

Mainstreaming Responsible Tourism at Rio+20 and the London 2012 Olympics

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Abstract

A sustainable future requires fundamental mechanisms for human populations to create conditions for both personal and societal peace, one being dependent on the other. In the traditional spirit of the original Olympic Games, the United Nations has called for six weeks of world peace to accompany the Olympic competition. It is a positive and enlightened response to the current challenges of climate change, poverty, loss of biodiversity and socio-economic collapse. The opportunity now is that in 2012 there is a convergence of the Rio+20 Agenda 21 follow-up conference in June in Brazil and the London 2012 Olympic Games in the United Kingdom in August, just two months later. In preparing for these two large-scale events, tourism stakeholders can act as an internationally cohesive group whose common interest is to use responsible tourism as a means for sustainable development by creating true destination security whilst supporting the growth of the global green economy. A one-minute silence to mark the truce, a map of global safe passage and a collective effort to bring 40 teenagers from areas of violence to the Games are being planned to make peace through tourism really happen. The current events in the Middle East confirm that we need to work harder for a global truce. The year 2012 will bring other issues of global security, whilst the Olympic Games themselves will make London a fortress city of fear in need of a positive affirmation of a world at peace and people at peace with each other and at peace within themselves. The London 2012 Olympic Peace Campaign sets a common vision for this. We now need to see well-coordinated, well-resourced, timely top-down and bottom-up actions as the clock is counting down.

Introduction: Peace through Tourism and the Olympics

For the ancient Greeks the Olympics were Sacred Games. When nations competed together in the Olympic tradition of “Ekecheiria,” war was stopped for a specific period of time and safe passage guaranteed to athletes and spectators. The modern United Nations movement recalled this means of achieving peace on earth in the 1990s, calling for an Olympic Truce (1); it is even stated as a means to end poverty in the Millennium Goals Declaration (2). There have been minor political processes put in place to achieve it, although to this point they have proved ineffectual. The six weeks of world peace in 2012 that has been designated by the United Nations to accompany the Olympic (and Para-Olympics) competitions is a positive and



Olympic Rings of Light. The Olympics have been cited as a means to achieve the Millennium Goals.

practical response to the challenges of climate change, poverty, loss of biodiversity and socio-economic collapse. It is a monumental task, only capable of being executed by many professional people following this common vision and moral purpose. This article proposes a means to do justice to this process by calling on tourism stakeholders to work toward the truce in a spirit of enlightened self-interest; creating destination security and safe passage is good for tourism business and contributes strongly to the process of overall sustainable development.

*A bottom-up and top-down move
from a culture of violence to a culture of peace...*

Like all global undertakings, no one individual can make this happen. It requires the personal commitment of a well-organized network of political, business, administrative and academic professionals together with a well-informed consumer audience, following a common vision. It should not remain as a rhetorical goodwill statement, but be turned into a real force for global harmony and prosperity. A concept of how to achieve this was developed for the 2004 Greek Olympics in the book “16 Days: The Role of the Olympic Truce in the Toolkit for Peace.” (3) Essentially, this concept demonstrates that all sections of society need to be involved in a process of moving us from a culture of violence to a culture of peace.

This move needs to happen on both a societal and personal level, from local to global levels, across all nations and regions, cultures and religions, genders and colors. It needs to be both a top-down and bottom-up multi-stakeholder process, drawing in all sectors of society across the globe. Sports, tourism, entertainment and health professionals can create big waves of public and political support. Celebrities, politicians and the business community need to be involved as well as citizens in local communities and through the work place.

Alongside the governmental-level actions necessary for the truce to occur, a series of creative projects need to be established to balance a top-down approach so that everyone can participate in the six weeks of inner peace – global peace effort. In other words, even if governments do not create the peace, individuals can create peace in themselves and their communities during this time, e.g., London Firemen for the Olympic Peace, Dancers for Olympic Truce, Businesses for Olympic Peace, Celebrities for the Truce, Christians for Truce Vigils, Buddhists for Olympic Peace, Olympic Athletes for Peace, Politicians for the Global Truce, etc.

Above all the media have a key role to play in taking up this message and making it a global issue so that politicians do their job and oversee the truce implementation process. Importantly, official Olympic sponsors should take on board the need for their support to see this happen.

The top-down process – ending the politics of scarcity and fear...

The role of the state however is paramount, as it is conflicting nation-states or power struggles within or against states that create most conflict and violence. At the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002, UNEP's Geo2 report (4) showed world scenarios that put markets first through military-enforced "security." What we need is a "Sustainability First" multi-sector, multi-stakeholder strategy based on the value system of sustainability – the just, fair, equitable and peaceful world of Agenda 21.

Those of us old enough to remember the concept of a "Peace Dividend" from reduced military budgets know the resources are there, and the world of scarcity is a creation of a powerful elite whose primary economic actions prolong inequality and foster insecurity in the preservation of their accumulated material wealth and the current socio-political power structure.

A state that develops citizens whose personal value systems show political responsibility, and operates a political system that takes care of individual citizens personally is within reach, but not achievable without more compassion in politics. "Enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed," Mahatma Gandhi's famous quote was used at the opening ceremony of the WSSD, but was quickly buried in bureaucratic negotiations that enforced the status quo of the further concentration of capital at the expense of people and the planet. In 2012, we cannot afford to let politicians and corporations make the same mistake at Rio+20, and must hold them accountable to their Millennium declarations.

However, clever the political rhetoric, the persistent poverty faced by the majority of global citizens, especially in Africa, and current events in the Middle East confirm that we need to work much harder for more permanent economic solutions than this phase of finance capitalism engenders. The year 2012 will bring other issues of global security, whilst the Olympic Games themselves will make London a fortress city of fear in need of a positive affirmation of a world at peace and people at peace with each other and at peace with themselves.

Making the policy work of the Agenda 21 practical – i.e. having a real and positive effect on markets and communities – is the task of governments at all levels. Rio+20 is another milestone on that road to sustainable development, but it needs corporate and political institutions to open their eyes and hearts to the impoverished reality of the world's majority population; address the issue of inequality by burying the myth of scarcity; and create culturally sensitive, knowledgeable and productive societies and citizens who can live in prosperity and peace. This is not utopian thinking, but rather the realization that with burning issues such as climate change, environmental degradation and social injustice outweighing materialist growth, we need a fundamental readjustment of the economic and political order. How is that possible?

***The tourism sector contribution –
mainstreaming sustainability by linking large-scale events...***

Peace is a necessary condition for tourism – tourism offers opportunities for economic, cultural and environmental recovery – it makes sense for tourism stakeholders to cultivate the culture of peace. A world with an estimated 40 major conflict zones is a world where there are not only 40 more human-tragedy stories, but also 40 less tourism destinations. Any Middle East country tourism stakeholder will tell you at the moment the essential need for peace for tourism business to exist and then prosper.

What is also in evidence though is the idea to use tourism as the economic rationale and driver for global peace and sustainability, with tourism stakeholders playing a key instrumental role in promoting a mindset of global awareness sensitive to the needs and plights as well as the differences and diversity of global cultures. To marvel at and appreciate the global environment and cultural diversity, as well as to provide business for local communities; to support and network rich and poor regions; to provide funds for nature and cultural conservation; to share knowledge and awareness of the best of what is local to a global audience – tourism can do all of this. In line with Rio+20's aim to

deliver a global “Green Economy,” we can see the strategic use of sustainable tourism development as a catalyst for socio-economic improvement.



What our opportunity is now is that in 2012 there is a convergence of the Rio+20

In stark contrast to Darfur, destination security in Costa Rica – a country with no army.

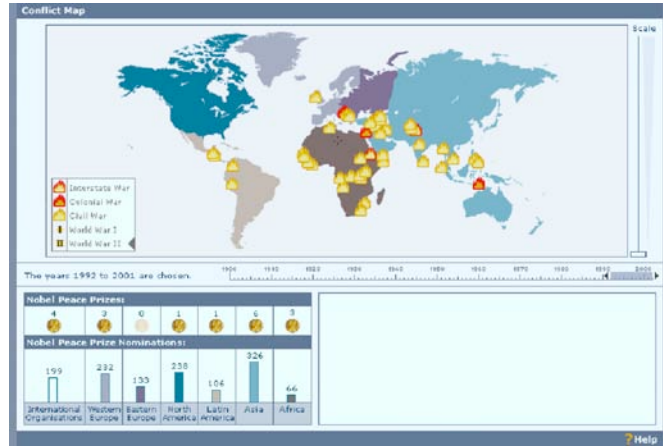
Agenda 21 follow-up conference in June in Brazil and the London 2012 Olympic Games in the United Kingdom in August, just two months later. In preparing for these events, we can act as an international group of responsible stakeholders whose common interest is to implement the global truce, and, in this period of celebrated peace, showcase alongside each participating country's Olympic athletes the best nature and culture offers as outstanding examples of sustainable and responsible tourism development, and the best ways of accessing them through the travel and hospitality industries.

Mapping the Peace Process: London 2012 Olympic Peace Campaign

A mosaic of open travel and tourism destinations and routes that link to London from all over the world is being mapped in the London 2012 Olympic Peace Campaign. The Olympic athletes will leave these destinations and pass on these routes; their safe passage in preparation, traveling to and returning from the Games should be every citizen's global right – to live and travel in peace anywhere on the globe at that time. In this way, a map of international destinations will highlight all the countries that work to achieve the right of peaceful passage for the six-week period stated in the UN Autumn Resolution, and respect a global truce. This map will be an international map of tourism that can immediately be used by the industry to provide income to those countries that are

counting on tourism to develop their economies. Such a map of peaceful national tourism can be prepared for Rio+20 and then broadcast via the Olympic media machinery.

This all needs a degree of co-ordination that only now is possible in global culture, in the form of the Internet's ability to connect us all, and a set of individuals who recognize they can play a part in making it happen, professionally and voluntarily. If the aim is to truly realize six weeks of global peace during the Olympic competition period, then we need to start organizing now, and follow the London Olympic countdown clock, which started in March 2011. Yet (at 500 days to go) the formation of a "Coalition of the Willing" is not coalescing, as business as usual and our busy lives prevents the Olympian effort necessary to achieve this aim. Importantly, however, since the 5th IIPT African Conference, in Lusaka, Zambia, the International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT) is supporting key elements of the campaign (6), which will help other stakeholders come on board. We need to see personal commitment – like IIPT's – and well-coordinated, well-resourced timely actions by those in power as the clock is counting down.



A map of UN peacekeeping operations at the turn of the millennium (5) – more than 40 major conflict zones are listed.

The London 2012 Olympic Peace Campaign sets a common vision for this. The campaign's aims include:

- 1. The effort from governments:** Every country attending the Olympics should support this autumn's UN Six-week Truce Resolution with an implementation strategy – with that process transparently mapped and made real.
- 2. One-minute silence for global peace** at the Olympic opening ceremony to mark and honor the state of global peace on earth, and to remember those places and people who may have not been able to achieve the six-week truce.
- 3. Youth for Olympic Peace Campaign:** One teenager from each conflict zone/area of violence will be sponsored to attend the Olympics as youth peace ambassadors, and share the camaraderie and support of the world for those days.
- 4. Responsible and Sustainable Tourism Business and Destination Support Travel Initiative:** Showcasing community-based responsible and sustainable tourism best practice offerings next to a country's Olympic icon. Responsible tourism can be targeted at the poorest nations to give a boost for local communities to benefit from global tourism opportunities for economic, cultural and environmental recovery.



The London 2012 Olympic Peace Campaign – aiming for six weeks of both inner peace and global peace.

5. VISTAS Peace through Tourism Award: A national award to highlight those countries that work most toward peace.

6. The Olympic Rings of Light Inner Peace: The promotion of inner peace together with global peace during the six weeks, so that we can have a mass movement from a culture of violence to a culture of peace alongside top-down political initiatives.

7. Olympic peace parties: Launching a global peace celebration during the London Olympics to mark this historic achievement.

The campaign is described in full on the DestiNet Portal for Sustainable Tourism Development (7). It shows how the tourism sector can lead the call to implement the necessary top-down and bottom-up processes to end the worst climate change that has really happened in our lifetimes – that change to a climate of fear – so negative for tourists and host communities alike.

Conclusion

In recognition that it will be the culture and education programs of the London Organizing Committee that will promote the Truce in the United Kingdom, it would be useful to run campaigns in each country – to contact ministries of culture and education to get the commitment process going around the world. If you add sports, tourism and environment ministries, a multi-sector participative process can be set in motion, which is what is needed to spread the message to all sectors of society in time for the Games. Each UN Member State, as an Olympic Competing Nation, can present signed declarations from either/all ministers of sports/tourism/culture/education/environment announcing their support for the UN agreed six weeks of peace during July, August and September 2012 and to run in-country campaigns to generate national awareness and participation. The UN resolution encourages such actions. States can then map their responsible and sustainable tourism activities and offers, and develop marketing campaigns to promote their contribution to the peace, to be showcased at Rio+20 in June 2012 and then mainstreamed during the London Olympics in 2012. United Kingdom and European travel agents and tour operators can promote community-based tourism, responsible tourism and sustainable tourism in the developing world, alongside Olympic athletes from those regions.

The Olympic Countdown Clock gives us all a common timetable, but we need to commit and involve ourselves (and our organizations) now. Rio+20 in June 2012 will show the world's readiness to develop global peace as the basis for sustainable development. The aim is to have both top-down government and bottom-up citizen initiatives in place by then to achieve the peace. Tourism stakeholders have a central interest and role in this peace, creating a world of inter-cultural exchange and travel possibilities to support developing countries in their effort to improve their socio-economic situations. This is an Olympian



The Olympic Countdown Clock – time is running out on this historic opportunity but the clock can synchronize collective action.

effort, but even the warring nations of ancient Greece achieved this – modern society can also reach a new height of civilization and make this happen if our politicians really want peace, but ordinary people and professionals must make the call for them to answer.

For further information or to support the campaign please:

Contact Gordon Silence, gordon.destinet@ecotrans.de, or go online to <http://destinet.eu/topics/sustainable-consumption-and-production/peace-through-tourism> or through Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/London-2012-Olympic-Peace-Campaign/211382448883873>.

FOOTNOTES

(1) Cf UN Declaration on Sport and Peace, since 1993, the UN Assembly has unanimously adopted six Resolutions championing the cause of Olympic Truce. <http://www.olympictruce.org/v2/index.html>.

(2) The United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted in New York in September 2000 by more than 150 Heads of State and Government, includes a paragraph on the promotion of peace and mutual understanding through the Olympic Truce.

(3) 16 Days: The Role of the Olympic Truce in the Toolkit for Peace by Rachel Briggs, Helen McCarthy, Alexis Zorbas, International Olympic Truce Centre Published by Demos, 2004 ISBN 1841801259, 9781841801254.

(4) <http://destinet.eu/topics/sustainable-consumption-and-production/peace-through-tourism>.

(5) http://nobelprize.org/educational_games/peace/conflictmap/conflictmap.html - this moving map shows a history of conflict zones throughout the world.

(6) See <http://www.iipt.org/newsletter/2011/august.html>.

(7) <http://destinet.eu/topics/sustainable-consumption-and-production/peace-through-tourism>.