and school as well as handed out the promotional folder. In other words, presented all the three aspects of place (Agnew 1987:28) in a favorable light, as to attract new inhabitants.

An important strategy has been having a person with contacts in decision-making positions who has done a lot of the cold calling to journalists, politicians and others to get publicity and access to more places to market Resele. In this regard the outward-facing marketing to decision-makers (Syssner 2012) also circle back to the marketing towards other external interests like potential new inhabitants, and the flow is not as clear cut as a simple model can describe.

4.3 Contacts - keeping the contacts warm

But one other thing I think they do really well in Resele, once you have a relationship, once you're in, they don't let you go. So when we went here once they immediately made sure there was somebody who drove us around. And since then they've been... Just the fact that Emilie liked my posts on Facebook. I mean it's very simple, but it feels like we're already a part of the community. – Maike

Being open to newcomers who show an interest in the village is an important part of the drive the people of Resele are known for. As the stereotype for a rural village is a close-knit community that it is hard to get accepted into, Resele make an effort to brand themselves as an open and inviting community to those who take an interest in their village. In their marketing this is evident in how drive and an inviting community can be found in the folder as well as in the activities of the in-migration group. But more people than the in-migration group have shown this eagerness to pull in new people. Well known among them are Carolina and Kerstin for engaging cold contacts, i.e. contacts with whom they have no previous contact, but also other parts of the local community council for pulling in warm contacts to get even more involved locally. Considering the concept of community as a practice and a sense of place as a meaning (Liepins 2000) the process of keeping the contacts warm are both a community-building practice by more people than the inhabitants in the village and a reinforcing of their identity as a driven and inviting community that also extends beyond the geographical borders of the village.

This observation of extended community practice and identity can be described by the shadow village idea presented by Ekman (2006), of how the social network of a small place is larger than the place itself. Where the place marketing process work first by engaging the cold contacts to pull them into the shadow village community as a first step, and from there can work more slowly to sustainably also move them physically into the village. Since they have already moved their hearts, they can take more time to find them suitable housing and sources of income, which my informants agree are more often the problems for new inhabitants.

...you know there is some houses probably coming out in the spring, so let's keep in touch and I will let you know, and also have a look at the website... - Maike

5. Sense of Place - We are Resele

As Bjelland (2012) noted, place marketing is packaging an aspect of a place for consumption. Since the main aspect marketed in Resele, contrary to many other rural places, is not the nature surrounding the village but the values and qualities of the inhabitants I was curious to see how well the marketed community and the village inhabitants corresponded.

In my attempt to examine to what extent the local place identity and the place marketing align I interviewed 8 inhabitants about what was important to them. A noteworthy limitation of my empirical material is that since I used the snowball method to access informants, they were all fairly locally active inhabitants. This choice of method is very likely to have skewed my results on to what extent their self-identification matched the current place marketing. I have therefore not attempted to quantify or create any identity-marketing Venn diagram, but only strive to describe and compare my qualitative empirical material.

5.1 Livelihood - one house, two cars and three jobs

When moving anywhere having a plan for how to support one's household is always important, but even more so when moving to a rural area when there are often fewer jobs. Therefore, having a job one can bring along or qualify in a field that is in demand locally is emphasized in both the marketing and by the informants.

According to my informants many of the inhabitants in Resele make a living by commuting to the nearest town where there is public sector employment in fields like education and health care. The second largest source of income is to run their own business, either full-time or as a side-business. The most common field being primary production like farming and forestry but also construction and services like tourism or in web-based and telecommuting types of work. Having more than one source of income per adult in a household is not uncommon among my informants.

We have a lot of businesses here in the village. But it's like me and my husband, we run a business, we have an agricultural property, but [...] he works as a fire fighter and I work as a teacher, but then we have the business, and do other things too. But it [the business] is not our primary occupation. – Emelie

This expectation to have at least one and preferably multiple streams of income makes it significantly harder for certain groups of people to establish themselves in the area in terms of livelihood sustainability (Ellis 2000). Several informants also mentioned the need for at least one car and the purchasing power to buy a house as limiting factors to who can realistically move to Resele. There was an awareness in the in-migration group that these requirements excluded some people that otherwise had all of the qualities they were trying to attract to the village like children for the school and being active in the community's organizations. Here too the necessary assets are packaged in the marketing by presenting inhabitants who fulfill all of them as a way of attracting more of the same. As Bjelland (2012) describes this is representing a curated selection of the inhabitants and not necessarily a representative selection. Contrary to the marketing my informants acknowledged that there are a lot of not so socially active inhabitants in the community too, and the most common livelihood is not to own a company but commuting to work in the public sector in Sollefteå.

5.2 Keeping the school - a core motivation

In the past few decades, the municipality has repeatedly proposed closing down the village school to save money. This perceived threat to the sustainability of the community has been the driving and unifying force for local community activities in Resele. Since the municipality's arguments for shutting down the school has been either that there are too few children in the area or that it is too expensive, many activities have focused on these issues. The low number of children in the school was the primary reason the recruiting of new inhabitants started, and the in-migration group was established, as well as why the requirements for accepting the establishment of asylum-seekers housing in the village was that the asylum-seekers had to be families with children.

Twice they have tried to close down the school, and then Resele have risen up in protest and done something about it, recruited families with children and all the things they've done. – Mats

The threat to the school is never mentioned in the marketing but the many advantages and benefits of the village school is already on the first spread of the folder. In accordance with Syssner's (2012) model the focus on the advantages of the school being so prominent makes the folder a marketing tool for influence both the municipality and prospective new inhabitants. This focus makes families with children feel very welcome and they have an easier time getting involved in the community, however, people without children can struggle to get involved in the social life and feel like they're fitting in.

5.3 Local engagement/Drive as an identity marker

Resele has become known both locally and regionally as a very driven and active community that gets things done. This identity is met both with admiration and sometimes envy by other people in the region. The place marketing of the village as an active community is performed and reproduced as sense of place both in how the social arenas are organized, through volunteering, in local organizations and how the inhabitants encourage this trait in new inhabitants too:

It's a very good way if you move here to join something. The local community council or some group. To get to know people. It's a really good way. – Helene

A long-time resident in the village told me that the inhabitants in Resele always have been driven and active, but that different local organizations have been the most prominent in the community-building activities at different times in the village history. As the arenas for community-building activities and place marketing change both in terms of the driving organizations behind them and access to technology like social media the place identity (Agnew 1987) as a driven community keeps being reproduced (Liepins 2000).

The negative side-effect of a driven identity is that it is also culturally accepted to place guilt on other inhabitants for not participating more in the local organizations and activities. It takes some courage and determination to decline the stream of invites to participate more when one is expected to give more.

I'm not part of the local history Society anymore, you know why? I'm deathly afraid that they'll call me and tell me I have to do 1000 things. Because that's the way it is. ... Come out to clean, come make coffee and God knows all of it. And I don't have time for all that, so I'm not a member anymore. Because otherwise they just keep calling all the time, and you feel that you probably have to after all. Isn't it terrible that it ends up that way? – Sonja

5.4 Positivity/Ambassadorship/Pride as an identity marker

...we talk a lot about ambassadorship, or that we who live here are the best advertisements for Resele... I think that a large part of that we've managed to get people to move here is that we are this positive and that we like it here, and that we're not shy about showing it so to speak. Rather we're kind of annoying about how pleased we are with living here. - Emelie

The inhabitants I interviewed spoke well of their community and showed pride in their place. They are also known for this pride in their place in their region too. Their pride and positivity is not uncommonly met with annoyance or silence by others in the region, like the municipality or employers in other parts of the region,

but as a positive example by people from further afield, like newspapers (Östholm 2013) and the Placebrander company (Nordström 2015).

The regional friction strengthens the sense of community locally by defining the in-group in relation to the out-group (Tajfel et al. 1979), which is noticeable in how they use the telling of these stories of opposition as in-group bonding actions, i.e. community-building (Liepins 2000).

Those who are loud and proud are visible, but the informants know that there are those who aren't as driven and proud but that they aren't getting noticed since they aren't as loud about it. Hence, that everyone in the community are positive about change and actively strives for the changes they want to see, prevails as the communicated image both in-wards and out-wards.

6. Community - Reproducing a shared sense of place

As the concept of place, in the view of Agnew (1987), is three-legged as the place locale, location and sense of place it is the latter that is socially constructed by the inhabitants of a place. In other words it is the shared identity, or sense of place (Agnew 1987), that is reproduced by the community through the activities of the inhabitants (Liepins 2000).

In one regard the people who are attracted to the marketing done by Resele are also the people who in large parts fit the marketed image and share those values. Hence a lot of the work in reproducing the local identity is already done before the new inhabitants move in (Häyrén 2015).

One strategy for identity reproduction is inviting new inhabitants into the local organizations and activities as it helps not only with community-building and being an active community in practice, in accordance with their marketing, but also because it is a prime arena for transferring the local values (Cresswell 2015; Syssner 2012).

6.1 A sense of place through retelling of the past and the future

As both Stewart (1996) and Cresswell (2015) describe in their explorations of place a lot of the sense of place comes from the stories we tell about a place. This is no exception in my case study of Resele and its inhabitants.

Sonja, a long-time resident in Resele, told me how the people of Resele have always been driven and proud. Back in the earliest times the first settlers were small-scale farmers and loggers with the mindset of being largely self-sufficient. In the 1940's the water navvies migrated into the community and although they were paid workers, they too worked hard to make the best they could for themselves and expected no one to provide anything for them. Finally, Sonja explained, there were the Green Wave in-migration of people who also wanted to be self-sufficient and depend as little on the government as possible. Hence the sense of place as a community of self-reliant and hard-working people is retold through the years as

the way the people of Resele are. This is picked up in the choice of descriptors found in the marketing folder:

Strengths among the inhabitants of Resele: Pride, drive, enterprise, cooperation, hospitality (Norström 2013:9)

These traits are reiterated in the plans for the future too, as the in-migration group eagerly exclaims that there are no plans on slowing down activities for recruiting inhabitants or community-building going forward either. To make sure all who are interested get a chance to get involved in the local development there was also an open local community council meeting later the same spring as my fieldwork, where they would continue to develop their future vision for Resele and organize their work around it. A lot of effort is put into making the plans for the future of Resele driven, entrepreneurial and proud going forward too, and thus the story the inhabitants tell of their place is not only displaying their self-assigned traits going backwards in time but also forwards. This way the current inhabitants of the village see themselves as but the present representation of the qualities of the inhabitants both past and future.

Notably in the story of the place from my informants is the absence of the Sami people both in the past and the present. At most the Sami people are spoken of not as members of the community but as a cultural heritage of the place conveniently available for exploitation in future tourist enterprises by some of the villagers.

Absences that on the other hand are noted and used in the retellings about the place are the lack of support from the government and the issues of housing and employment. These are often used in the story to explain the pride and the entrepreneurial spirit to solve their own problems, as they expect little outside help.

6.2 Community enjoyment and belonging - arenas for producing the sense of place

Rural communities are not static and stable places “but dynamic and contested groupings of people that are shaped and influenced by social and political context and power relations.” (Woods 2011:169). Therefore, arenas for this dynamic creation of community and sense of place is important to observe even on the very local level of a village, both in a power relations perspective and in terms of who has access how.

...if we are to work well together and come up with good things for the village, then we have to know each other and socialize and have some sort of feeling of ‘us’ for it to work well. – Emelie

There are many arenas for socialization in Resele where the sense of unity and shared identity is reproduced. Most of these arenas are centered around the children, e.g., through the school group, the asylum-seekers group, the sports association's kids' groups and the churches' kids recreation groups.

Social arenas geared more towards adults regardless of children are the local history association, the snow-mobile club, the fishing association, and some sub-groups to the local community council like the board and the rest-stop areas group.

Some social activities and events are also open for everyone or unconnected to any official organization. These are both a way of attracting and including more of the inhabitants in the community as well as bolstering the already active members' sense of community. E.g. the in-migration group has had a dinner-relay where interested inhabitants are grouped on random to have dinner together as a way of getting to know new people; the local history association or the sports association also arrange a summer party, a midsummer party, the local community council arrange some open hikes for clearing the local paths and the Facebook group for the village as well as the notice boards in the village are quite active. There is also the customary coffee station at the grocery shop to sit down and have a chat.

In general, the level of local engagement in the community is thus quite high, although my informants admits that many of the same people recur in many of the organizations, but also that there is always room for more. Or as Sonja in the asylum-seekers group said:

And you know, you can get active endlessly, endlessly. You'd be here every day. – Sonja

As both Liepins (2000), Bjelland (2012) and Syssner (2012) note, the people create the identity of the community and therethrough include and exclude who and what are accepted parts of a place. In Resele those actively engaged in the village organizations are the ones whose narrative of what the village is is the one being reproduced and retold most consistently. This is why those who already fulfill the adjectives mentioned in the folder and reiterated throughout my interviews are the ones who feel the most at home in the village. Or closer to Liepins' (2000) words, the sense of belonging that the members of the community feel towards each other, and a shared identity is created through the shared practices in the shared place, hence the participating people are the people who create the sense of community and place through their activities. Those not active are not represented and struggle to feel included. This means that regardless of how long one has spent as an inhabitant, if at all yet, they are included in the place if they are actively contributing to the place through the already established practices. When you are too inactive or too active in a novel direction, I observed it being somewhat frowned upon by other members of the community.

7. Conclusion

As much of the debate both nationally and internationally is about urbanization and rural depopulation, it is interesting to examine both how Resele, a place putting a lot of effort into counteracting these trends, works and how it affects their own community.

To examine this, I conducted a text and image analysis of their promotional material and online presence, followed by observations and semi-structured interviews in the village. However, as this is an ideographic study, I make no attempts at generalizing my results but rather to explore the theoretical framework of sense of place in place marketing on a practical case.

The main theoretical concepts of place marketing and sense of place as expressed in Resele confirms that place is a dynamic and contested space of identity-creation. Since all marketing requires packaging the place as a product for consumption it also brings up some issues of representation.

The target audience found in Resele's marketing activities aligns with Syssner's model in being directed in the three directions of the visitors, the government and the inhabitants themselves. Often the arguments are reused in all three directions. This works well since the core motivation in all efforts is primarily to keep the school and make it a good place for families with kids to live. The threat to close the school has also worked as a unifying force for community engagement in the village. The drive and pride in their community for working so hard is then also reproduced by their marketing activities both in image and community identity. The drive and pride have sparked some ire and envy in neighboring villages, which the informants in Resele felt gave them more of a sense of local unity by being different from their neighboring villages.

The main selling points mentioned in the marketing for Resele are the values and qualities of the inhabitants, but as living in a rural place comes with several practical challenges to living comfortably those who have overcome these are profiled in the marketing to exemplify ways to "make it". These livelihood challenges are mainly how to get a stable source of income that you can generate from the village, the purchasing power to buy a house, and a mode of transportation for getting to and from the village. Here the livelihood necessities and ability to purchase a house trump the villagers desire for people who share their values.

A recurring observation of a few negative effects in my material has been that of representation. Those who are actively participating in the marketing of the village are also the people who largely shape it in their own image. This is a good thing for those who fit this mold as they can feel included already before moving in, but also has problems, as those who don't actively shape the image of the village are also not visible and have fewer social arenas within the village where they are comfortable to participate.

There are many local organizations in Resele and these are important arenas for community-building and transferring the values of the inhabitants. They are places for sense of place reproduction and performance. One of the ways the sense of place is transferred to new inhabitants as well as created by the inhabitants in these arenas are through retelling of the past and the plans for the future. In these stories recurring themes reflected in the values written in the folder are the absence of government support and therefore the need to have their own drive to get things done for the village. These retellings of the spirit of the community also serves as a unifying activity as the shared idea of what their village is like is both produced and performed by the participating inhabitants.

This study confirms the processes with their benefits and drawbacks that previous research has proposed when it comes to both place marketing and sense of place. For marketing that the recruiting is in the image of the recruiters and for sense of place that a community identity is both a strength and a weakness in that it creates an in-group for those who share the desired traits. My complement to this is that place marketing is not only a matter of marketing of the physical place, locale and location, but the importance of marketing the community and the sense of place too to establish a positive image of a place. It would be interesting to see if a place with less active organization of its inhabitants has as strong an idea of what kind of people they are and what values are part of their sense of place.

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